

LEVELED BOOK • M

Sharks



Written by Kira Freed • Illustrated by Cende Hill

MULTI
level
J•M•Q

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Sharks

A Reading A-Z Level M Leveled Book • Word Count: 303



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Table of Contents

Introduction	4
Description.....	7
Eating	10
Baby Sharks	13
Shark Attacks.....	14
Strange Sharks.....	16
Shark Hunting.....	17
Glossary	20
Sharks • Level M	3

Introduction

Sharks have lived in the oceans since before **dinosaurs** walked on Earth. There are more than 350 kinds of sharks, and they can be found all over the world.

4



Blue shark

Rays such as this southern stingray are close relatives of sharks.



Sharks are fish, but their skeletons are made of **cartilage** instead of bones. Cartilage is what gives human ears their shape. Unlike most fish, sharks have rough skin.

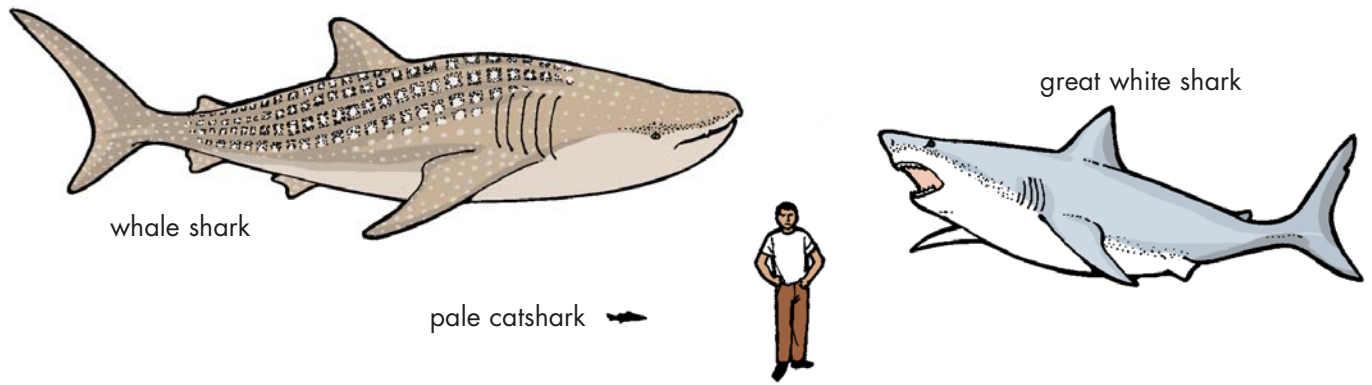
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5

Sharks have a very good sense of smell. They also see well in poor light. Sharks can sense when hurt animals are moving in the water.

6





Size variation in sharks and comparison with human

Description

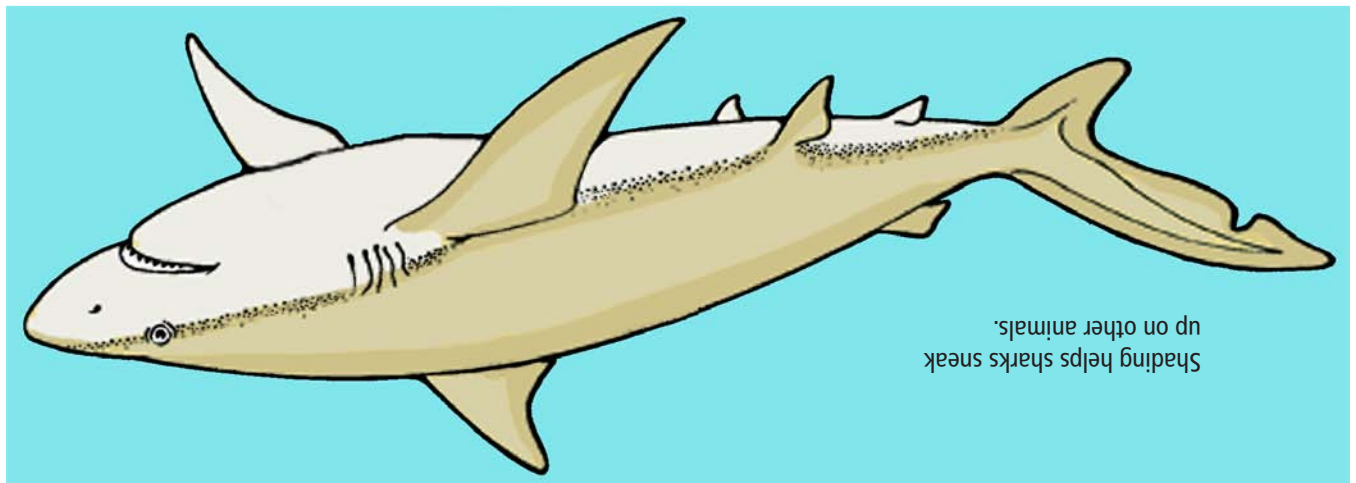
Sharks come in many sizes. Some sharks are only a few inches long. The whale shark is the largest fish in the world. Sharks have pointed noses and long, thin bodies that let them swim very fast.

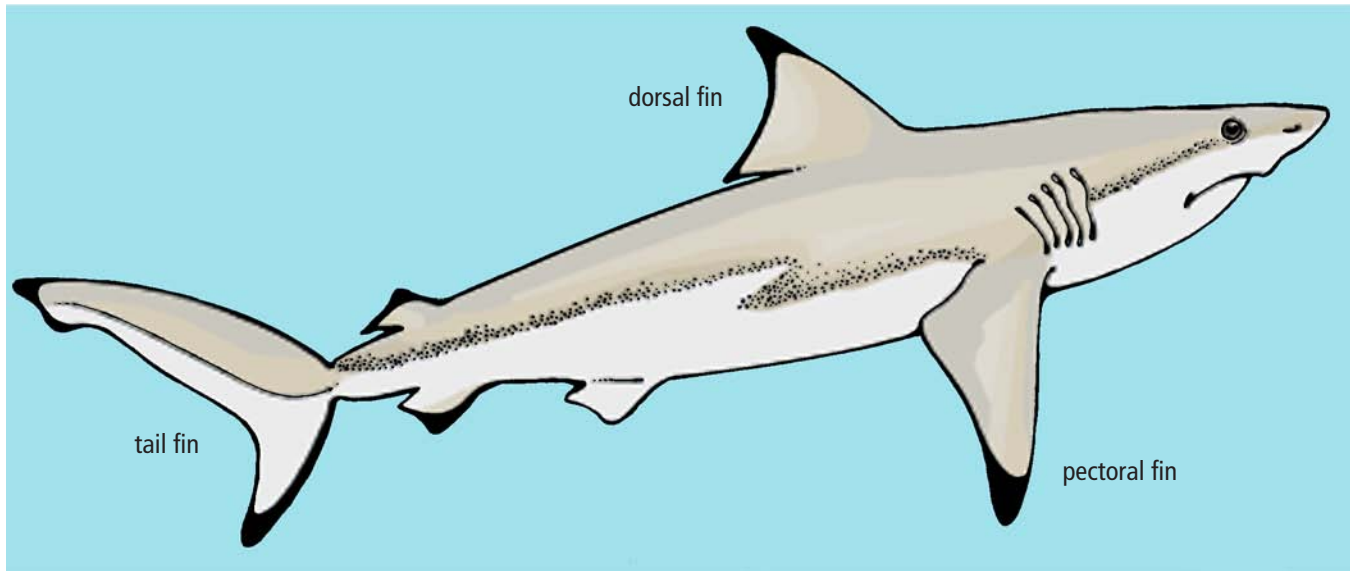
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7

8

Many sharks are dark on the top and light on the bottom. This color **pattern** makes it harder for other animals to see them.





Sharks swim by swinging their tails from side to side. Fins help sharks steer, turn, and keep their balance. The **dorsal fin** on a shark's back sometimes sticks out above the water.

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9

10

The shape of a shark's teeth depends on the kind of food it eats. Most sharks have many rows of teeth. When one tooth breaks off, another one moves up to take its place.

Eating

Do You Know?
A shark may wear out and regrow a thousand teeth during its lifetime.



lemon shark

Great white shark



Most sharks eat fish. Large sharks eat sea lions, dolphins, and other sharks. These large sharks have very sharp teeth. The teeth help the shark catch and hold onto its food.

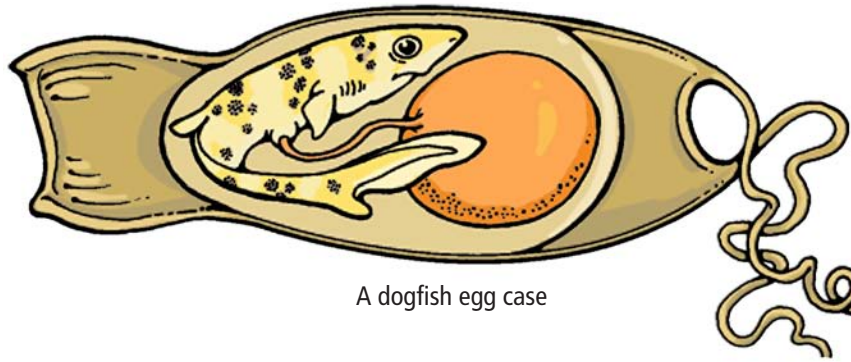
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11

Some sharks eat shellfish. These sharks have flat teeth for crushing shells. The huge whale shark has tiny teeth but doesn't use them when eating. It swallows very small ocean plants and animals that float near the ocean's surface.

12





A dogfish egg case

Do You Know?

Unlike humans, baby sharks are not helpless when they are born. They are able to hunt for food right away.

Baby Sharks

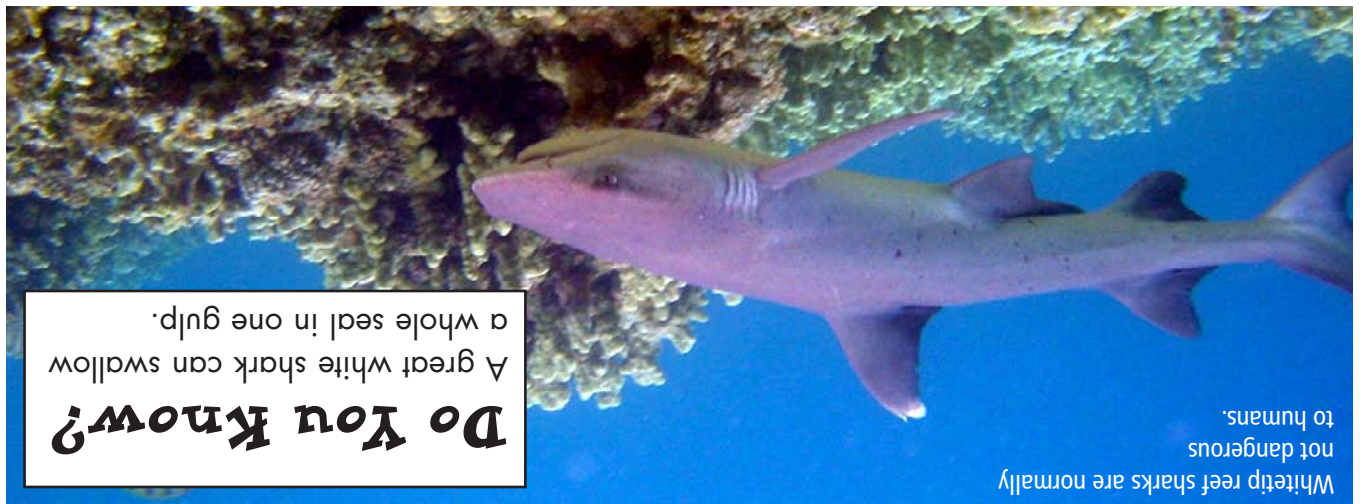
Most kinds of sharks give birth to baby sharks, called pups.

A few kinds of sharks lay eggs that hatch a few months later.

Few pups live long enough to become adult sharks.

Shark Attacks

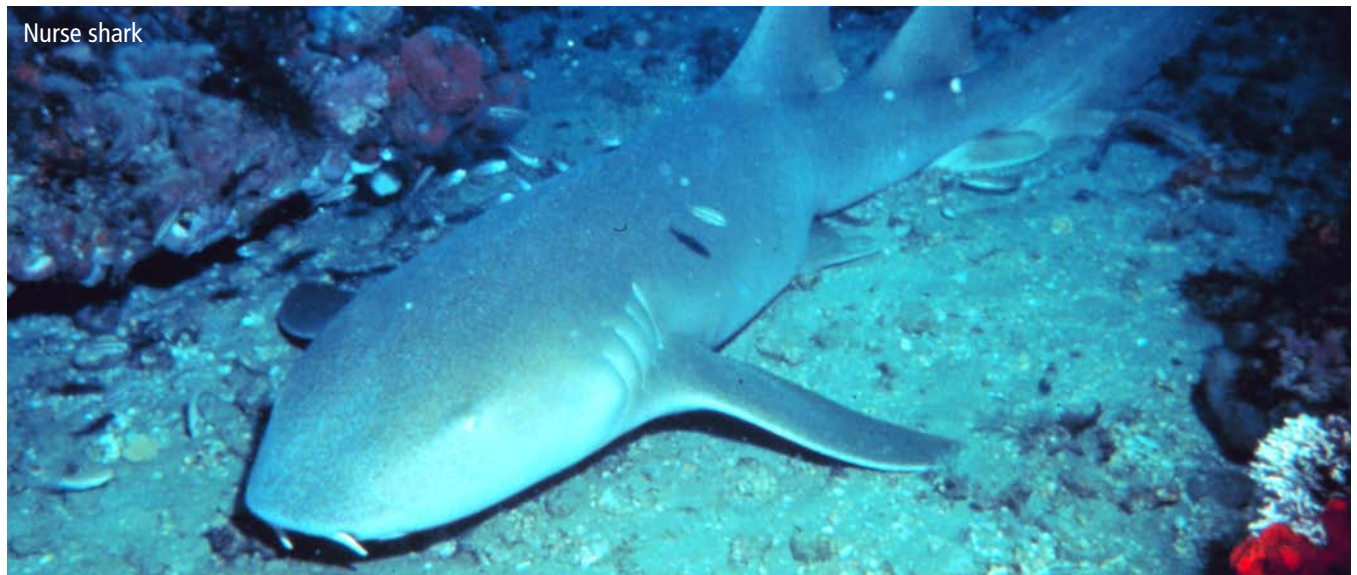
Many people are afraid of sharks, but most sharks do not attack humans. Great white sharks are one of the few kinds of sharks that are dangerous to people.



Do You Know?

A great white shark can swallow a whole seal in one gulp.

Whitetip reef sharks are normally not dangerous to humans.



Even small sharks may bite when scared or surprised by people. Sharks also sometimes **confuse** humans with the animals they normally eat.

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Some sharks look very strange. The hammerhead shark has a flat head that sticks far out on each side. Its unusual head shape helps the hammerhead see around and behind it.

Strange Sharks

16





Shark Hunting

People hunt sharks for their skin, oil, and teeth. Many people eat shark meat, and cooks use shark fins in a popular soup.

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17

Many kinds of sharks are now in danger of being completely killed off. Few people complain about shark hunting because sharks are thought to be mean and dangerous. However, most sharks are not dangerous to people.

18



Gray reef shark



When sharks are killed, it takes a long time for their numbers to go up again. Sharks are an important part of the balance of life in the world's oceans. They have as much right to live as any other animal.

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19

20

pattern (*n.*) an orderly grouping of shapes, lines, or colors (p. 8)

dorsal fin (*n.*) a fin on the back of fish and some marine mammals (p. 9)

dinosaurs (*n.*) a large group of reptiles that roamed Earth until they all died over 65 million years ago (p. 4)

confuse (*v.*) to mistake something for something else (p. 15)

cartilage (*n.*) the flexible tissue that makes up the skeletons of sharks (p. 5)

Glossary