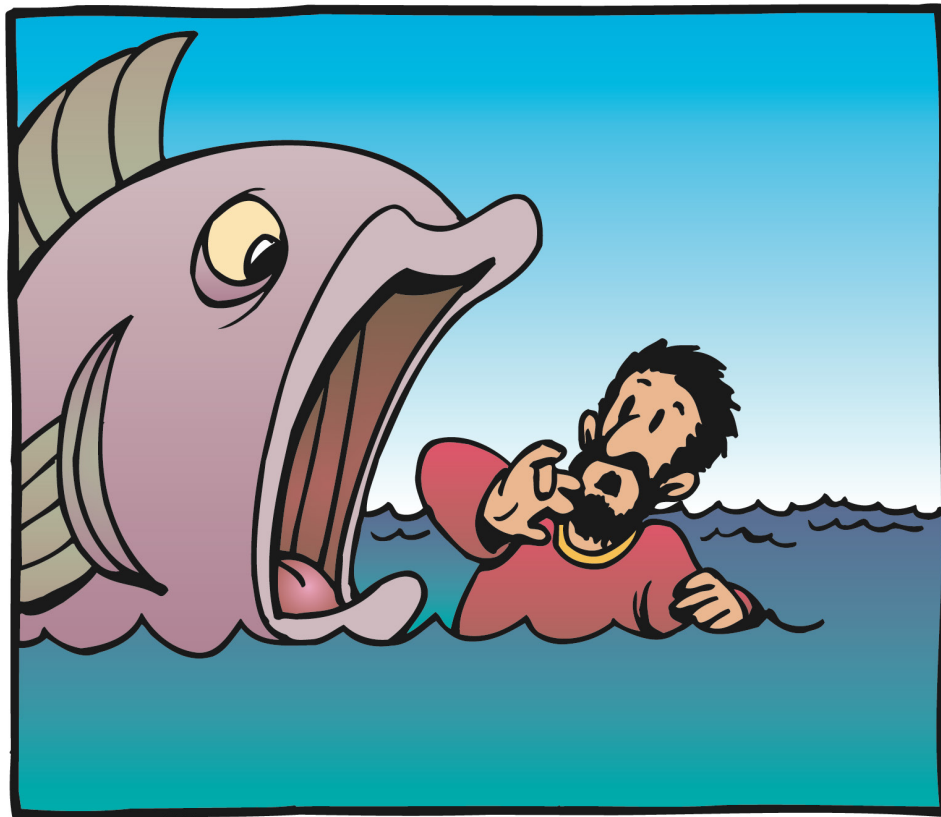


# GETTING 'REEL' WITH JONAH

**Children's Time**

Valerie Pavey





# Jonah, Would You Rather?

(Jonah 1)

Valerie Pavey

## Preparation:

Optional: Put the “Would You Rather” questions on PowerPoint slides for the audience to read as you ask the students to make a decision. Familiarize yourself with Jonah 1.

## Share:

*(Have the students line up in a single file line facing you. Instruct them to move left for first answer or right for second answer. Then move back into a straight line for the next question.)* How would you answer these questions?

1. Would you rather a ride in a car to school OR ride a scooter to school?
2. Would you rather ten friends to hang out with OR one good friend you can count on?
3. Would you rather lick the floor OR lick a garbage can?
4. Would you rather eat mashed potatoes OR eat mashed peas?
5. Would you rather fingers as long as your legs OR legs as short as your fingers?

Wow! You all are pretty quick at making decisions. I’ve got one more decision for you to make.

Do you think we make 350 decisions in a day or 35,000 decision a day?

The answer is we make 35,000\* decisions on average a day! This makes me feel so tired, because sometimes I just don’t like making decisions. Some decisions I really have to think about and others I make far too quickly. (\*PsychologyToday.com)

There’s a guy in the Bible who had an important would you rather decision to make. God told him to face his enemies and to tell them that they were living lives that displeased God. What decision do you think he made? Did he decide he would rather boldly go, or did he run in the opposite direction? *(Allow a few responses.)* Today we’re looking at Jonah. Here’s what you need to know from Jonah 1:

God was angry with the people of Nineveh. The people of Nineveh sinned against God (they made decisions that displeased God). God told Jonah, a Hebrew, to go to Nineveh and warn the people about His anger. Jonah was afraid of the Ninevites and *made the decision* to run away. Jonah *decided* to get on a boat and head in the opposite direction to Tarshish. A wild, frightening storm rose-up. The sailors feared for their lives, and Jonah was sleeping while all this was happening. The sailors woke him up. They cast lots to see who was responsible for the terrible storm. The lot fell to Jonah. He confessed to the men that it was his fault. He told them who he was and that he worshipped the God of heaven who made the sea and land. Jonah then *made another decision*. He told the sailors to throw him from the boat. When they did, the waters and wind calmed down. Then God sent a large fish to swallow Jonah. Jonah remained in the fish for three smelly days and three smelly nights.

Jonah was a prophet of God. That means God gave him messages to share with the people around him. Jonah knew God. But Jonah lacked faith in God and made decision after decision without asking God what he should do. Jonah decided not to trust God and ran away. Jonah needed to remember Philippians 4:13:

I can do everything through Christ who gives me strength.

When Jonah told the sailors that he worshipped God, I wonder if they believed him. His decision to run away shows that he didn't have faith that God would go with him to Nineveh. Because of his lack of faith, the boat he was sailing in could have been destroyed and the men on board along with it. Jonah realized his mistake and told the men to throw him from the boat and God rescued him – in the smelly belly of a fish!

We face many, many decisions in a day. Over 35,000 decisions! What kinds of difficult decisions do you sometimes have to make? *(Encourage students to share ideas. Ideas could include: eating with someone who is all alone at lunch time; inviting the kid who is always left out to play with you and your friends; to not cheat on a test when you don't know the answers; to clean your room when you don't feel like it; to let your little brother or sister hang out with you and your friends; to turn off your game when your mom asks you to, etc.)* Do we make all those decisions alone or do we pause and invite God to show us the right choices to make? Do we have faith to believe that God can help us to do everything through His strength? Or are we sometimes like Jonah and decide to do what is easiest or safest for us to do. Here's a command from God I want each of us to decide to remember:

And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him. Colossians 3:17

This week you're going to have decisions to make. You're going to have to face some "Would You Rather" situations. Some may seem easy like what to eat or wear, but others will be difficult. Remember God knows and loves you. He promises to be with you in all things. We can do anything if we do it in Jesus' name. So, have faith, trust in Him, decide that you would rather run to God and seek his guidance when making decisions and thank Him for giving you the strength to do the right thing. We need to decide: "Would you rather face life with God, or would you rather stumble along on your own?"

### **Prayer:**

Gather the students around you. Thank God for the great love that He has for each of us. Thank God that He knows each of us and wants the best for us. Invite God to be with you and to remind you that we can come to Him with any decision we face. Ask God to help you trust His faithfulness, to remember He keeps His promises made to you, and gives you the strength to do what is right.

### **Finish:**

Challenge the students to write their own "Would You Rather" questions and to try them out on their family or friends in the week ahead. Encourage them to remember to talk to God when facing difficult decisions. Remind the students of Colossians 3:17 and invite them to memorize it. (If possible, spend a few moments repeating the Bible verse and learn it with the students.)

### **Extra Activity:**

Print and distribute the activity sheet on the next page for each student to take away.



## JONAH, WOULD YOU RATHER?

### Would You Rather:

Eat pizza everyday or eat hamburgers everyday?

Have hair that drags on the ground or no hair at all?

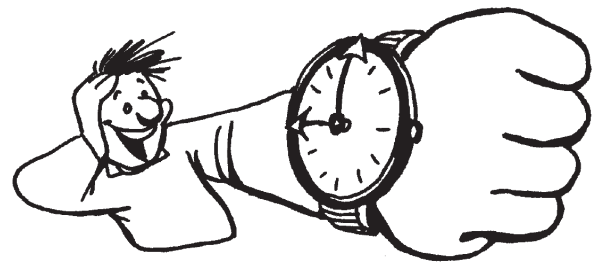
Be really good at a sport or really good playing video games?

Write your own "Would You Rather" questions:

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Make time this week to read **Jonah 1**.

Write or draw some decisions you are going to talk to God about this week.



### Memory Challenge:

And whatever you do, whether in word or deed,  
do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks  
to God the Father through Him.

Colossians 3:17



Why is a fish so easy to weigh?

Because it has its own scales.



# Jonah, God Hears You!

(Jonah 2)

Valerie Pavey

## Preparation:

Gather items together: a pin, Kleenex, jingle bell, paper clip, rock, pencil, spoon, and a plastic cup. Put items in a box or bag so the students cannot see them. Create a sign or a PowerPoint slide with the words “Name that Sound.” Have a surface that you can drop the items on, such as a table, and a way of blocking the students from seeing what you are dropping. Familiarize yourself with Jonah 2.

## Share:

*(Gather the students around you in such a way that they will not be able to see the items you are going to drop.)* When it’s very quiet, some people say, “It was so quiet, you could hear a pin drop.” Let’s hear how quiet that would be. *(Invite everyone to be very still and to try not to make a noise. Then drop a pin on a table.)* Wow! That didn’t make much noise. We had to really listen to hear it.

We’re going to play a listening game today. I’m going to drop some things behind this desk/sign/cloth, and I want you to raise your hand if you can guess what the object is.

*(Drop several different objects one at a time, and have the students listen carefully so they can identify them. Drop items such as Kleenex, jingle bell, paper clip, rock, pencil, spoon, plastic cup. Give the students a few minutes to identify what they think they heard drop.)*

We sure needed to listen very carefully to know what made those different sounds. God listens very carefully too. Last week we learned about Jonah and how he decided he would rather run away from God’s mission for him than go to Nineveh. He ended up in a huge storm on the sea and then was thrown overboard. What a scary time! But God rescued Jonah. He sent a large fish to swallow him, and he stayed there for three smelly days! Jonah had three days to think about his situation. Let’s see what Jonah had to say while he was there.

Listen while I read Jonah’s prayer from Jonah 2:1-10 (Read from the NIV version if possible.)

While sitting in the belly of the fish, Jonah had time to consider the decision he made to run away from Nineveh. He talked to God about the situation. He talked about the decisions he made. Jonah admitted he was wrong and decided to do what God asked. Jonah talked. God listened. He heard what Jonah had to say from deep inside the belly of the fish. God will hear you, too, when you talk to Him. Here is something I want you to remember from 1 John 5:14 (NIV):

“There is one thing we can be sure of when we come to God in prayer.  
If we ask anything in keeping with what he wants, He hears us.”

God knows each of our voices and is always ready to listen when we pray. God loves the times we talk with Him. It doesn't have to be quiet for God to hear us, either. God can always hear us, whether we whisper, shout, just talk or think we are too far away to be heard. I wonder, when are times we might whisper? (*Encourage responses.*) How about times we use a shouting voice? (*Encourage responses.*) And when do use just a talking voice? (*Encourage responses.*) So, when you talk to God this week what voice will you use? You can use any voice!

### **Prayer:**

Gather the students together to pray. Thank God that He listens to us when we talk with Him. Give thanks that we can approach him with whatever is on our mind and that we can speak with a whisper, a shout or just talking. Ask God to remind you to pray about anything we may be going through, excited about or thankful for.

### **Finish:**

Challenge your students to talk to God this week. Remind them He can hear them no matter where they are or what voice they use. He loves them. He will listen. (If possible, spend a few moments repeating the Bible verse and learn it with the students.) Remind your students of the words of 1 John 5:14:

“There is one thing we can be sure of when we come to God in prayer.  
If we ask anything in keeping with what he wants, He hears us.”

### **Extra Activity:**

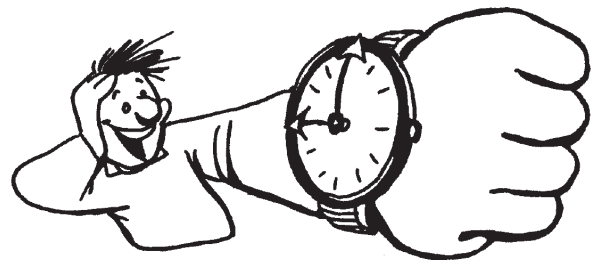
Print and distribute the activity sheet on the next page for each student to take away.



# JONAH, GOD HEARS YOU!

## God hears you when you talk to Him!

What voices can you use when you talk with Him?



Make time this week to read **Jonah 2**.



## Memory Challenge:

Use the number-alphabet code to decipher this week's memory challenge from 1 John 5:14.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M

14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26
N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z

20 8 5 18 5      9 19      15 14 5      23 5      3 1 14      2 5      19 21 18 5      15 6

23 8 5 14      23 5      3 15 13 5      20 15      7 15 4      9 14      16 18 1 25 5 18

9 6      23 5      1 19 11      1 14 25 20 8 9 14 7      9 14      11 5 5 16 9 14 7      23 9 20 8

23 8 1 20      8 5      23 1 14 20 19      8 5      8 5 1 18 19      21 19

Why are fish so smart?

Because they live in schools.





# Jonah, Turn Around!

(Jonah 3)

Valerie Pavey

## Preparation:

Gather photos of familiar street signs such as Yield, One Way, School Zone, Construction Zone, Speed Limit. Be sure to have pictures of a Stop and U-Turn signs. Put pictures onto PowerPoint slides or print out as large as you are able. Familiarize yourself with Jonah 3.

## Share:

I wonder how many of you came here today in a car. How about on a bus? Who walked here? Did anyone ride a bike or a scooter? (*Encourage responses.*) I wonder if any of you noticed any signs while travelling here today. I've brought some pictures of signs with me. Some of them I passed on my way today.

(*Show street signs one at a time to the students, pausing to discuss each one.*) Who knows what this sign is? What is it telling us to do if we are driving a car, a bike, a scooter, or a bus? (*Encourage the students to answer. Explain the road sign.*) Why do we have traffic signs? (*Encourage responses. They keep us safe; Drivers know what they should do at an intersection; To let us know which direction to travel, etc.*)

Which of these road signs helps us know what to do when we realize we have disobeyed God? (*Encourage the students to share their ideas.*) The Stop sign reminds us that we should stop doing what is wrong. The U-Turn sign tells us we should turn away from doing wrong and start doing what God says is right. Let's find out what happened to Jonah after he prayed inside that smelly fish for three days.

Read Jonah 3 to the students (NIRV if possible.)

After Jonah prayed and confessed to God that he had been disobedient, God sent him another message. Who remembers what God said to Jonah? (*Go to Nineveh and tell the message I give you.*) What did Jonah do this time? He obeyed. He turned around and headed to Nineveh. He shared God's message with the people. Who remembers what happened to the people of Nineveh? (*Encourage responses.*) That's right they listened to Jonah. They STOPPED and then made a U-TURN. God saw that the king of Nineveh and the people regretted their actions, stopped doing what was evil, so He did not destroy them.

When I think about a stop sign and a U-turn sign, I am reminded of a Bible verse that I want us to think about today and to remember. Listen to Psalm 119:59:

"I have thought about the way I live.  
And I have decided to follow your covenant laws."



This verse reminds us to choose to obey God's commands. Remember we all make the wrong decisions sometimes. Just like Jonah. Just like the people of Nineveh. But like the Ninevites when we disobey, we can tell God we are sorry and ask Him to help us in making a U-Turn – turning away from our wrong actions and doing what's right.

### **Prayer:**

Gather the students around you. Give thanks to God for allowing us to make U-TURNS when we recognize the wrong things we do and confess them to Him. Invite God to help us STOP and pray for His guidance when we are faced with a decision to follow Him or to turn away from Him. Invite God to help each of us to choose to live for Him.

### **Finish:**

Repeat the words of Psalm 119:59 with your students. Challenge them to memorize this verse over the coming week. Encourage the students to watch for street signs this week. Can they remember what the sign means for those who are driving? Can they remember what a Stop sign and a U-Turn mean for us as we choose to live for God?

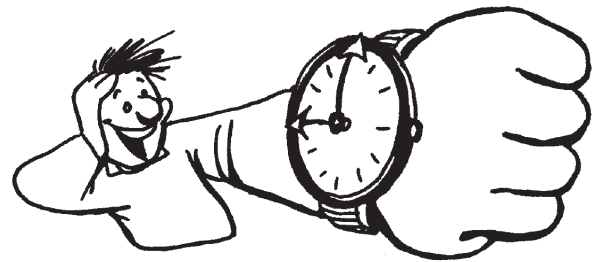
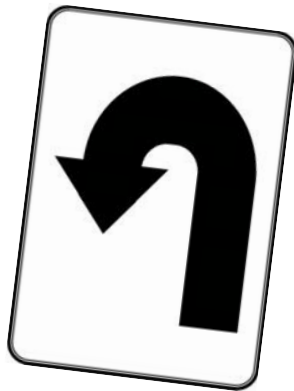
### **Extra Activity:**

Print and distribute the activity sheet on the next page for each student to take away.



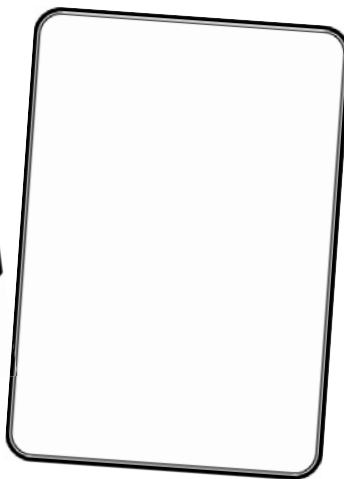
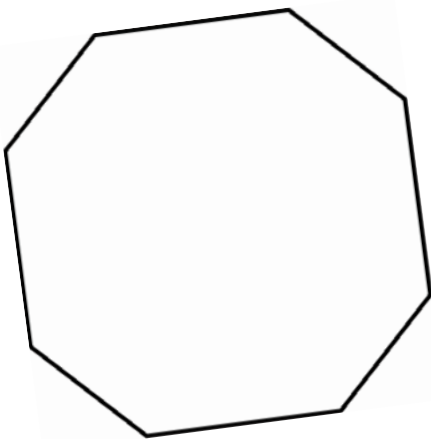
## JONAH, TURN AROUND!

**Have you seen these signs before?**  
What do these signs tell drivers to do?



Make time this week to read **Jonah 3**.

In the shapes below, write what the people of Nineveh did when Jonah told them that, "In 40 days Nineveh will be destroyed".



### Memory Challenge:

I have thought about the way I live.  
And I have decided to follow your  
covenant laws.

Psalm 119:59

When we are being disobedient towards  
God, we can **STOP** and make a **U-TURN**.  
To do that we need to:

**SNOSFEC** 1. \_\_\_\_\_ our  
wrong doing, and tell God we  
are sorry.

**CEIDDE** 2. \_\_\_\_\_ to  
ask God to help us make  
decisions that please Him.



Whats the difference between  
a fish and a piano?

You can't tuna fish!



# Jonah, Have Mercy!

(Jonah 4)

Valerie Pavey

## Preparation:

Have a tray with two or three glasses of water on it. Have a plant or a bucket nearby. Bring enough treats so that each student in your congregation will receive one treat (i.e., wrapped candy). Familiarize yourself with Jonah 4.

## Share:

Let's review what we've learned about Jonah. We learned that Jonah was a prophet. What does a prophet do? *(They share God's messages with people.)* When we met Jonah, what did God ask him to do? *(To go to Nineveh and tell the people God knows about their sin.)* What did he do instead? *(Ran away. Got on a boat headed to Tarshish.)* What happened when he ran away to Tarshish? *(Huge wind and waves threatened to destroy the boat.)* He told the sailors to throw him overboard. God had mercy on Jonah and saved him. How did God do that? That's right! God sent a fish to swallow Jonah up. Jonah was inside the smelly belly of a fish for three days. Do you remember what Jonah did while inside that fish? He prayed. For three days he talked to God. He admitted he was in trouble. He thanked God for saving Him. And he promised to do what God asked. So, God saved him. God sent Jonah another message. What did He say to Jonah? God told Jonah to go to Nineveh and say, "In forty days Nineveh will be destroyed". Did the people of Nineveh believe him? Did they change their ways? Yes, and Yes! They turned from their evil ways and God had mercy on them. He did not destroy them or their city.

Did you hear me say the word mercy? Do you know what it means? Mercy is showing more love or kindness to a person than they deserve or expect to receive. Let's try a little experiment. *(Gather the children around you and ask for a couple of volunteers. Pick 2 or 3 volunteers based on the number of glasses of water you have prepared.)* I'm going ask you a question. If you get the answer correct, I have a treat for you. If you get the answer wrong, I'm going to pour a glass of water over your head. Are you ready? I have a number between 1 and 20 in my head, what number is it? *(Give each of the three kids one chance to guess. If a child gets it correct, give them a candy. If the number is wrong share the following.)* Oh no, you got the number wrong. My number was \_\_\_! Do you know what is going to happen now? *(Let them respond.)* I should pour this water over your head, but I'm going to show you mercy instead. I'm not going to pour the water over you. *(Pour water from glass into plant or bucket.)* I'm going to give you a candy. *(Try this with your 2 or 3 volunteers.)* Mercy is giving you what you do not deserve – like candy instead of water over your head.

God showed Jonah mercy when he ran away. He saved Jonah's life. God showed the people of Nineveh mercy when they turned away from their evil ways. He saved their lives.

But Jonah now has another problem. Listen carefully as I read Jonah 4 (NirV is possible)

What was Jonah's response to God's mercy to the Ninevites? He was angry! The Ninevites were his enemy. He wanted them destroyed. He went and sat on a hill ready to watch God destroy the city, but instead God took pity on the people and let them live. When that happened, Jonah told God that he knew God would show mercy. He knew God was full of love and that He would take pity. He told God he would rather die than live.

As Jonah sat on the hill, having a temper tantrum, God reminded him that 120,000 people lived in Nineveh, and that he should be concerned for them. The story ends there. We don't know what Jonah did next. Did he extend mercy towards his enemies or did he walk away. Jonah needs to remember Colossians 3:13 (NirV):

"Put up with each other.  
Forgive the things you are holding against one another.  
Forgive, just as the Lord forgave you."

I wonder if any of us today are angry with someone. Maybe you are angry with a friend, a brother or sister, maybe your mom or dad. I want you to remember the story of Jonah and the mercy God showed to him and the people of Nineveh. God is calling each of us to forgive those who hurt us. To forgive those we have a grudge against. God is calling us to show mercy – to extend love and kindness where it is not deserved. We don't know if Jonah made that decision, but I invite you to do that today.

### **Prayer:**

Gather the students close to you. Thank God for His great love for us. Thank Him that He forgives us for the wrong we have done when we ask for forgiveness. Invite Him to help us show mercy to those we are angry or upset with. Thank God for the lessons we have learned from Jonah and ask Him to remind us of those lessons as we live our lives with Him. Be sensitive to students who may be struggling to extend mercy to someone. Invite them to come to another space to talk with you further.

### **Finish:**

Give each student a candy. Remind them to think about situations and people who they may need to forgive. Remind them that God has been merciful towards us and calls us to show mercy to others. Challenge the students to memorize Colossians 3:13.

### **Extra Activity:**

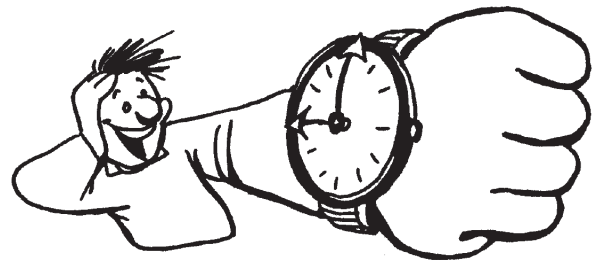
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## JONAH, HAVE MERCY!

### What does MERCY mean?

Mercy is showing more \_\_\_\_\_ or  
\_\_\_\_\_ to a person than they  
\_\_\_\_\_ or \_\_\_\_\_ to receive.



Make time this week to read **Jonah 4**.

**DESERVE**

**LOVE**

**KINDNESS**

**EXPECT**

Jonah did not want God to have mercy on the people of Nineveh. But God wants us to show mercy to others. Think of someone you need to forgive. Ask God to help you show mercy.



### Memory Challenge:

Put up with each other.

Forgive the things you are holding  
against one another.

Forgive, just as the Lord forgave you.

Colossians 3:13

Circle the words of the Memory Challenge as  
you find them in the word search.

F	O	R	G	I	V	E	Y	P	A	F
T	J	E	T	H	E	A	O	U	Q	O
S	U	H	U	O	Y	C	U	T	S	R
N	S	T	X	R	E	H	T	O	G	G
I	T	O	A	U	W	I	T	H	N	A
A	T	N	R	P	D	R	O	L	I	V
G	X	A	E	O	N	E	X	E	H	E
A	H	O	L	D	I	N	G	H	T	W
Z	E	V	I	G	R	O	F	T	A	S



Why didn't the crayfish share her toys?

She was too shell-fish!