

Why is it so  
hard to make  
my shell?



Written and Illustrated by: Ileana Freytes-Ortiz

In the crystal blue sea, there once lived a little oyster named Jimmy.

Like all of his oyster friends, Jimmy liked to filter water through his gills and eat itty-bitty algae that grew on him.



Jimmy also created pearls -- bright, beautiful pearls, made just like his shell.



Over time Jimmy began to notice that growing his shell was getting harder and harder, and he could barely make pearls anymore.



"I wonder why it has gotten so hard to make my shell," Jimmy thought.

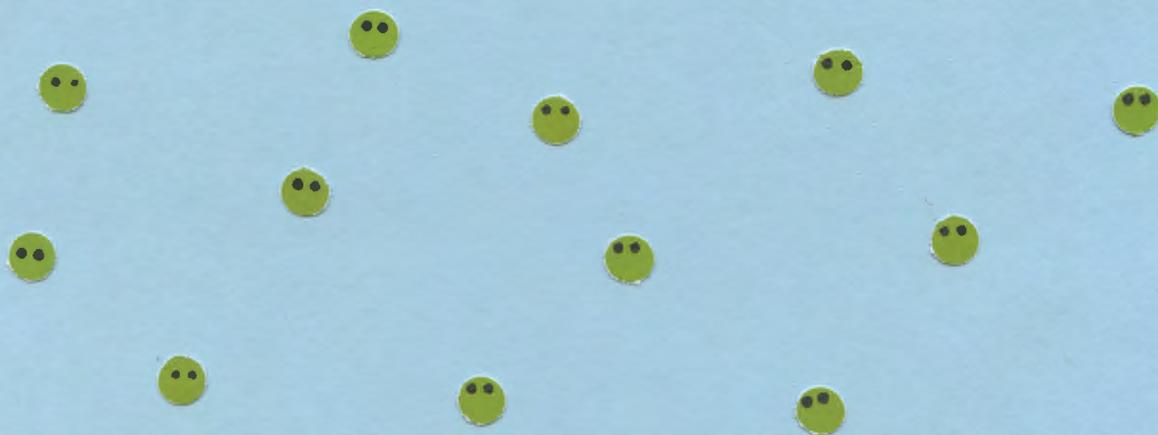
So Jimmy set out in search for an answer...

Jimmy asked the small coccolithophores in the water, since they made their homes like Jimmy made his shell.

"Why, oh, why has it gotten so hard to make my shell?," asked Jimmy.



And the coccolithophores answered: "It has always been hard to make our shells. It was even hard for our great-grandparents that lived months ago."



Jimmy asked the queen conch, with a shell much like his.

"Why, oh, why has it gotten so hard to make my shell?"



And the queen conch answered: "It didn't use to be this hard to make my shell when I was a little conch some years ago. It's like the water strips away what I've just built, and I have to re-build almost as much as I make".



Jimmy asked the old giant clam with two shells  
just like his.

"Why, oh, why has it gotten so hard to make my  
shell?"



And the old giant clam answered: "Back in my day, years and years ago, it was easy for animals like you and me to build our shells. The water has changed and now it strips away the bits of shell we make. There is something in the water, something that wasn't there before - or at least not as much as before - that is taking apart our shells."



Jimmy asked the old sea turtle.

"Why, oh, why has it gotten so hard to make my shell?"





And the old sea turtle answered: "I have lived for many years and have felt the changes in not only the water, but the air we breathe too. Whatever is happening to the water is happening to the air."

Jimmy saw a scientist working on the beach.

"Why, oh, why has it gotten so hard to make my shell?"





And the scientist answered: "I'm afraid the fuel we use to run our cars has changed the air we breathe and the water you live in. Normally trees would help take away the bad stuff in the air, but people have cut trees down and they drive more cars today than before. So the air is dirtier than it used to be. With time, it makes the water corrosive, taking apart the shell you work so hard to build. We scientists call it "ocean acidification" and we're doing as much as we can to understand it and help animals like you."

Worried, Jimmy then asked, "What can I do to help?"





And the scientist answered: "Whenever you see people on the beach, tell them to ride their bikes instead of their cars to go places. Tell them to plant trees and care for them to grow big and clean the air. Let them know how much their actions mean to the little oysters and clams and turtles living in the sea."

From that day on Jimmy lived close to the beach,  
telling all the little girls and boys who came to  
play with him to ride their bikes and plant trees.





That way they could help cut back Ocean Acidification and save sea animals like Jimmy.

