

THE GREAT WHITE MAN-EATING SHARK

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A Cautionary Tale

by Margaret Mahy, ill. by Jonathan Allen (Dial)

Themes: Greed, Problem-Solving Techniques, Sharks

Grade Level: K – 5

Running time: 10 minutes

SUMMARY

THE GREAT WHITE MAN-EATING SHARK – A CAUTIONARY TALE is about a boy named Norvin, who would make a fine actor, but, in fact, has a very plain face that looks much like a shark. Norvin spends his days swimming in the crowded cove, moving through the water like a silver arrow, and bumping into other swimmers. One day Norvin decides that he would like to have the cove to himself. He ties a fin onto his back and moves through the water wearing his best shark look to frighten the other swimmers. Eventually, Norvin frightens everyone out of the water and swims to his heart's content. As the story unfolds, Norvin swims out of sight and eventually the swimmers return to the water. Again, Norvin, who does not like sharing the water, returns with the fin, and scares everyone away. This plan works quite well for Norvin until one day, a female shark appears and threatens to devour Norvin if he refuses to marry her. A frightened Norvin shoots through the water like a silver arrow and onto the beach. At last, Norvin's prank is revealed to the other swimmers.

The end of the story finds the swimmers returning to the water, with a shark net protecting them from the real shark beyond. Norvin decides to stay on the beach, having come a bit too close to being devoured by a shark in love.

OBJECTIVES

- Children will learn about greed
- Children will investigate problem-solving techniques
- Children will study sharks

BEFORE VIEWING ACTIVITIES

Share the book THE GREAT WHITE MAN-EATING

SHARK – A CAUTIONARY TALE with children. Then ask:

- How did you feel about Norvin in the story?

- How many liked him? Didn't like him? Felt sorry for him? Thought he was smart, silly, wimpy, brave, etc.?

Talk with children about their own swimming experiences.

Ask:

- How did you learn to swim?
- Where do you go swimming?

Ask children to think about something they may have wanted so badly that they would do almost anything to get it. Then ask:

- What was this "something?"
- When you finally had it, was it as wonderful as you imagined?
- After having this "something" for a while, did you want it as much as you did before?
- Did it seem as important?

Provide children with illustrations and photographs of sharks to examine. Ask:

- What are the special body parts of the shark?
- What kinds of things can sharks do that other animals cannot?
- Where do you think you might find sharks?
- Why are they dangerous?

AFTER VIEWING ACTIVITIES

Have children identify Norvin's problem and the way he chose to solve his problem in the story. Then ask:

- What other things might Norvin have done in order to have some time alone in the water?
- Was the way Norvin chose to solve his problem a good way? Why? Why not?

Give children several of the following hypothetical situations involving problems. See how many different solutions to the problems children can come up with.

- You're about to leave for a camping trip and you can't find your backpack. What can you do?
- One of your friends wants you to go to the movies with her. Another friend is having a birthday on the same day. You want to be with both friends. What can you do?

Borrow some non-fiction books from the library or get a chart about sharks. Show the children the different sharks, what they eat, talk about their teeth, etc.

Tell the children the story of "The Boy Who Cried Wolf" how the first few times he claimed he saw a wolf eating the children, how he alarmed the adults, how the adults were irritated, and how they did not listen the last time when a real wolf came. Have the children make up their own girl or boy who cried wolf stories.

Provide props that children can use to perform simple dramas. Challenge children to use the props to represent different animals and people. See how effective children can be in their dramatizations without using language, similar to the way Norvin used movement and facial expressions in the film to represent a shark.

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