

Shark Frenzy by J.E. Fison – Teachers' Notes

Shark Frenzy is a fast-paced and often hilarious story that will grab young readers and hold them from the first page to the last. The self deprecating narrator, Jack Wilde, has a voice that will appeal to readers. There is something very down to earth about this boy who loves adventure but isn't always totally sure if he is really brave enough to handle it. The scrapes that he gets into will remind young readers of their own adventures, imagined and otherwise. The holiday setting will provide a welcome bit of escape for students working their way through a long winter term.

Teaching the book

Shark Frenzy is a story that might remind readers of Enid Blyton's *Secret Seven*, *Famous Five*, and *Adventurous Four* series. The story takes place in during a family holiday at the aptly named Hazard River. The narrator Jack Wilde relates the story in a humorous manner. The other characters, his little brother Ben, and his two friends, Lachlan and Mimi, are well drawn and distinctive characters. Like Blyton's stories, the plot revolves around a mystery. The children investigate and eventually foil the bad guys. But the writer, J.E. Fison, has updated the bad guys. Blyton's German spies have been replaced by environmental criminals. In this story, grey nurse sharks are being mutilated for their fins and left to die in a cruel manner. The fact that this is taking place in a marine park makes the crime even more despicable. Thus, the story will work well in a cross curricular unit involving topics related to the environment, animal cruelty, or preservation. Fison provides interesting information on the sharks and the Queensland environment. Throughout the book, there are points where it would make sense to research further or develop some kind of project based around the sea life or the issues presented.

But it is also a book that will work well for the more reluctant readers in the class. It is written in a fresh, vibrant, and accessible manner. The humour and pace mean that it would be winner if read aloud to the class. But it might also be a good one to hand to a particular student in a quiet reading period.

Facts

The grey nurse shark is one of Australia's most endangered marine species. They were hunted almost to extinction in the 1960's because people wrongly believed they were man-eaters. It is estimated that there are fewer than 500 left along Australia's east coast. The grey nurse is not considered dangerous to people. Their teeth are designed to catch small prey such as fish, squid and crustaceans.

Grey nurse sharks are threatened by fishermen accidentally catching them and **shark finning**. Shark finning, where the shark's fins are cut off (often while they are alive) and the carcass is thrown overboard, is banned in Australia. Sharks without fins drown or die of starvation. If things don't change, the grey nurse shark could be extinct within 40 years.

Before Reading

Class discussion

What do you do during the holidays?

Have you ever had a real adventure?

What do you know about sharks?

Have you ever read a book or seen a movie or a TV show about sharks? How did it portray them?

What are the most popular kinds of stories about sharks? Why?

The title of the book is *Shark Frenzy*. What do you think the book is about?

What does the cover tell us about the book?

While reading

Comprehension Questions

What deal does Jack make with the sharks?

What is Lachlan doing when he is introduced by Jack in chapter 1?

Who finds the shark?

Describe the joke Lachlan plays on Jack.

What is the difference between Jack's view of Hazard River and that of his parents?

Why is Lachlan the 'King of Hazard River'?

Who does Lachlan think has killed the shark?

What is the other suspect?

What does Ben want to do with the Giant Squid?

How do the boys get to Pelican Island? Why do they go?

How does Jack feel when he is driving the boat?

What do they find on the island?

What happens to Ben? What does Jack do?

How does Ben change the story?

What does Jack think of Mimi? Why?

Where do the children find the word 'Killer'?

What do they find while they are playing cricket?

What does Mimi say about pirates?

Why do they go to Flat Rock Island?

What is Ben's reaction to the notion of a 'marine park'?

What happens when they 'cross the bar'? Why?

What is the purpose of the marine park?

What does Jack observe when he spies on the fishermen?

What is Mimi's explanation?

Describe the fishermen's shack. What do they find there?

How does the story end?

After reading:

The characters

Make a character chart like the following:

Character	Description	Quote
Jack Wilde		
Ben Wilde		
Lachlan Master		
Mimi Fairweather		

Discussion Questions:

How are Jack and Lachlan different? How are they similar?

Describe Jack's relationship with Ben.

How do Jack's feelings about Mimi change in the course of the story?

Are the four characters a good team? Why or why not?

Why has the writer chosen Jack to narrate the story?

The story

Discussion

Most stories are based on a problem. What is the problem in *Shark Frenzy*? How is it solved?

Activities on Story

In small groups decide on five important turning points in the story. Find a key quote to support each of your examples. Share them with the rest of the class.

Create a timeline of the events in the story

In small groups decide which part of the book is the most exciting and why. Share your findings with the other groups. Are there any scenes that stand out? Why?

Activities - KLA Specific

SOSE Activities

Marine Parks

Research Marine Parks and answer the following questions:

How many marine parks are there in Australia?

When and why were they established?

How are they policed?

Choose one and, in small groups, prepare a short talk that outlines the size of the park, its purpose, and the sea life found there. Use a map to show the other class members where it is in Australia.

Great Barrier Reef Marine Park

Create a poster for visitors to Great Barrier Reef Marine Park. The poster should be both informative and attractive. Think about what information will appear on the poster and what images you will use. Consider the purpose of the poster. What is the best way to introduce the park to visitors, especially those from overseas?

Illegal Fishing

Illegal fishing remains a serious problem. Research the issue and find an example of a sea creature that is illegally fished. Share your findings with the class and be sure to answer the following. Why do people fish illegally? Why do they want the sea creature you have chosen? Is it a culinary speciality? Why is it so prized? How much money do people make? What are the punishments for fishing this particular creature?

Science Activities

Sharks

There are two kinds of sharks mentioned in the book, the bull shark and the nurse shark. Research one of these to determine the following:

Where are they found in Australia and overseas?

What do they eat?

How big are they?

Do they have predators?

Are they a threatened species? Why? How are they being protected?

Share your findings with a partner who researched the other type of shark.

A debate on Sharks:

Sharks are very controversial creatures. In *Shark Frenzy*, Jack considers the idea that the ‘only good shark is a dead shark’ briefly before succumbing to Mimi’s ‘web of life’ argument. Divide into two teams with three members each and debate the following proposition:

“Sharks are too dangerous to be protected”

One side will agree and the other will disagree. The first speakers will introduce the main arguments. The second speakers will respond to the first speakers' points and introduce further arguments. The third speaker will address the other sides' arguments and summarize their own main points. The rest of the class will vote to determine the winning team.

Media Activities

Write a newspaper article about the capture of the illegal fisherman and the role of the kids.

Write an editorial about illegal fishing in the Hazard River area with reference to the Shark Fin incident.

Draw a cartoon for the editorial page on the issue.

Write a letter to the editor defending the fishermen.

The film of the book:

In small groups, put together a proposal for a film version of Shark Frenzy. Include the following:

A brief outline of the story

A storyboard to show how you will film the story

Suggestions for casting. Who will play the various parts?

Suggestions for a soundtrack. What songs could be featured?

A poster advertising the film

Propose the film to your classmates in a presentation

Drama Activity

In small groups of four, choose one scene to present to the class. You will need to write a script and consider the props and costumes you will need.

English Activities

Rewrite one of the key scenes from the point of view of one of the other characters.

Write a letter from Mimi to one of her friends overseas describing the events in the novel.

Have you ever had an adventure on a holiday? Write it up and read to the other members of a small group.

Write a poem called, "Shark".

Write a review of *Shark Frenzy*. Be sure to give a brief outline of the story and some idea of the kind of reader that might enjoy the story. Post your review somewhere in the classroom. Read the other reviews. Do most people in the class agree on the book?

Research the writer, J.E. Fison. What can you find out about the author in the book itself? What can you find out on line? Has the author written other books? Do they sound similar? Are there any in your classroom or school library?

Have you read other adventure stories involving children? Write about one of them. How was it similar to *Shark Frenzy*? How was it different?