

SHARK ATTACK!

It was a boiling hot day; the sun relentless in the sky above, staring down upon us as though determined to scorch the entire Earth. As I ran down the soft, sandy beach, my spirits were high as the colourful kites being flown. The beautiful board I carried had been given to me for Christmas by my brother – a stylish, short board with a concave bottom for speed over the water; the design a sleek, silver shark on the pale-blue background.

Paddling the board hard out to sea, I was helped by the wind which was whipping up waves and promising an exciting day's surfing. Jason, who was a champion surfer and good friend, passed me whooping loudly as he rode a large roller. I felt good – King of the Ocean! What could possibly go wrong? A massive wave was approaching and I held my board in position – poised to leap on and ride the crest. My whole body was concentrated and ready, so it was with something like annoyance that I was distracted by a thump on the leg.

"Driftwood," I told myself and gave it not a second thought.

The wave was close. I crouched in the water. Tensed. Then I heard Jason's shout,

"Behind you!"

He sounded urgent. I flashed a look. A fin. Moving at speed. Towards me!

With a huge leap, I left the water, just as the enormous creature rose below me, its jaws wide open.

The wave whipped me away but what had happened to my balance? At first, I thought it was panic that was making me fall. I was an expert surfer. Furious with myself (and terrified as I needed to get to the safety of the beach), I went to crouch and toppled into the water. I had no leg. Blood was pouring out of where my calf should have been. Shock and adrenalin was making me oblivious to pain, but not fear . . . and I knew the shark would be back for more.



“Get on! NOW!”

Suddenly, Jason was there, pulling me onto his long, slim board and while holding on – lying full length – I was surfed by him back to shore, where arms carried me up the beach. As I lost consciousness, snippets of conversation made it to my brain:

“Tiger shark . . . four metres at least . . . not a chance . . .”

“ . . . below the knee . . . lucky to be alive!”

I thought of my brother, my board, my arrogance. What had gone wrong? King of the Ocean? What had happened to my respect for the sea – its power and unpredictability? It would never happen again!

Tiger Sharks

Named for the dark stripes found on juvenile sharks, which fade as they grow to maturity, the Tiger shark is second only to the Great White in the number of attacks on humans.

Size

Tiger sharks can grow up to 6 or 7 metres in length and weigh up to 900 kilograms – that is four times the length of a man and ten times his weight! They take a long time to grow and have low reproduction rates.



Habitat

Tropical or sub-tropical seas

Diet

A carnivore, the Tiger shark, which will eat anything, has been found to have a huge variety of fish in their stomachs and even metal licence plates and tyres!

Their sharp, serrated teeth and powerful jaws allow them to crack shells – allowing them to eat such foods as turtles.



Humans hunt Tiger sharks in order to use their meat, skin and fins. Their livers, which are high in Vitamin A are often used in Vitamin supplements. *Finning* is when a shark's fins are removed and the body (often still alive) is thrown back into the sea. A shark cannot swim without its fins so will suffocate or be eaten.

Due to humans, the Tiger shark is on the vulnerable list.

SHARK ATTACK QUESTIONS

1. Who had given him the board? Father? Mother? Friend? Brother? (1 mark)
2. Three figures of speech (simile, metaphor etc.) are used in the first paragraph of the story. Copy them down and write what they are called. (3 marks)
3. What does the surfer mean when he says "King of the Ocean." (2 marks)
4. What is meant when it says Jason was riding "a large roller"? (1 mark)
5. What did the boy think he had been hit by? (1 mark)
6. He sounded urgent. I flashed a look. A fin. Moving at speed. Towards me! These are not all proper sentences with subject and verb. Why has the author punctuated it like this? What effect does it have on the reader? (2 marks)
7. How did he become aware of his injuries? (2 marks)

8. Why has the author used ellipsis in the conversation the boy heard before he lost consciousness?
(1 mark)
9. What is meant by 'juvenile sharks'?
(1 mark)
10. Why are there text boxes in the non-fiction piece about Tiger sharks?
(2 marks)
11. How are sharks able to eat turtles?
(2 marks)
12. Should 'finning' be illegal? Explain what it is and why you think yes or no.
(3 marks)