Surprising Sharks by Nicola Davies, Illustrated by James Croft

This is an excellent introduction to sharks which will surprise children and ignite their interests in what lurks beneath the sea. The book itself is full of interesting facts about sharks that will challenge the reputation of the shark as a “giant man-eating killer”. The first shark the author introduces is a Dwarf Lantern Shark that is smaller than a chocolate bar. The author’s snippets of information fall into playful shapes and sizes of print which go beside bright and colourful illustrations. The author, a zoologist Nicola Davies, proves that sharks come in various shapes and sizes by describing sharks such as the lantern shark which has “built in fairy lights” and the wobbegong that lies “on the sea floor like a scrap of old carpet”.

The book encourages children to think about the human impact on sharks by providing the startling statistic that “every year people kill 100 million sharks”. Children will learn lots of interesting facts about sharks but the biggest surprise of all may be the realisation that sharks should be more afraid of humans that we are of them.

This book provides an excellent opportunity for children to look at non-fiction texts and discuss the differences between fact and fiction books. Children can also look at photographs and visual images so that they can explore together what really lurks beneath the sea.

Overall learning aims of this teaching sequence:

- To write for meaning and purpose in a variety of non narrative forms.
- To know where information can be found in non-fiction texts
- To know that information can be retrieved from a variety of sources
- To use talk to give explanations and opinions
- To listen to books attentively and respond to what their have heard
- To identify some of the features of non-fiction texts
- To talk to reflect on past experiences
- To sustain relevant listening, responding to what they have heard with relevant comments and questions
- To use vocabulary influenced by books
- To enjoy an increasing range of books

This teaching sequence is designed for a Nursery or Reception class.

Overview of this teaching sequence

A teaching sequence of 3 weeks

Teaching Sessions

Before beginning this book:

- Gather a number of photographs, video clips, information books, posters and leaflets about sharks. Collect together shells, pebbles, sand, and other resources so that children will be able to create under the sea worlds.
- Make a class journal in paper or on the interactive whiteboard to capture the talk and the activities that the class create around sharks.

The Literacy Environment

Ideas for CLL continuous provision

- Provide a display board for children to add their own work as they produce it. In the centre of the board draw a large shark so that later the children will be able to label the parts of a shark e.g. teeth, skin, dorsal fin etc.

- Have a scale line with an interactive question on the display. Ask children to pin a picture of a shark where they believe that it sits on the scale. This can change as the children find out more information about sharks and change their perceptions.

How scary are sharks?

Not Scary | Very Scary
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- Somewhere in the classroom find space for a shark fact display. Provide some shark shaped paper or post-its so that children can write any shark facts that they find out at home or through further investigation. Encourage children to get their parents to write any facts on the board that they may know to add to the display.

Book Corner

- Collect together some story books about sharks and the sea, such as Shark in the Park! Nick Sharratt, Billy’s Bucket, Kes Gray and Gary Parsons; The Rainbow Fish, Marcus Pfister etc so that children can read them together or they can be drawn on during read aloud sessions.

Large rolls of paper

- Encourage children to work together to create an under the sea scene on large pieces of paper. Invite children to come up and draw pictures of things that they would expect to see under the sea. Encourage children to talk about what they are drawing and use a variety of mark making equipment. Try playing music or under the sea sound effects and ask the children to listen to the sounds as they make their marks.

Independent book-making
- Encourage children to make their own fact books about Sharks. Make zig-zag/ origami books and leave them in the mark making area for children to use. Include interesting resources for the children such as shark shaped note paper and a range of mark making materials.

**Story box**

- Make an under the sea story box for children to play at ocean stories in small groups.

### Session 1 Introduction to the book 1: Book talk

- Demonstrate to the children what a surprise is. Perhaps arrange for a parcel or letter to be delivered or find something hidden beneath your chair to excite the children and demonstrate the element of surprise. Ask the children to talk about surprises that they have had in pairs.
- Through shared writing list their ideas asking them to help you when spelling key words.
- Look together at the title of the book and discuss the word surprising.
- Are surprises always a good thing? Can anyone think of a nasty surprise?
- Can anyone think or guess what surprises we might find out about sharks?

### Session 2: Reading Aloud and book talk

- Ask children what kind of book they think it will be and make some predictions. Will it be a story about sharks or will it give us some facts and information?
- Ask the children to listen out for any facts or information as you read aloud. Read only the main text up to page 13. Stop and ask the children if they heard any facts about sharks. Return to the book to get further information. Now read the captions that go with the illustrations and the labelled diagrams to add to what the children have remembered. Discuss general differences of information books and the features of non-fiction texts.
- Ask children to talk to a partner and discuss what they already know about sharks. Through shared writing record and include children’s ideas in the class journal/ or class display.

### Session 3: Reading Aloud and Re-reading

- Begin session by re-reading from the beginning to the end of the book (main text only). Encourage the children to join in with you. Pick up on the size and shape of some of the text used.
- Ask children what else they would like to find out about sharks. What questions do they have? Through shared writing write down the children’s questions.
- This could be followed by a guided talk/writing activity. Show children pictures of sharks and discuss as a small group. Children could then write; record on talking tins/mp3 or have their questions scribed to add to the class display/ include in the class journal.

### Session 4: Reading aloud, shared reading

- Read and discuss the labelled diagrams of the inside and the outside of a shark (p-14-17). Allow children to comment on what they have heard.
- Give out labels on card and ask children to read them together and place them onto a large diagram or class display.
- This labelling activity could be followed by a guided reading activity. Children could label items in the classroom. Add labels to the role play area or read class name labels or badges and pin them to their friends.

**Session 5: Responding to Visual Images**

- Show children a selection of shark and various under the sea photographs, ask them to talk in pairs about the image and say what comes into their minds. Model through shared writing the children’s responses and include photos and the children’s caption in the class journal.
- Give out a photograph to children in pairs. Ask then to talk about the picture they have in front of them and decide on a short sentence that comes into their mind. Give children whiteboards so that they can write their own captions. Pairs can then read their caption and show their photograph to their class.
- Leave a selection of photographs in the writing area for children to independently add a caption if they wish. These can then be celebrated and added to the class display.

**Session 6: Poetry and shared writing**

- Show children a photograph of a shark or an ocean scene and ask them to talk about what comes into their mind as they look at the photo. Collect words and phrases and create a shared poem. You could begin a class anthology or add this to an existing one.

**Session 7: Reading Aloud and re-reading**

- Ask the children to listen out for more facts. Read from p 18, stopping to read the labels captions etc. Read to the end. Discuss function of the index and talk to the children about how one is used.
- Refer back to children’s questions on the display. Have all the questions on sharks now been answered? Read post-its and answer any that are now known. How can we find out the answers to the rest? Make a list of different sources of information in the class journal.
- Children can make fact books, leaflets or fact sheets (depending on their experience) as a guided writing and talk activity. Through bookmaking children can write their facts and create their very own book about sharks. Encourage children to think about the facts that they now know about sharks and use various sources such as books, photographs, leaflets, posters etc to help them.

**Session 8: Reading aloud and book talk**

- Read from page 23-27 and look closely at all the different reasons why humans kill sharks.
- Do the children think that sharks are as dangerous as before they read the book? Who should be more afraid of who?
- As a possible group/ guided reading activity ask children to look at reasons why humans kill sharks. Talk about whether the children think that this is necessary. Match labels to pictures or use real objects if you have them. (Labels and pictures included in resources).
**Session 9: Debate and argument**

- Invite another member of staff into the class and explain to the children that they have a deep fear of sharks. It is the class’ job to convince them that sharks aren’t that scary after all and give reasons for this.
- Look again at the shark scale on the display and ask the children to place the shark where they feel it should be now.

**Session 10: Shared Writing**

- Write a letter to the Shark Trust to ask what can be done to stop so many sharks being killed by humans. (You could also show children the Shark Trust website www.sharktrust.org)
- Write a letter together and post to the address on the website. Perhaps include some art work and a photograph of the class display. Encourage children to write their own letters or design a poster during the day to be posted along with the class letter. Include some headed paper and A3 size paper in the writing areas for children to do this.

**Additional ideas**

- Encourage children to create their own under the sea worlds using empty boxes and a range of materials.
- Drawing under the sea scenes
- Using watercolours to create seascapes
- Children could draw a picture of their favourite type of shark
- Children could use a range of materials to create their own under waterscape in the bottom of buckets or washing up bowls.
- Add rocks, sand, sea creatures, boats etc. into the water play area
- Look at size of sharks. Use chalk to mark out the lengths of sharks on the playground or in the hall. Use a metre stick, measuring wheel demonstrate the size of the large sharks.
- Movement and dance - become creatures of the sea
- Encourage children to make a boat in the large construction area and go and fish for sharks, include nets and fishing rods. What will they catch?
- Visit an aquarium
- Watch film clips of sharks swimming in their natural habitat
- Create a treasure chest with different objects inside to encourage talk and discussion.
- Change the words to ‘5 Little Ducks’...... 5 Little Sharks