Paper Plate Crabs
Ages 3–6

Objectives:

1. Students will demonstrate appreciation for different forms of artistic expression.
2. Students will demonstrate self-expression and creativity in a variety of forms and contexts, including play, visual arts, music, drama, and dance.
3. Students will demonstrate creativity, imagination, and inventiveness.
4. Students will recall information and use it for addressing new situations and problems.

"Paper Plate Crab Craft for Kids," Hunny I'm Home, accessed June 1, 2026, https://www.hunnyimhomediy.com/paper-plate-crab-craft/?utm_source=Pinterest&utm_medium=organic.

Materials:

- Copy of *A House for Hermit Crab* by Eric Carle (or virtual copy here)
- Paper plates (folded in half)
- Red paint, crayons, or markers
- Red pipe cleaners (cut in half, 2 halves per student)
- Red construction paper claw cut outs
- Googly eyes (optional)
- Safety scissors
- Glue sticks
- Clear tape
- Audio system
- Calm "ocean sounds" or instrumental background music

Directions:

- Tell students:
    - "When you come to the Gaillard Center, you will see *The Littlest Cove,* a performance about ocean discovery and coastal environments by Treehouse Shakers. In this show, you will experience movement, storytelling, and nature coming to life."
- Ask students:
    - What animals live near the ocean or coast?
    - Have you ever seen a crab at the beach?
- Explain:
    - "Crabs are small coastal animals that live in sandy beaches, marshes, and shallow water. They move sideways and have strong claws to help them dig and protect themselves."
    - Today we will read a story about crabs and create our very own crab crafts!
- Read *A House for Hermit Crab* by Eric Carle (or virtual copy here)
- Identify the words in the title and the author's name. Point to each word in the title as you read to encourage students' understanding of directionality.
- After reading the book, ask:
    - "Why did the crab need a new home?"
    - "Who did the crab meet along the way?"

Activity directions:

1. **Begin playing background music.**
2. **Prepare the crab body**
    a. Give each student a paper plate.
    b. Have students fold their paper plate in half to create a semicircle.
    c. **Option 1 (paint):**
        i. Students paint the plate red and allow it to dry.
    d. **Option 2 (no paint alternatives):**
        i. Students may trace the plate onto red construction paper, cut it out, and glue it onto the plate.
        ii. Students may color the paper plate with red markers or crayons.
3. **Add crab claws**

a. Explain: “Crabs use their legs to scurry across the sand and their claws to grab food.”
b. Provide pipe cleaners and construction paper claw cut outs.
c. Students create two claws by glueing or taping them to the inside of the plate.
d. Students tape the claw cut outs to the ends of the pipe cleaner.
e. Refold the paper plate and use glue or tape along the inside edges to seal the plate shut.

4. **Add details**
    a. Encourage students to draw or glue on googly eyes.
    b. Use markers to add a mouth or patterns.
    c. Ask students:
        i. “Is your crab happy, shy, or silly?”
        ii. “Where does your crab live?”
5. **Imagine and move**
    a. Gather students in an open space.
    b. Say: “Crabs move in a special way—they scurry side to side!”
    c. Have students:
        i. Hold their crab
        ii. Move sideways like a crab
        iii. Pretend to explore a cove or beach
    d. Ask:
        i. How does your crab move in the sand?
        ii. What happens when a wave comes in?
6. **Crab parade**
    a. Say, “Let’s explore the cove together!”
    b. Students move around the room:
        i. Slowly (calm water)
        ii. Quickly (waves coming in)

Conclusion:
Share with students: “In *The Littlest Cove, y*ou will see how movement, nature, and imagination come together to tell a story about coastal life. Today, you created your own crab and explored how animals move and live in a coastal environment.

SC Early Learning Standards:

- Goal CD-4: Children demonstrate appreciation for different forms of artistic expression.
- Goal CD-5: Children demonstrate self-expression and creativity in a variety of forms and contexts, including play, visual arts, music, drama, and dance.
- Goal CD-10: Children observe and describe characteristics of living things and the physical world.
- Goal APL-4: Children demonstrate creativity, imagination, and inventiveness.
- Goal LDC-8: Children develop interest in books and motivation to read.
    - Goal LDC-8o: Listen to and discuss increasingly complex storybooks, information books, and poetry.
- Goal LDC-9: Children develop book knowledge and print awareness.
    - Goal LDC-9o: Demonstrate an understanding of some basic print conventions (the concept of what a letter is, the concept of words, directionality of print).
- VA.CR NH.2: I can use and combine materials, techniques, and processes to make art.
- VA.CR NM.1.2: I can combine several elements of art to construct 2D or 3D artwork.
- ELA.AOR.1: Evaluate and critique key literary elements that enhance and deepen meaning within and across texts.