The Scenario
A red fish silhouette called ‘the fortune teller fish’ is taken out of its envelope and placed on the palm of a person’s hand. Magically, it begins to move and performs a variety of gyrations. By observing its behaviour and reading the ‘fortune scale’ on the back of the envelope, a person can tell their own ‘fortune’

Open-Ended Inquiry Questions
What causes the Fortune Teller Fish to move?
Can you make it behave differently?

Process Skill(s)
Observation, predicting, hypothesizing, selecting, experimenting, analyzing, discussing, reporting

Instructions
If you are not familiar with these novelties, here’s what they do. You put the thin cello-type fish in your hand, and depending upon how the fish moves or curls (or doesn’t) determines your fortune, which is printed on the back of the tissue envelope. Some experts believe that these Fortune Teller Fish work as they react to body heat in one’s hand. However others in the scientific community conclude that they are made of long-strand polymers that grab water molecules causing them to curl. Whatever the method, this is certainly a classic penny toy.

For an explanation of how the Fortune Teller fish works see:
http://chemistry.about.com/od/howthingswork/f/fortune-teller-fish.htm
shortened URL: http://goo.gl/vTHQn

Trivia: A Fortune Teller Fish was the title and subject of the 2009 Academy Award Nominated Short Film “Miracle Fish.”

Curriculum Connections
The Fortune Teller fish is a great way to introduce problem solving to students at any grade level. As a guided inquiry, the teacher introduces the problem and question and guides students to identify variables to be tested based on their hypotheses.