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Super Powers That Rival Those of Batman

In the waters of the Chesapeake Bay there lives a superhero. Not many people see it as a superhero, but I know it is. I have studied its super powers. This superhero is small and has two shiny shells connected by a hinge. It is The Eastern Oyster! Now, don't judge by the name; this animal is very powerful despite its small size and appearance. Its secret identity is not Bruce Wayne, Clark Kent, or any such name. It has a blood curdling name, a magnificent name! It is called...Oops, I forgot it's a secret, so you can't tell anyone except your teacher, some friends, your family, a scientist or two, or your dog Max. Just be smart about who you tell. Its secret identity is *Crassostrea Virginica*. It's part of the Ostredae family. I will tell you about this superhero, its super powers, and the super villains that threaten it.

One of these superpowers is water filtration. WOOSH! An adult Eastern Oyster can filter 50 gallons of water a day! They become adults at the age of one year, and they can live up to 20 years. Now let's think. An oyster can filter 50 gallons of water a day, and they live 20 years. So, that means they can filter about 346,750 gallons of water in all of its 19 years of adult life. That's more than I thought! The average pool holds about 20,000 gallons of water. That means an oyster can filter about 17 pools throughout its lifetime.

If that isn't enough to illustrate how grand this superpower is, listen to this. The average person drinks approximately a gallon of water a day. If they reach the age of 82 they will have drunk about 30,000 gallons of water. Our superhero can filter more water in 19 years than a

human can drink in 82 years! When the oysters filter water, they are helping animals and people have clean water to drink, bathe with, and water plants.

Now let's see how the supervillains mess up the oysters mission at purifying water. These supervillains are some of us. DUN DUN DUNNN! The Polluter comes with his boat that leaks oil and throws trash on land and in the waters of the ocean. When the rain comes, it carries the trash into the water. When chemicals enter the water, the oysters can get sick and eventually die.

Another one of *Crassostrea Virginica*'s superpowers happens when they come together. KABOOM! They create a fortress-like structure called an Oyster Reef. It is capable of growing about 11 centimeters a day diagonally. WOW!! That is fast! This creates a home for many big and small animals. It is also used as a pit stop for migrating animals to take a rest. But then the Over Harvester, another supervillain, comes, and turns the order to disorder. The Oyster Reef is an easier target for the Over Harvesters. They can take a bunch of oysters at a time. This leaves many animals without homes, unprotected, and open to predators.

To not let the oyster get lost in history, let's take action! Let's become The Eastern Oyster's sidekick. YAY! Let's work alongside the oyster to help it finish its mission of saving the Chesapeake Bay. Let's enjoy the benefits of *Crassostrea Virginica*'s super powers, while we work side by side. You might even become a founder of a sidekick organization like TOGA or the CBF. You'll turn out much better than Batman, and Robin!