



# TOITOI

## STORY SEARCH

Write a story or poem inspired by  
7-year-old Maxwell Zhao's fantastic  
artwork published in Toitōi 30.

You may submit in English or te reo Māori.

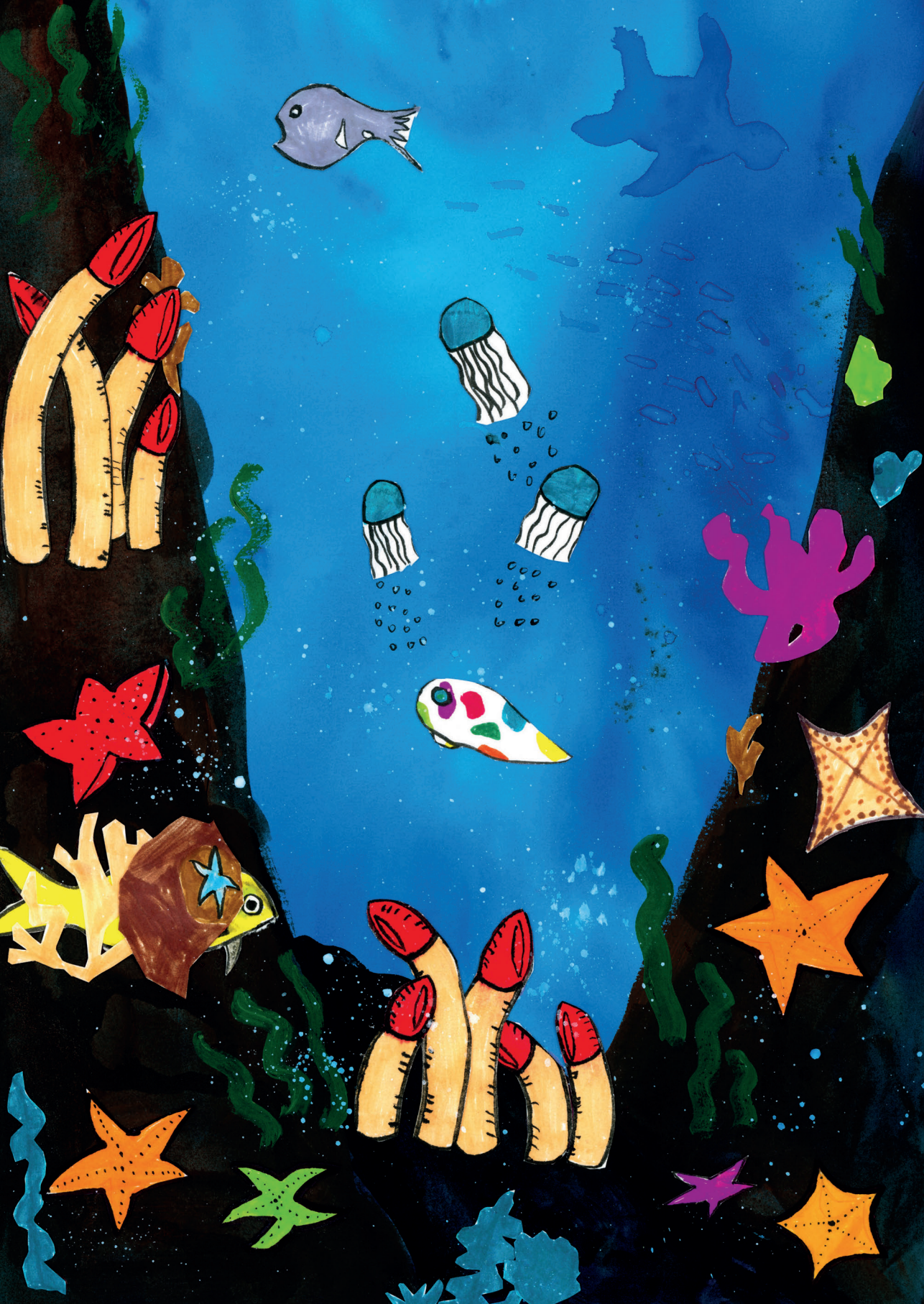
Send it to [submit@toitōi.nz](mailto:submit@toitōi.nz) and include your name,  
age, school and a parent or teacher's contact details.

Submissions are due on April 6, 2023.

We will publish the best story in Toitōi 32  
with additional illustrations by Christian.

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#TOITOISTORYSEARCH





# Hunt for the Gold-Finned Fish

"Here we are, Julie. This is it. The day we catch the special gold-finned fish!" Joe exclaimed dramatically. "You know, legend says it has mysterious healing powers," he continued, moving his hands for emphasis.

Julie disagreed, pointing out that it was only a fairy tale told to children to get them to sleep.

"Don't be such a wet blanket, Julie," Joe said, scowling.

The submarine swam around in the dark-blue water. The gold-finned fish was supposed to live in brightly-coloured coral reefs. Joe controlled the submarine, turning in random directions, not wanting to admit to Julie that he was lost.

As they moved past the rocks, the claustrophobic walls of stone parted and an opening appeared. Julie gasped. Rays of light shone down at the perfect angle, creating rainbows in every corner. Turtles inched their way towards their destinations and intricately-patterned marine animals swam in all directions. Schools of fish darted behind luminescent coral. Joe was amazed. If they couldn't find the gold-finned fish, at least they had seen this.

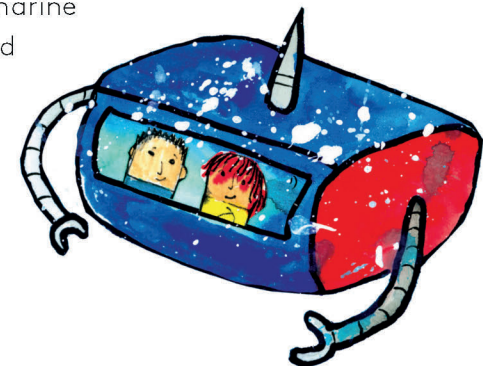
Joe pushed the thought out of his mind. He had to find the gold-finned fish. Mouths open in awe, Joe and Julie's eyes darted all over the place.

Joe swallowed and cleared his throat. "I think..."

Suddenly, a shadow loomed behind them. Julie lunged for the controls but it was too late. The shadow opened its large, gaping mouth. Like a black hole, it sucked them into the vortex, leaving them in darkness. The submarine had been inhaled at an awkward angle and got stuck in the corner of the monster's mouth, tipping it dangerously. Joe was the first to speak.

"We are in a whale. A WHALE! We're going to die!" he screamed.

**Joe controlled the submarine, turning in random directions, not wanting to admit to Julie that he was lost**







Julie clamped her hand over his mouth. "Calm down, stop talking and steer the boat towards the middle of the whale's mouth, under its blowhole. Now!" Julie spoke urgently.

Joe couldn't hide his confusion. A puzzled expression settled on his face but after years of knowing Julie, Joe realised it was better not to question her.

**"We are in a whale. A WHALE! We're going to die!"**

Joe steered the sub to the middle of the mouth. He was petrified. If this didn't work, they would be sucked down the whale's throat and into its stomach. Joe pulled a face.

"Okay, Joe. We need to rock the submarine to tickle the whale," Julie explained.

Joe bit his tongue in concentration. After a few seconds, he placed his hands firmly on the levers, pulling them in opposite directions, making the sub rock. The whale lurched, shaking its head. Joe's timing was perfect. The sub jumped up at the same time as the whale swallowed, causing the submarine to rise in the air.

The blowhole opened and water gushed out, taking the sub with it. Joe sped to the safety of the surface as quickly as he could. Julie raced to one of the walls of the sub and pulled a lever, sending up a flare.

Fish swam away, afraid of the submarine. Joe and Julie surfaced. The sound of spinning blades filled the air. Rescue! Joe stepped out of his chair, climbed a rope ladder and threw open the hatch at the top of the sub. He squinted and glanced up at the sky.

Someone threw a ladder out of the helicopter door. Joe waited for Julie to climb the ladder and followed closely behind. Three-quarters of the way up, Julie froze to the spot.

"Julie!" Joe said, shoving her. But she would not budge. After what seemed like an eternity, Julie spoke.

"Look, Joe!" Julie said, pointing to the sea.

Joe's head whipped around. He gazed in the direction she was pointing and saw...