

Yo, Shark Bait!

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Synopsis

Rory has always loved fishing. He loves getting out on the water and enjoys the thrill of reeling in a really big fish. But everything changes when Rory goes out with his family during a fishing competition. His Uncle Eddie hooks a huge shark and Rory accidentally falls in the water. Luckily, a petrified Rory is rescued before the shark can do any damage, but the incident affects him deeply. He begins to suffer from anxiety and panic attacks. Fishing no longer holds the same appeal.

After this incident occurs Rory's school principal puts him in charge of organising the school's fishing competition. Rory can't face the idea of going out on the water again, but feels he has to organise the event or he will look foolish in front of his peers. Rory forms a committee which includes his best friend Sam, a new student called Susi and two other girls called Adele and Christine. To Rory's horror, Mr Lonigan insists that Rory's archenemy Bart also be involved. Bart knows about Rory's encounter with the shark and takes every opportunity to taunt him about it.

Everyone in town gets excited about the competition when they find out that Grant Simpson, who presents a local TV programme on fishing, wants to film the event for his show. Rory really wants to participate on the day and with his father's help begins to take steps to improve his confidence on the water. But Rory's father can't be at the competition. He is under suspicion from the police who believe that he might be involved in a ring who are selling fish on the black market. Rory's father feels that it is best he keeps a low profile until the matter is resolved.

Rory knows that his father is not guilty. He has been doing some investigations of his own and is sure that Bart's Uncle Spider and another mystery man are responsible. But when Uncle Spider threatens to implicate Rory's father in the scam, Rory decides not to go to the police. He has no proof so why should they believe him?

Finally the day of the fishing competition arrives. Rory finds the courage to go out in Susi's dad's boat and when Susi falls in the water in an accident that replicates Rory's, he shows extreme bravery by jumping and rescuing her. As Susi's dad takes his injured daughter back to land the group on the boat believe that all the drama is over for the day. Little do they know that they are about to stumble upon Uncle Spider and his accomplice in the black market fishing ring. Uncle Spider is willing to do nearly anything to stop the group from exposing him as the culprit and Rory soon realises that swimming with sharks is nowhere near as dangerous as dealing with these violent criminals.

Text Type

Yo, Shark Bait! is a fast-paced adventure novel. Though this story is particularly well-suited to boys, girls who are interested in fishing and love action-packed stories will also enjoy it.

Set in New Zealand *Yo, Shark Bait!* revolves around the character of Rory who has a life-changing experience when he falls in the water with a shark while out fishing. Though the story is told in third person point of view the author often eavesdrops on Rory's thoughts and feelings so the reader is able to get a real sense of the turmoil that Rory goes through after this traumatic event occurs. Suffering from a kind of post-traumatic stress disorder, Rory begins to have panic attacks and finds it hard to get back onto a boat. Luckily Rory has a very supportive family who realise how much the experience has shaken him. They rally around Rory to help him regain his confidence.

Rory's character develops and changes as the story progresses. He overcomes his fear of boating and sharks during the fishing competition when he dives in after Susi and saves her life. He also displays bravery during the showdown between his group of friends, Uncle Spider and old man Henley. In addition Rory is able to put aside his animosity towards Bart and work towards becoming friends with his former enemy, a sure sign that he is maturing.

The author has included an interesting sub-plot in the novel surrounding the sale of black market fish in the area. This helps add interest to the story and creates conflict because Rory's dad is considered a suspect. Although Rory is sure that Uncle Spider has something to do with the crime he has no proof, and when Uncle Spider threatens to implicate his father, he refuses to go to the police. The sub-plot culminates in a final showdown that sees Rory risking his life to save his friends.

Themes include experiencing a life-changing event and learning to deal with fear, bravery, friendship, bullying and the idea that crime doesn't pay.

Sharing the Novel

The novel has been divided up as follows: Prologue, Chapters 1 and 2 (pp. 7-28), Chapters 3-11 (pp. 29-127), Chapters 12-15 (pp. 128-169) and Chapters 16-21 (pp. 170-254).

During the shared sessions encourage students to discuss their ideas and ask questions to clarify their understanding of words and issues presented in the story. Have them make inferences and predict what is going to happen next in the story. Wherever possible, have students relate Rory's adventures to their own experiences and broader knowledge. Students should analyse the main character and look at his actions, how he relates to others, how he deals with his situation and how he develops as the story progresses. They should be able to identify important themes and ideas raised in the story.

Introducing the Novel

Have students study the front cover of the novel and read the blurb.

- Why do you think the novel is called *Yo, Shark Bait!*?
- Who is the main character in the story? What happens to him that traumatises him?
- In what ways does this incident affect the main character?
- Why is the main character torn when the principal puts him in charge of the fishing competition?
- Have you ever had an experience that has affected you deeply? If so, what happened and how did you deal with it?

Teacher reads the Prologue and Chapters 1 and 2 (pp. 7-28) aloud to the class. Students follow along in their books.

Comprehension Prologue and Chapters 1 and 2 (pp. 7-28)

- Who hooks the large fish? Why does Rory have to take his rod out of the water? How long could it take to get the fish onto the boat? The prologue usually introduces an event that will become important later in the novel. What do you think is significant about this event?
- Why is Rory looking forward to his day so much? What news does his father give him that puts a damper on his good mood?
- Who is Susi Thomson? How does Rory feel about her?
- Why does Rory resent his sister so much?
- Why does Rory remove his life jacket?
- Describe the process that Eddie goes through as he tries to get the fish onto the boat.
- How do the group on the boat learn what kind of fish Eddie has hooked?
- How big does Rory's dad think the shark might be? Why can't he help Eddie catch the fish?
- What does Rory fantasise about as Eddie fights with the fish?
- What different emotions does Rory experience as his uncle wrestles with the shark?
- What does Rory notice about the shark as it attacks the boat? How does Rory end up in the water?

Discussion

- What information have we learnt about Rory so far in the story? Why does he enjoy fishing so much? What kind of relationship does he have with his father? His sister?
- How do you think Rory would have felt as he fell into the water? What would you do if you found yourself in the water with a shark?
- Predict what is going to happen next in the story.

Students read Chapters 3-11 (pp. 29-127) independently before the next shared session.

Comprehension Chapters 3-11 (pp. 29-127)

- Why does Rory panic so much when he first falls in the water? What thoughts rush through his mind as he tries to get back to the boat? Who rescues him?
- Why does Rory's dad think that he might be in shock after the accident?
- Why is Rory so embarrassed by what happened?
- Describe Rory's first conversation with Susi. Why does he feel so awkward around her? What does he learn about her? Why is Rory so impressed when he sees Susi's dad's boat?
- What do Rory's parents give Liana in the hope that it will stop her telling people about Rory's adventure with the shark?
- What does Rory tell Sam about the shark and how it got away? Why do you think he feels the need to lie to his best friend?
- Who confronts Rory about his swim with the shark?
- What "weird stuff" does Sam notice happening around Bart's house?
- Why does Mr Lonigan want to see Rory? How does Rory react to his suggestion?
- Why does Rory get so angry with Sam when he finally confesses the truth to him? Why does he feel better after he tells Sam? What feeling can't Rory seem to shake despite talking to his friend?
- Who does Rory approach to form the fishing competition committee?
- What does Rory suddenly realise after Bart approaches him in the playground?
- What further information does Sam share with Rory about Bart's family?
- Why isn't Rory looking forward to prize giving as much as usual?
- What do Rory and his father learn as they watch the evening news?
- What does Mr Lonigan talk about at prize giving? How does Rory feel when he gets called up to the stage? Who is the other guest speaker?
- Who won the prize for the heaviest shark? Why does the applause die away very quickly?
- Why does old man Henley yell at Sam and Rory after the prize giving?
- What do Rory and Sam see when they peer through the fence at Bart's house? Who catches them spying?
- What ideas does the committee come up with for organising the tournament? What excuse does Rory come up with for why he doesn't want to go fishing? Why doesn't he want to go out in the boat with his friends?
- How does Rory feel when Susi offers to help out with the fishing competition? Why does Mr Lonigan suggest that Bart join the committee? Why doesn't Rory think that he is going to be able to work with Bart?
- How does Bart summarise what he saw on the news to the rest of the class? Why do they begin to look at each other suspiciously?
- Who tells Bart where the meeting is? Why does Rory suspect that Adele has spoken to Bart about his behaviour?

- Why are the police at Rory's house?
- Why does Adele storm out of the committee meeting?
- Why does Rory suspect that Bart is in on whatever is happening with his uncle?
- What convinces Rory to take a closer look at what is happening at Bart's place? What do the boys find in the old shed?

Discussion

- In what ways does Rory's experience with the shark affect his life? What advice would you offer him to help him gain his confidence back?
- Have you ever liked a boy or a girl and had trouble talking to them? Why can it be embarrassing getting to know someone that you like? How does Rory feel when he is around Susi?
- Describe Bart. What do we know about him so far? Why do you think he hassles Rory so much? What is the best way to deal with a bully?
- Who do you think is calling Bart's name? What do you think will happen to the boys if they get caught in the shed? Do you think Rory and Sam are justified in snooping around Bart's house? Explain your answer.
- The author has introduced the sub-plot in these chapters. Identify the sub-plot and explain in what way this storyline will become important as the novel progresses.

Students read Chapters 12-15 (pp. 128-169) independently before the next shared session.

Comprehension Chapters 12-15 (pp. 128-169)

- What excuse does Sam give Bart's father for being in his shed? How does Bart's dad react to them being there? Why does his reaction surprise the boys so much?
- Why doesn't Rory's dad want to be involved in the fishing tournament? Why doesn't Rory tell his father about his suspicions?
- Which committee member secures the trip to the Gold Coast as a prize? What does he decide the prize should be for? How does Rory react to this suggestion?
- Why does Rory's father believe that it is so important for him to go out fishing? How does Rory feel about going out in the boat?
- What news does Mr Lonigan give Rory that makes him change his mind about resigning from the committee?
- What do Rory and Susi overhear Bart's uncle talking about while they are hiding at the beach? Who do you think Uncle Spider is talking to?
- What kind of weapon does Uncle Spider threaten Susi and Rory with? What does he tell Rory he will do if Rory reports him to the police?
- How does Rory feel when he climbs into his father's boat? What does he see swimming around in the bait tank? What does Rory think about as he traces the fish's movements through the water?
- What does Rory decide to do with the shark? Why do you think he decides to do this?

- What does Rory's father let him do for the first time when the pair goes out fishing?
- Why does Rory's dad advise him not to "think too hard"?
- Why does Rory think that he might have hooked a shark?

Discussion

- Why does Rory decide to put the shark posters back up on his wall? Why is he so determined to take part in the fishing competition? How does Bart's father help him overcome his fear? What attributes does Rory possess that you admire?
- Does Rory do the right thing by not telling his father about Uncle Spider or going to the police? What would you do if you were in his position?
- Do you think Rory has hooked a shark? If so, how do you think he will deal with this situation?
- Predict what will happen next in the story.

Students read Chapters 16-21 (pp. 170-254) independently before the next shared session.

Comprehension Chapters 16-21 (pp. 170-254)

- What does Rory's dad do when Rory asks him to take the rod? Why does he do this? What does Rory catch?
- Which boat is Rory on? Who else will be going out with him? What does Susi tell Rory they will be targeting first?
- Why can't Sam attend the fishing tournament?
- What does Grant Simpson talk to the assembly about? How does Grant's speech inspire Rory?
- What is a "tag and release" policy?
- Why makes Rory think that his father won't believe anything that he says about Bart's Uncle Spider?
- How does Rory's interview with Grant before the tournament help raise his confidence?
- What will the person who tags and releases the biggest shark win?
- Why does Rory feel slightly uncomfortable with what he is wearing? Why does his mother insist that he take her jacket?
- Why does Adele come on Susi's dad's boat? Why do you think Bart acts differently when she is around?
- What is "bird or meatball" action?
- Why does Rory snap at Susi? How do you know that he has hurt her feelings?
- What does Rory tell Susi to do when she hooks the fish? What does she catch?
- What does Rory see in the water when Bart comes up to gaff his fish?
- What is the shark after? How does Susi fall in the water? What does Rory mean when he says he has a feeling of déjà vu?
- Why does Mr Main stop Bart from diving in the water? What does the fact that he wanted to dive in suggest about his character?

- Why is Rory so worried when he realises that Susi is bleeding? What does Susi do when she sees the sharks? Who pulls Susi out of the water? Who pulls Rory out? Why is Bart so impressed with Rory?
- Why does Rory feel so relieved after his second encounter with the shark?
- Where does Rory suggest that Mr Main dock the boat so that Susi can get to the hospital quickly? Who will meet the boat en route?
- Whose boat is already docked at the wharf? Why are they so surprised to see it there? Why does Mr Main decide to have a look around on shore? What does Rory suddenly realise when he hears old man Henley's voice?
- What does Mr Henley tell Mr Main to do after he makes him return to the boat? How does Mr Main get injured?
- Who turns up and stops the fight between Rory, Bart and Mr Henley? How does Bart react when he sees this man? Why do you think Bart chooses to stay with his friends rather than go with his uncle?
- What does Uncle Spider tell Henley to do with the captives?
- What does Bart mean when he says that he "didn't want to know" what his uncle was doing?
- Who rings on the cell phone? Why isn't Rory able to tell the person that they need help?
- Why is the phone operator so sceptical when she hears Rory's story? Who does Rory decide to call instead?
- How do Bart and Rory get through the door?
- What does Rory find on the wharf? Why does Uncle Spider start shooting at the boat? Why does Rory decide to head in the opposite direction to Milligan's Harbour? What do you think might have happened to the group if Rory wasn't there?
- What is Uncle Spider's real name? What do he and Mr Henley get charged with?
- Where were Bart's parents while Uncle Spider was looking after Bart and his brothers? How does Bart's father react when he finds out what Spider has been doing?
- Why is Rory so surprised when he sees himself being interviewed on TV?
- What prize does Rory win?
- What does Susi's dad want to do for Rory as a thank you? Why does Rory believe that he owes Mr Main a thank you as well?
- Who does Rory choose to go out on Grant's boat with him?

Discussion

- Are you surprised when Rory dives in the water after Susi? Why/why not? What would you have done in his position? Do you believe that Rory is a hero? Justify your answer. In what ways has Rory's character developed and changed as the story has progressed? What lessons do you think that he has learnt from his experiences?
- Rory displays many admirable attributions during the drama at the wharf, but he is not the only character who helps them through the

situation. Discuss how each character behaves during the crisis and what this shows about them.

- How do you think Rory's relationship with Bart will change after this event?
- Identify the climax of the story. What does the author do to create tension during this part of the story?

Activities

Plot – Create a plot graph for *Yo, Shark Bait!* Choose 10 important events from the novel and list them in the order that they happen along the horizontal axis of the graph. Label the vertical axis “Level of Excitement”. Plot each event according to its level of excitement. Clearly mark the climax of the novel.

Newspaper Article – Write a newspaper article about Rory's encounter with the black market fishermen. Use the inverted pyramid style of writing where all of the important information (who, what, where, why and how) go in the first two paragraphs. Remember to include quotes from people involved.

Interview – Imagine that you are a Holmes style interviewer. Your task is to interview Rory about his recent experiences. Formulate 10 interview questions with answers. Have another student act in role as the character of Rory. You may like to video your interview and show it to the rest of the class.

Static Image – Design a poster advertising the school's fishing competition. Remember to combine verbal and visual features to convey your ideas.

Character – Imagine that Rory has written in to an advice column asking for help to deal with his anxiety surrounding his experience with the shark. Write his letter and a reply.

Poem – Write a poem about Rory's experience with the shark. Use figurative language features such as metaphors and similes to help create imagery.

Script – Choose an exciting part of the story and write a script for it. Remember to include stage directions and a list of characters. Practise your play and present it to the class.

Theme – Complete a brainstorm of all of the important themes and ideas presented in the novel. For each idea list important words and events from the story that help develop that theme. Choose one theme and complete a collage that represents that theme. Include words and images from the text to help convey your ideas.

Soundtrack – Imagine that *Yo, Shark Bait!* is being made into a movie. You are in charge of the soundtrack. Choose 5 songs and explain when they will be played in the movie and why you chose them.