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# LITERATURE CONNECTIONS FOR ISLANDS

**Note on grade levels: A range of grade levels is usually given, to reflect both interest level and reading level. Most books can be enjoyed by a wide age range, although younger children must be read to while older children can read alone.**

***Blassingame, Wyatt. Wonders of Sharks. Dodd, Mead, 1984. Gr. 4-7.***

Straightforward information and descriptions of shark anatomy, evolution, and behaviors are here mixed with discussions of true and untrue human beliefs about sharks, shark legends, and startling facts that will leave the reader turning the pages in hopes of more. Some prospective readers may at first hold back from this book because of its frequently fuzzy black-and-white photographs, but will be fascinated once they hear some of the information about shark digestion on p.39 ("many naturalists believe that sharks can vomit up the entire stomach, turning it inside out in the sea to wash, then swallowing it again"). This will certainly gain and hold the attention of young readers.

***Bright, Michael. Seals. Gloucester Press, 1990. Gr. 3-6.***

This brief overview of the facts of seal endangerment and worldwide efforts to save seals will introduce the topic to readers who need material not too challenging in its reading level. Many color photographs gain the attention and interest of the reader, and help clarify the meaning of the text. There is factual material on seal anatomy, varieties, and behaviors, and a map showing the distribution of some of the seal species that have been hunted commercially.

***Bunting, Eve. The Sea World Book of Sharks. Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1979. Gr. 5 - Adult.***

A discussion of sharks in general, and a few species in particular, with small but very clearly reproduced, brilliantly colored, well-chosen photographs. There are descriptions of shark anatomy and physiology (not as thorough or complete as in the book by Blassingame, cited above), and of shark behaviors. This will attract readers and serve as an introduction to the topic. The tone is

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somewhat sensationalist, with heavy emphasis on the dangerous, the predatory, the fearful; some readers may be alarmed rather than informed.

***Ferguson, Ava and Gregor Cailliet. Sharks and Rays of the Pacific Coast. Monterey Bay Aquarium, 1990. All Ages.***

Beautiful photographs and fascinating facts illumine this information-packed small-size book. Sharks and rays are discussed generally, as well as in relation to their special habitats: in sloughs and estuaries, in kelp forests, sandy sea floors, open ocean, and the deep sea. Special attention is given to those sharks and rays living in Monterey Bay. Children will especially enjoy the description of shark attacks, with gory details given.

***Gelman, Rita Golden. Dawn to Dusk in the Galapagos: Flightless Birds, Swimming Lizards, and Other Fascinating Creatures. Little, Brown, 1991. Gr.4-7.***

The variety of animals inhabiting the Galapagos Islands is described, as well as the daily activities of selected species. In addition to the flightless birds and swimming lizards mentioned in the subtitle, sea lions, various seabirds, and tortoises are described. The photographs are outstanding and very attractive, giving close-up details of animals in their customary behaviors of feeding, courtship, parenting, and play.

***Harvey, Bob and Diane Kelsay Harvey. A Journey of Hope: Una Jornada de Esperanza. Beautiful America Pub. Co., 1991. Gr. 3-5.***

Color photographs and drawings illuminate this bilingual account of the life cycle of a sea turtle. More than half the book describes the journey of the newly hatched animal to the sea; only a few pages describe the later life of the turtle. There is also a short discussion of the dangers facing sea turtles from humans as well as from egg-eating animals. This would be useful for children needing bilingual (Spanish and English) material, as well as for those children who require high-interest, low reading level books.

***Holling, Holling Clancy. Seabird. Houghton Mifflin, 1948. Gr. 5-8.***

All this author's works combine science and adventure: this is no exception. This is the story of an ivory bird, carved as a mascot by a ship's boy aboard a whaling ship, and carried by four generations of adventurous boys. But embedded within the tale are many details describing what the young ship's boy saw and learned on his many travels -- whales in all their variety of habits and behaviors, tropical islands formed by corals, islands made by volcanic action. Many drawings, both color and black-and-white, enhance the appeal.

***Johnson, Sylvia A. Elephant Seals. Lerner, 1989. Gr. 4-6.***

Describes the physical characteristics, habits, and environment of elephant seals, with many photographs illustrating the elephant seals who return every year to Año Nuevo Island in central California. The photographs are attractive,

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and will invite young readers to look in the text to learn more about, for example, how male elephant seals issue challenges and fight fiercely.

**Lewis, Naomi. *Puffin*. Lothrop, Lee & Shepard, 1984. Gr. 3-5.**

A young puffin, hatched on an island of the coast of Scotland, is followed as he grows, learns to fly, swim and dive, and makes his solitary journey across the sea to Canada. The dangers faced by migratory sea birds are described, including the life-threatening human-caused oil slick as well as natural hazards posed by predators. The illustrations, one full-page painting for each page of text, are colorful and evocative, following the entire life cycle of the bird.

**MacQuitty, Miranda. *Sea Birds*. Mallard Press, 1990. Gr. 6-9.**

As well as general information about sea birds -- courtship and breeding, nest-building, parenting, feeding -- there is description of adaptations to specific habitats, such as seacoasts, polar regions, and life on the open ocean. The text is in small typeface, possibly daunting to readers who need easy material, but it will not deter a good reader. The many photographs are small, but colorful and well chosen.

**MacQuitty, Miranda. *Shark*. Knopf, 1992. (*Eyewitness Book*). All Ages.**

As in all the Eyewitness series, the marvelously detailed photographs are the focus of each page. Each double-page spread covers one topic, such as teeth and diet, or shark attack, and has a general introduction to that topic. Most pages are arranged with a large central photograph and many surrounding smaller photos or drawings, each with a one-paragraph lengthy explanation in very small text. This will attract casual browsers, who are certain to become fascinated readers.

**O'Dell, Scott. *Island of the Blue Dolphins*. Houghton Mifflin, 1960. Gr. 4-8.**

Based on historic fact, this Newbery Award winner tells the story of Karana, a Native American girl, who spent eighteen years alone on a small, barren island off the California coast. She is forced to become familiar with all the animals who swim in the waters around the island, as well as with those who inhabit its rocky length and breadth: the reader, through Karana's eyes, encounters sea lions, otters, frightening wild dogs, and even battles an octopus, as well as hiding from the most dangerous foe of all, other humans. This page-turner has long been a favorite of readers who enjoy tales of survival and courage.

**Patent, Dorothy Hinshaw. *Seals, Sea Lions and Walruses*. Holiday House, 1990. Gr. 4-6.**

A useful and informative look at a variety of pinnipeds: several species of true seals (including elephant seals), sea lions and fur seals, and walruses. Anatomy and physiology, habits, behaviors, and conservation efforts are all discussed. Many black and white photos are included, which are well selected

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and helpful to the text. There is a glossary and a list of scientific and common names of seals and sea lions, worth mentioning because it gives some idea of the many species of pinnipeds in existence.

**Rydell, Wendy. *All About Islands*. Troll Associates, 1984. Gr. 3-5.**

A simply written and easily read explanation of islands: how they are formed by volcanic action, corals, glaciers, or other natural forces; how their climate is affected by ocean currents; what kinds of plant and animal life can live on them.

Especially useful for reluctant or below-grade-level readers.

**Sattler, Helen Roney. *Sharks, the Super Fish*. Lothrop, Lee & Shepard, 1986. All ages.**

28 pages of general information about sharks, accompanied by beautifully detailed black-and-white pencil drawings, followed by a lengthy (approx. 60 pages) "glossary" of sharks -- an alphabetical listing of species, each defined by both common and scientific name, each described in a paragraph, each shown in a black-and-white pencil drawing below its written description. Readers will probably enjoy looking through the glossary to find the biggest shark, the scariest-looking shark, the shark with the strangest name, etc. An appendix lists sharks by family. There is a list of books and articles for further reading which includes mainly adult materials, though some will be accessible to children who are "good readers".

**Seabirds. (Zoobooks). Wildlife Education, Ltd., 1993. Gr. 4-6.**

This introduction to seabirds is lavishly illustrated with attractive colored drawings and some color photographs, all designed to interest young readers and induce them to read the accompanying text, which consists mainly of extended small-typeface captions for the illustrations, together with short general discussions for each separate topic covered. Physical characteristics of seabirds, food and feeding, communication, parenting, and endangerment are all covered in this short book that will almost certainly cause its readers want to go on to find out more.

**Stevenson, Robert Louis. *Treasure Island*. Viking, 1992. Gr. 6 and up.**

This classic tale of piracy, treachery, and adventure reaches its climax on an island, on which is finally found not only the treasure left by a pirate of surpassing wickedness, but a man marooned there for three years. (Islands, because of their very isolation, have always been favored locales for writers of mystery and romantic adventure.) One of the most blood-curdling characters in children's literature can be found in this book in the person of Long John Silver. A good read-aloud for a teacher who enjoys the grand and resonant language and is willing to rehearse a bit beforehand.

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***Turtles. (Zoobooks). Wildlife Education, Ltd., 1993. Gr. 4-6.***

Like ***Seabirds*** in this series (see above), this is an attractive introduction to turtles, sure to interest reluctant readers and coax them into reading the text if only to discover what the pictures are about. Colorful photographs and drawings show how the turtle's shell is attached to its body, the great variety of shells, the life cycle of sea turtles, and there is a brief discussion of endangerment and conservation efforts. There is not much information here, but it may serve to entice some readers into reading further.