

Shark Beneath the Reef
Critical Reading and Writing Activities

Critical Reading and Writing Activities

Teachers - Following are several ideas of activities designed to improve critical reading skills and writing skills. Many of these activities serve to give a better understanding of the ecological, social, and political dilemmas presented in *Maggie's Earth Adventures* and *Shark Beneath the Reef*. Choose activities that support your goals and will enhance the curriculum in your classroom. Many of these questions could also serve as discussion questions for the class or small groups. Before reading, have students begin the KWL chart, "About Sharks."

Chapter 1 Ideas

1. Write a paragraph explaining why you think the chapter is titled, "A Round Black Eye." Be sure to tell what you think the eye is.
2. Find where you think Loreto is located on a map or globe based on the description in the book. Sketch your own map of the region. The author talks about the Sea of Cortes. Find out where this is located.
3. Why does Tomás believe the shark is a whale shark? Draw a picture for a zoology book and write a descriptive caption of a whale shark.
4. How do Tomás's Mexican heritage and Spanish heritage come together to form his personality and influence his thoughts? Prepare a chart to show the differences and likenesses between the two cultures.
5. Count the number of times in the first chapter that Tomás thinks about the conflict between good and evil. Write down three examples of his thoughts on

this conflict.

6. Pretend you are a shark fisherman. Write a letter to your friend telling why it is dangerous work.
7. Find three examples from this chapter to support the conclusion that Tomás is a daydreamer.
8. Start to make a pack of "trading cards" depicting various animals described in the book. Draw a picture of the animal and write a short factual paragraph. You may want to look up more information to include on your cards in a reference book such as typical adult size and common habitat. Begin by making trading cards for the following animals: quetzal bird, sanderling, hammerhead shark, whale shark, and grebe.

Chapter 2 Ideas

1. Write a letter to an official in the Mexican government explaining why the Japanese fishing boats should not be allowed off the coast of Loreto.
2. Draw a picture of Tomás's climb up the volcano. Use the descriptions of the plant life that Jean Craighead George gives in the chapter to help you imagine what you should draw.
3. Add the following to your trading card pack: pelican, verdin, osprey, and turkey vulture.

4. Tomás thinks that "underwater the rocks of Coronados are an Eden." Write a paragraph explaining what you think this means.
5. Pretend you are Tomás and write a diary entry telling how you felt when you looked into the empty crater.

Chapter 3 Ideas

1. Add these animals to your trading card pack: hermit crab, damselfish, parrot fish, and jewfish.
2. Make a shadow box of the world that Tomás sees when he is diving. Choose two or three fish to highlight and describe them in a "Guidebook to the Reef."
3. Tell a short story about being caught in a net from the point of view of a shark.

Chapter 4 Ideas

1. Pretend you are showing tourists around the village of Loreto. Write a speech to give them when you take them to see the mission bell tower.
2. Do you think that Tomás likes Griselda? Write a paragraph supporting your conclusion.
3. Use the description of Loreto given in Chapter 4 and with a group of friends, make a mural showing what the village of Loreto looked like.

4. Pretend you are Tomás's mother, Francisca. Write a diary entry telling how you feel about your son.
5. Make a menu showing the food that Tomás's family serves for dinner in Chapter 4. Explain each dish with a sentence or two.
6. Do you think Tomás will decide to become a fisherman or continue with his schooling? Make a prediction and support it using the information you have read.

Chapter 5 Ideas

1. Add the caracara to your trading card pack.
2. Make a chart showing the differences between your morning routine and that of Tomás. Then use the chart to write a comparative paragraph.
3. Do you have a dog? If so, make a chart to compare the life of your dog to the life of the dogs of Loreto. Write a paragraph that illustrates the likenesses and differences. Be sure to write a good topic sentence and clincher sentence!
4. On a large piece of paper, draw a "bird's eye" view of Victorio's fishing camp.
5. Write a paragraph supporting this statement: *Stereolandia* and the *palapa* are symbols for the United States and Mexico.

6. Pretend you are Griselda. Write a letter to a friend in Mexico City telling her about your life in Loreto. You may want to mention Tomás!

Chapter 6 Ideas

1. Write a speech for Ramon to give to the crowd at the beach explaining why it was so important for the Japanese fishing boats to leave the local waters. Remember to draw upon Ramon's past experiences.
2. Write a conversation between José's father, Emiliano Morellos and Tomás's uncle Miguel about the different types of nets the two families use. This may turn into an argument!
3. In this chapter there is a huge celebration. This was not planned but just happened because the people were relieved and happy. Have you ever been to a celebration like that? Write a paragraph telling about it.

Chapter 7 Ideas

1. Write an editorial for a Mexican newspaper expressing your views on the government based on its description in this chapter. Use some reference materials to determine if this is an accurate portrayal of today's Mexico.
2. Explain why you think Tomás compared the government to Tezcatlipocas and the Mexican families and Lady of Guadalupe to Quetzalcoatl.

3. Pretend you are Uncle Diaz and tell a fantastic story about one of your diving experiences.
4. Paint a picture of the undersea world that Tomás sees.
5. Look again at the verbs that Jean Craighead George uses to describe the movement of the fish Tomás observes on the reef. Think of as many descriptive verbs as you can and write sentences about animals or people you know using these verbs.
6. Add the following to your collection of trading cards: snowy egret, angelfish, yellow jack, oyster, sun star, needlefish, sea urchin, asteroid, giant manta, and grouper.

Chapter 8 Ideas

1. Pretend you are a news announcer and tape a news clip about the warnings from the fish and the bird that Tomás misses in his haste to catch the whale shark and achieve glory.
2. What conversation might have gone on between Zoro and Jesús as they left the island? What do you suppose they said about the *oficiales*? What do you think they said about Tomás? Write a script that contains this discussion.
3. Make a sketch or draw a mural with a friend to represent the ocean food chain. Be sure to read carefully to find out about the enemy of large creatures such as sharks and whales.

4. Add these animals to your trading card pack: spiny lobster, annelid, two-spotted octopus, and sanderling.

Chapter 9 Ideas

1. Pretend you are Tomás and write a journal entry telling how you felt when the shark broke free.
2. This chapter deals with disappointment. Have you ever felt great disappointment? Write a paragraph describing this time and tell how you felt.
3. Write a paragraph describing all the things that seemed to be working against the Torreses. Talk about rich versus poor in your paragraph.
4. Tomás felt the life of a fisherman had a spiritual dimension to it. Can you understand this feeling? If so, write a paragraph explaining it.
5. If you worked for the tourism bureau what kind of a brochure would you make to advertise Loreto? See if you can make one.
6. Write a conversation that might have taken place between Ramon and Miguel after Tomás falls asleep. Remember Ramon's words to Tomás at the close of this chapter. Also keep in mind that Miguel had advised Tomás to become a fisherman.
7. Add the plover and red snapper to your trading card pack.

Chapter 10 Ideas

1. Tomás feels great pleasure in the gift he plans to give his grandfather - the whale shark. He feels this will preserve their way of life. Have you ever felt great excitement about a gift you planned to give? Write a paragraph telling about that gift and time.
2. Tomás felt the pageant showed the battle between good and evil. Have you ever seen something that reminded you of this kind of battle? Write a paragraph telling about it.
3. Juan Fuertes reminds Tomás of three great scientists he had enjoyed studying: Charles Darwin, Louis Pasteur, and Madame Curie. Find out more about one of these scientists and write a paragraph about why they are important.

Chapter 11 Ideas

1. Pretend you are Tomás and make a list of the reasons you should become a fisherman and the reasons you should go to high school.
2. Have you ever had to make a difficult decision? Write a letter to Tomás telling him about your choices and what you did.
3. Make a chart comparing the way the Torres family celebrates Christmas and the way your family celebrates a major holiday.

4. Add the sea hare, Sierra mackerel, porcupine fish, oriole, and sand dollar to your trading card deck.

Chapter 12 Ideas

1. Use some reference books to find out more about Benito Juarez. Choose one of the following activities:
 - a) Write a speech that he might have given.
 - b) Tell a story about him visiting Loreto today. How would he react? What would he do?
 - c) Make your own statue of him using clay. Write an inscription for the base of this statue.
 - d) Make a chart comparing him to a leader of today.
2. With a friend, pretend you are Tomás's mother at a job interview. What would an interviewer ask Francisca? Tape this interview and show it to the class.
3. Make a shadow box of the scene that Tomás sees when he is wearing the diving mask.
4. Have you ever been snorkeling or scuba diving? If so, write a paragraph telling about your adventures.
5. Add the following to your trading card deck: anemones, leather bass, barberfish, smoothtail manta rays, puffer, benthic fish, Moorish idol, zebra moray eel, flag cabrilla, and spotted sand bass.

Chapter 13 Ideas

1. Count the times the struggle between good and evil is mentioned in this chapter. Write a few sentences telling what you think this means.
2. Find the two times the vultures are mentioned in this chapter. Discuss with a friend how the author's talking about the vultures made you feel.
3. Imagine a conversation between Zoro and Jesús as they motored off. Write a script for a little play of this scene. Act out this scene for your class.
4. Pretend you are Miguel and write a diary entry telling about this day.
5. Write a paragraph about how Tomás's dream about the life of a fisherman is different from the real life of a fisherman.

Chapter 14 Ideas

1. Tell a story about the storm from the point of view of an ocotillo.
2. Make a postcard of the thatch palm. Write a few sentences about why this is important to the local people.
3. Do you agree with Ramon's decision about paying the rent to the *oficiales*? Tell why or why not.

4. Find out more about sea lions. Make a statue of a sea lion and write a story telling what your sea lion can do. Give it a name and personality!
5. Why do you think Ramon did not come to help Miguel pack up the family's belongings from the island? If you were Ramon at home what would you be thinking and doing? Write a narrative about it. You can do this from the perspective of Ramon, Francisca, or Dolores.
6. If you were Miguel would you have charged tourists to see Pebbles at play? Write a few sentences explaining your decision.
7. Add the sea lion to your trading card pack.

Chapter 15 Ideas

1. Tomás and Miguel had to carry the gear from the island past the people of Loreto. Have you ever had to do something you didn't want to do? Write a narrative telling about this time and how you felt.
2. Reread Juan Fuertes definition of a teacher. Has anyone ever led you to think about something? Tell about that time.
3. Have you ever realized that you must look at something differently? Write about how you viewed the situation in the past and how you look at the situation now.

Culminating Activities

1. Many things changed for Tomás during this book. In fact, the name of the Sea of Cortes has even changed! Write about why you think so many things changed. Be sure to think about the influence the Japanese fishing industry and tourism had.
2. Write an editorial for a newspaper describing the importance of the ocean food chain and what you think people should do about it.
3. Imagine that it is twenty five years from when this book is set. Tomás and José meet and tell each other about their present lives. Keep in mind that our past influences us in the future. Write a script for Tomás and José as they talk about the time in their lives when they each made important decisions and how the events in the book influenced their lives. Imagine what each boy has accomplished! With other students, video tape this conversation and show it to the class.