

Sharks fascinate many people. They have been around for millions of years and figure prominently in the mythology of several cultures as well as in popular stories. They are a great subject for a unite study. We alternated fact with fiction to weave a long study of sharks, but you may wish to start with facts and save fiction for the end, depending on the way your children learn best. We first worked through a shark unit when my son was three years old; we have revisited several times and included different resources based on age.

Fact books:

Sharks by Seymour Simon. Awesome, awesome, awesome book, but then again I love the photos in all of Seymour Simon's books. This one has some pretty detailed text, making it suitable for older children as well; I often abbreviate the text when reading to son. Note the beginning reader listed below in that section.

Sharks (Usborne Discovery: Internet Linked) by Jonathan Sheikh-Miller. This book has tons of great info in a very approachable format.

Scholastic Q & A : What Do Sharks Eat For Dinner? by Melvin Berger, et al. My favorite thing about this book is that you can read it in many sessions without losing continuity due to the Q&A format. You can also select specific questions for various days based on concurrent topics of study.

All About Sharks by Jim Arnosky. Lots of information in this installment from the Scholastic "All About..." series.

Sharks: This is a 3-d book by Discovery Kids. Kids love the 3-D effect, but be careful you don't lose the glasses.

Sharkabet: A Sea of Sharks from A to Z by Ray Troll This imaginative alphabet book provides a combination of facts about living and prehistoric sharks and imaginative, clearly not real items that are in the "what if" category. The Monterey Bay Aquarium had enlargements of the pages leading into their craft center.

Folklore books:

Ula Li'I and the Magic Shark by Donivee Martin. "Little Red Riding Hood" has a Hawaiian Twist.

Three Little Hawaiian Pigs and the Magic Shark by Donivee Laird. A Hawaiian version of the classic story. Using this book and the previous students can compare and contrast various versions of the stories for a literature study.

The Shark God by Rafe Martin, David Shannon (Illustrator). A more traditional Hawaiian tale of two children who try to save a shark with bold drawings by a Caldecott-winning illustrator.

Punia and the King of Sharks: A Hawaiian Folktale by Lee Wardlaw, Felipe Davalos (Illustrator). A boy outwits the king of sharks.

Hawaiian Values - The Mystery of the Shark and the Poi by Susan Entz, Sheri Galarza. Very Hawaiian fable.

Read-alouds (beginning readers):

Hungry, Hungry Sharks (Step-Into-Reading, Step 3) by Joanna Cole, Patricia Wynne (Illustrator). Joanna Cole also wrote the original Magic School Bus series.

Hungry Sharks (Let's Read-And-Find-Out Science) by John Frederick Waters

Incredible Sharks (Seemore Readers, Level 1) by Seymour Simon. I have yet to find a bad book by Seymour Simon. This is a very introductory text; I also suggest other shark books by Seymour Simon for read-to's in the above section.

TV/Video/DVD:

Factual:

Jean-Michel Cousteau Ocean Adventures: Sharks at Risk. Following sharks through Polynesia and South Africa and discussing why the predators are important to ecosystems.

Nature: Shark Mountain. Filming at night and swimming through schools of sharks, this video plays up the scary side of sharks.

Fiction:

A Shark Tale. Sharks are still a popular character in modern folk tales. You might also weave Finding Nemo in here, perhaps as a bridge to a more general ocean or reef study.

On Line Resources:

National Geographic (www.nationalgeographic.com/animals/) has a great section about sharks on line. Look at the photos and quizzes on line, and check out crafts here, to. Don't forget to look at maps and figure out where certain sharks are found for a geography link! Shop for National Geographic videos about sharks here, too.

The Monterey Bay Aquarium (www.montereybayaquarium.org/) has an excellent in-house integrated study on sharks, coinciding, I believe, with the Great White Shark they had on display for a time until it started taking chunks out of its tankmates..

PBS/NOVA has some interesting shark information (www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/sharks/) and you can augment your geographic studies. Shop for PBS videos. (No specific kids' shark site here.)

The Discovery Channel has a nice section on sharks at <http://dsc.discovery.com/convergence/sharkweek/sharkweek.html>. This section was originally created for “Shark Week”, which has concluded, but you can search for shark programs playing on Discovery this week. The site also has fun shark puzzles, games, and quizzes.

Seaworld has some online shark info (<http://www.seaworld.org/animal-info/info-books/sharks-&-rays/index.htm>) including a look inside a shark (or at least a great drawing).

The Ocean of Know has a good kids’ shark site: www.oceanofk.org/sharks/sharks.html , including a lesson plan.

The San Diego Natural History Museum has Shark School for kids to learn about sharks at <http://www.sdnhm.org/kids/sharks/index.html>. You can check out some shark games at that site as well.

Older kids will enjoy the information about sharks available at the Florida Museum of Natural History’s Ichthyology Department website: www.flmnh.ufl.edu/fish/Sharks/sharks.htm.

Math Worksheet:

Ten math word problems related to sharks can be found at <http://library.thinkquest.org/J0112423/math.htm>. This worksheet is only ten problems long, but includes addition, multiplication, and division problems. Because it’s different from most of the other parts of the study it makes for a good break and possible segue to other math topics.

Shark Coloring pages and crafts:

Enchanted learning has a great selection of shark coloring/fact sheets available on their website: <http://www.enchantedlearning.com/subjects/sharks/classroom/sharktemplates/TemplateList.shtml>. You can also print these on heavy paper, cut out the pictures, and use them to make a shark mobile using a wire clothes hanger and thread or yarn. Just cut the yarn to various lengths and tape one end to the picture and tie the other to the hanger. Older kids can get creative by adding extra levels with pieces of drinking straws and balancing strings with pictures on them.

Monterey Bay Aquarium’s on-line resources include the Shark School of Art (http://www.montereybayaquarium.org/lc/activities/sharks_cartooning.asp), where you can learn to draw a shark and learn how to do shark cartoons. You can mail in your shark cartoon that deals with shark conservation to the aquarium and they may choose it for display, but keep in mind the original will not be returned.

In the aquarium itself, visitors are encouraged to color and cut out their own totem pole with a shark at the top. That craft is available in PDF format from the aquarium website

at http://www.mbayaq.org/PDF_files/activities/aquarium_sharks_totem.pdf. If at all possible, print this out on 11 x 17 inch paper. Work on Internet searches to find actual totem poles featuring sharks.

About.com has a selection of other shark crafts <http://homeschooling.about.com/od/unitssubjsci/qt/sharkcrafts.htm>. Selections include a puppet, a mask, a headdress, and the same totem pole as above in pieces to fit on standard printer paper.

A Field Trip to your local aquarium is a must for a shark unit study! I think all aquariums have at least one shark on display, and some of larger ones such as the Baltimore Aquarium or Monterey Bay Aquarium have small sharks available to pet (no, really!). A coworker tells me that members of the Baltimore Aquarium (www.aqua.org/) have the opportunity to sign up for an overnight at the aquarium for kids ~8 or 9 years old and their parents. This includes a walk over the shark tank and special guided after hours tours.

You can also augment shark study with a **shark steak for dinner**, as long as your kids don't develop an attachment to the critters in the process. Make sure you don't get any shark fin soup—after seeing what is being done to the shark population in pursuit of this delicacy you probably won't be able to eat it in good conscience.

There are also lots of **shark toys** available, including stuffed toys and plastic. No particular favorites—just do a search at Amazon.com or Google “toy shark stuffed” for a WIDE selection.

Writing topics:

My son thought up the following writing topics about sharks:

1. Would you rather have a whale shark or a great white shark (if it were nice and didn't eat you)?
2. What if the Shark King came to you and told you that you were the Shark Prince?
3. What if sharks and dolphins were friends?

Math Connection:

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Bridge to Other Subjects

Shark studies dovetail nicely with general Ocean or Coral Reef studies (branching to Whales and Dolphins), as well as studies on the Environment, Fishing (as part of Food Industries), Submersibles and Submarines, Ancient Animals, Hawaii and other cultures with a strong sea attachment, and Folklore in general. Students could also track various shark species on a map of the world.

