mystery science

# Grades K-5
# Mini-Lesson: “Do wild animals ever dress up in costumes?”

---

# VIDEO TRANSCRIPT

---

## VIDEO 1

Hey, it's Jay. I wanted to show you one of my favorite costumes. A few years ago, my whole family went as a TV show, the Magic Schoolbus. Our dog even wore a chameleon costume, so he could look like Miss Frisal's pet chameleon, Liz. Someone named Monroe has a question about costumes. Let's call Monroe now.

**[Video Call]**

- Hi, Jay!

- Hey, Monroe!

- I have a question for you. Do wild animals effort yourself in costumes?

- Great question.

To figure out whether wild animals wear costumes, we might start by thinking about what a costume even is. After all, people wear different things and act different ways in all kinds of situations, depending on where we are, who we're with, and how we're feeling. For me, I think a costume is when you make yourself look like something or someone other than yourself. Or when you dress or act differently to bring out a part of yourself that you don't always show. For example, when I was a kid, I had a Batman costume I loved. Like any other kid, there were times when I felt ordinary, small, or scared. But when I dressed up as Batman, I felt strong,

brave, and special. It can also be fun to have others see you differently than they normally do. When I dressed up as Batman, some people didn't even notice it was me under the costume. People talked to me like I was a totally different person. Some of my friends even walked right by me at first. But what about animals? Do they have reasons to dress up in costumes like we do?

## VIDEO 2

Check this out. This is a clump of weeds and fuzz resting on the ocean floor. And now this clump of fuzz is going for a walk? Wait. That's not normal! Turns out, this is an animal called a decorator crab. This isn't the only look a decorator crab has either. Some decorator crabs look like this, or like this, or this—these are all decorated crabs—but they look so different, right? That's because they're wearing costumes. Decorator crabs have special hairs on their upper shelves that can stick to things sort of like Velcro. They use those sticky hairs to put the things around them like shells and underwater plants on their bodies. But why would an animal do this? How could it possibly help the decorator crab to stick stuff on the ocean floor to their bodies? Well, to answer that, let's play a game with some other animals in disguise. See if you can spot the animal here. Looks like a bunch of seaweed, right? But this part isn't seaweed. It's a sea dragon. Okay. One more. Can you spot it? It's a leopard hidden in the trees. The leopard's tan color and spots make it look like part of the tree dappled with spots of shade. Many animals use how they look to blend in with their surroundings. This is called camouflage. Camouflage makes an animal harder to spot. An animal can use camouflage to sneak up on an animal that they want to eat, or they can use camouflage to confuse animals who want to them. That's what this decorator crab is doing. Cover it in fuzz and weeds, a decorator crab doesn't look like a crab anymore. It just looks like part of the ocean floor. That keeps this crab safe from becoming

another animal's lunch. But as stylish as they are, decorator crabs aren't even the most complicated costumes under the sea. That honor goes to this creature, the mimic octopus. Take a look. This mimic octopus is flat and tan, gliding along the ocean floor. But here's the same animal, looking totally different. Now instead of flat and tan, it has red-brown stripes and arms that flare out. And here's the same mimic octopus. Now it's half buried itself in the sand, and its arms are long and sleek with dark stripes. Mimic octopuses don't add anything to change how they look like decorator crabs do. Instead, mimic octopuses can change the shape and color of their own bodies. Maybe you've heard of the word mimic before. It means to make yourself look or act exactly like someone That's just what a mimic octopus does. It mimics other animals. When a mimic octopus flattens and turns tan, it looks like a poisonous soulfish. When the mimic octopus flares its arms out, it looks like a spiny venomous lionfish. And when it hides in the sand with two stripey arms hanging out, it looks just like a venomous sea snake. A mimic octopus isn't particularly scary by itself. It doesn't have venom or spikes or tough armor, but the animals it mimics do. By making it look like these threatening creatures, a mimic octopus can convince other animals to stay away. So in summary, Do wild animals dress up as pirates and fairies and ghouls like people do? No. But some animals do disguise themselves as other animals or things to sneak up on animals they want to eat or to avoid getting eaten themselves.  So keep your eyes open for animals around you. What you see might not be what you get. That's all for this week's question. Thanks for asking Monroe.