

# MOLLUSCA

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AMPHINEURA

•CAUDOFOVEATA

•SOLENOGASTRES

•POLYPLACOPHORA

GASTROPODA

MONOPLACOPHORA

BIVALVIA

SCAPHOPODA

CEPHALOPODA

Clams are a very diverse group of bivalves in that there is notable variation in the shape, size, thickness, colour and degree of sculpturing of the shell from one species to the next. The one feature that all clams have in common is that they burrow into the seabed. Consequently, both shell and body display modifications necessary for this type of existence. The quahog clam *M. mercenaria* has a thick, triangular shell. It is grey or brown with a sculpturing of numerous shallow concentric rings that run around the shell, parallel to the hinge.

Annual rings are clearly visible on the shell exterior and thus ageing in this species, and indeed in many of the other commercially important clam species, is an easy task. The inside of the shell is glossy white, often with bluish purple tints. It was this feature that made them valued as currency in earlier times (Dore 1991). There are three conspicuous teeth on each valve and each tooth fits into a corresponding socket on the opposing valve. This ensures an intimate fit when the valves are closed.

The shell interior is marked by an anterior and posterior adductor muscle scar, a distinct pallial line and a short pallial sinus – the indentation indicating the position of the retracted siphons in the closed shell. The depth of the pallial sinus is a very reliable indicator of the length of the siphons, and thus the burrowing depth of a particular clam species.

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