

What Am I?

by Michael Sandler • illustrated by Erin Brown



Level **M/28**
Lexile® **580L**

Animal Fantasy

Look for the genre features noted below as you read this book. Use the features to help you understand the text.

The main character is an animal.

The setting is imaginary and does not exist in the real world.

Animal Fantasy

The events in the story could not happen in real life.

Animals in the story talk and act like people.

© Benchmark Education Company, LLC. All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopy, recording, or any information storage or retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publisher. 
Printed in Guangzhou, China. XXXX-XX-XXXX

LEXILE® is a trademark of MetaMetrics, Inc., and is registered in the United States and abroad.
E-books and additional digital resources available at benchmarkuniverse.com.

ISBN: 978-1-5322-8024-5

Toll-Free 1-877-236-2465
www.benchmarkeducation.com
www.benchmarkuniverse.com

BENCHMARK EDUCATION COMPANY
145 Huguenot Street • New Rochelle, NY • 10801

On Land

Kristap woke from her nap and yawned. Moving to a new home always made her tired. She looked around and saw birds flitting overhead. Then she smelled the ocean. *How can that be?* She wondered. *I'm not at the ocean. I'm in a zoo.*

Kristap followed the smell. Sure enough there were waves lapping onto the sand. It was just a pool, but it was large, blue, and clear like the ocean. Just then, an iguana climbed from the pool onto the sand.

The iguana slid into the sand next to Kristap. "Hi," he said, "my name is Majik. The water feels good, right?"



“Feels good?” Kristap said. “Are you kidding? I never swim in it. I only like to sip it or maybe dip my toe in it. What kind of iguana are you?”

“I’m a marine iguana,” said Majik proudly. “That’s what we do. Marine iguanas are the world’s only oceangoing lizards, and this new place is fantastic.”

The voice of a tour guide boomed overhead. A group of people stood on a platform looking down at Kristap, Majik, and the other animals.

“This is our new Galapagos Islands exhibit,” the tour guide said. “The animals live together in this nearly perfect recreation of their natural environment.”

“Can you understand her?” asked Majik.

“Nope. Humans are the one animal I just can’t talk to,” replied Kristap.

“Same here,” said Majik. “Want to walk and check everything out?”

Kristap nodded. As they walked, Majik stumbled on some stones.

“Ow! I stubbed my claw.”

Kristap eyed Majik’s claws. Kristap and Majik were both iguanas, but Majik’s claws were long, far longer than hers. And his tail was incredibly flat.

“What are you looking at?” Majik’s face was red. Kristap was unsure what to say, but finally she told the truth.



“Your claws and your tail ...” she said.
“They’re just so different from mine.”

“Well, flat tails help marine iguanas swim faster,” Majik said proudly, “and these long claws help me grip ocean rocks. You’d want them if you went swimming in the water.”

Kristap cringed. “Swimming? Never!”

“It’s safer than land,” said Majik as he tripped again, this time on a smooth, white stone. “Hey, this isn’t a rock.”



“It’s an egg!” said Kristap.

Majik moved closer. Kristap looked from side to side to see if any other animals had spotted the egg.

“An egg shouldn’t be out in the open. Someone will eat it!” said Majik. “You don’t eat eggs, do you?”

“No!” Kristap said. “Well, maybe if I was *really* hungry, but I get plenty of fruit and cactus here. We need to do something. Who do you think it belongs to?”



“Her?” said Majik, pointing to a giant tortoise shuffling past them.

Kristap scampered over, “You’re not missing an egg, are you?”

The tortoise craned her head and snorted. “Certainly not, and that little thing is too small to be mine.” She lumbered down to the beach.

“What about them?” Majik asked, pointing to a group of sea lions warming themselves on some rocks. The two iguanas headed over.

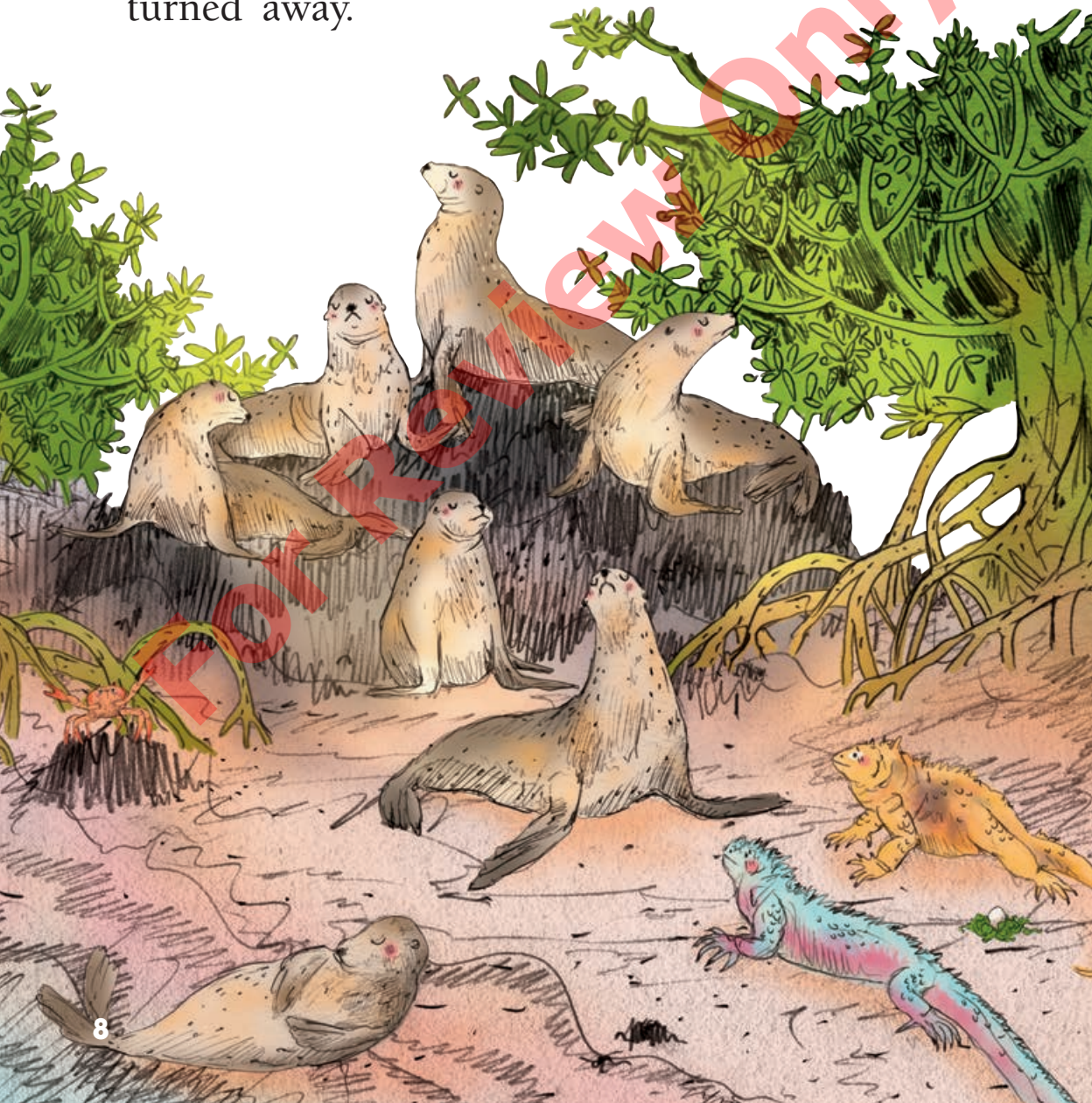
“Excuse me,” said Majik, “is anyone missing an egg?”

“We’re mammals,” said the sea lion nearest to Majik.

“Mamas? Yes, we want to find the mama!” said Majik.

“Mammals, silly, not mamas,” barked the sea lion. “Mammals don’t lay eggs. We give birth to our babies live. No one here is missing an egg.”

Kristap and Majik hung their heads and turned away.





“I guess we could try those rice rats,” said Majik. “There’s a whole group over by that cactus.” As soon as they approached, all the rats disappeared into holes in the ground.

“Anybody down there missing an egg?” he shouted into one of the holes. An answer echoed from the hole.

“We don’t do eggs. We’re mammals!”

“Mammals, again?” sighed Kristap and rolled her eyes.