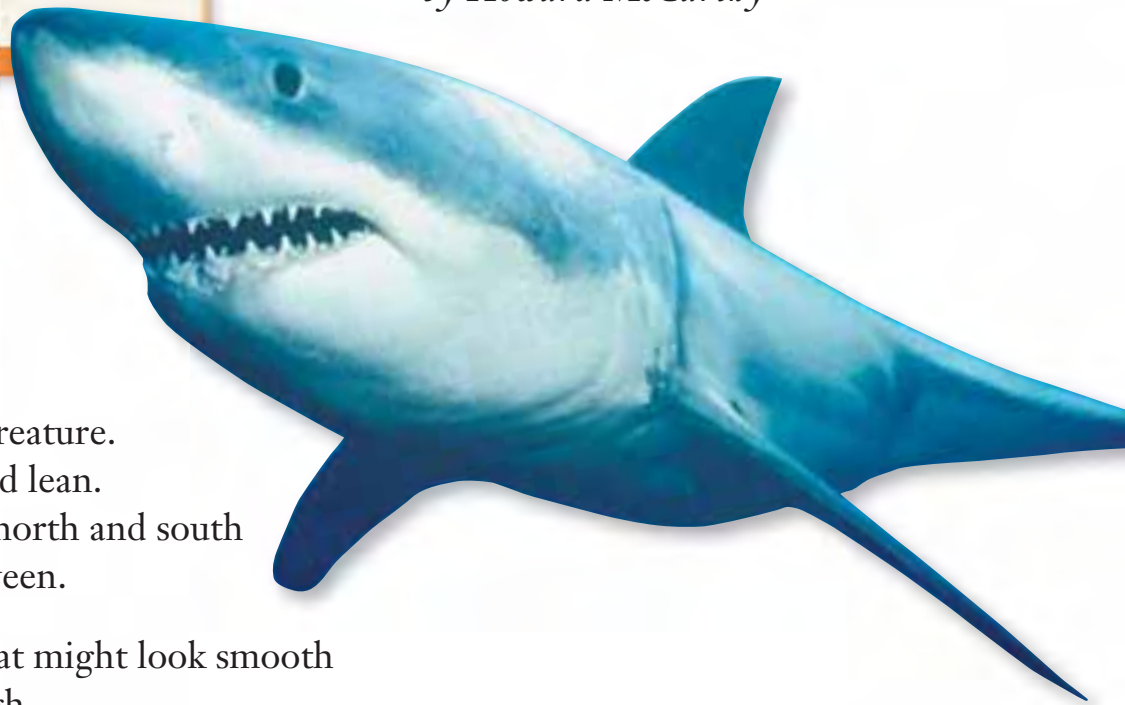


What is a Shark?

by Howard McCarthy



A shark is quite a creature.
Its shape is long and lean.
It swims in waters north and south
And waters in between.

A shark has skin that might look smooth
But actually is rough.
If you rub that scaly skin
You'll be sorry, sure enough.

A shark has jaws that open wide
With lots of teeth to spare.
So when it breaks a tooth or two
It doesn't really care.

A shark is not a welcome sight
To most who swim the sea.
When they see that hunter coming
Most will turn around and flee.

Getting to Know Sharks

Sharks! They are strange and amazing creatures.

Living Fossils

Sharks are living fossils. They are among the oldest living creatures on Earth. Many sharks look the same as sharks that lived 100 million years ago.

Sharks are different from other fish in several ways. They have no bones! Instead, a shark's skeleton is made of a material called cartilage. Your nose and ears are made of cartilage.

Most sharks have several rows of teeth. When a shark loses a tooth, another one moves up to take its place. Great white sharks lose their teeth at least once a week, but there are always more teeth to take their place.

Sharks do not lay eggs like other fish. Their newborn sharks can swim fast and hunt food at birth.

Up Close and Personal

How do scientists learn about sharks? They study them up close in the ocean. For protection, they wear shark-proof diving suits and get into iron shark cages. Scientists study how sharks hunt, what they eat, and where they go in the sea.

Scientists also catch sharks and attach tags to them. A tiny computer is in each tag. It records where the shark is, how deep it goes, and how fast it swims. One shark swam more than 1,800 miles in three months!



Shark studies scientist?

Wolves of the Sea

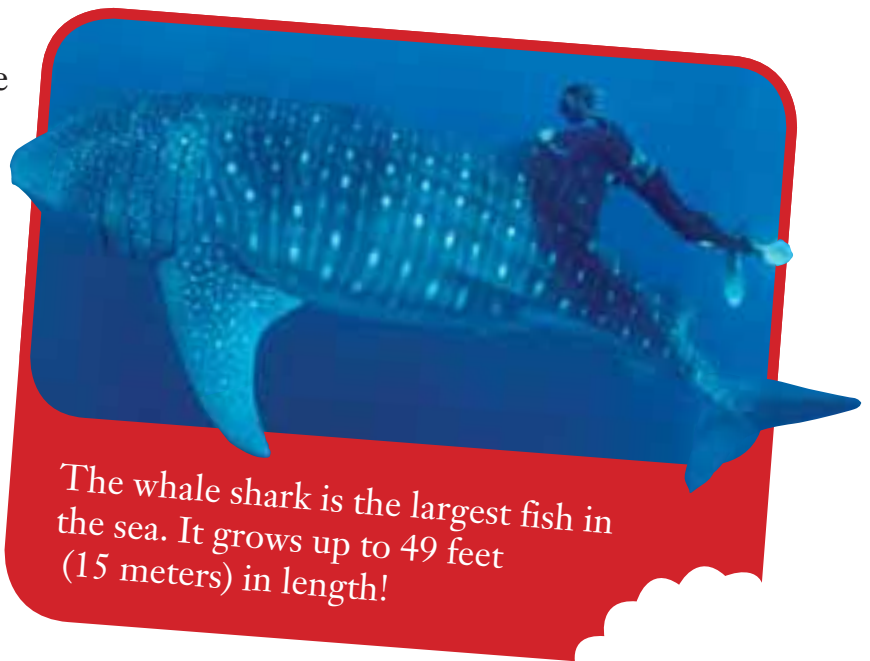
Sharks have been called “wolves of the sea.” That is because most sharks are feared hunters. The largest shark, though—the giant whale shark—is harmless. It feeds on tiny sea animals that it strains out of the water with its gills.

Many people fear sharks, but being attacked by a shark is quite unlikely. Out of 370 different kinds of sharks, only 27 species are known to attack humans. The most dangerous are the great white, hammerhead, tiger, bull, and blue sharks.

The most feared shark of all is the great white. A great white can grow to more than 20 feet (6 meters) long and weight 4,000 pounds (1,800 kilograms)! Though great white sharks have been known to attack people, you are much more likely to be struck by lightning than attacked by a shark. When sharks do attack, they may be mistaking humans for their prey. They prefer to eat other sharks, dolphins, seals, and sea lions.

Seeing Sharks

There are places where people go scuba diving to see sharks, but for most people, the best place to go is the aquarium. Many aquariums keep sharks. They are not too difficult to care for—and they are popular! Visit an aquarium if you want to see these living fossils in real life.



The whale shark is the largest fish in the sea. It grows up to 49 feet (15 meters) in length!

Tip

Look for information.

Directions: Answer the questions.**1. Why is a shark NOT a welcome sight?**

- A Sharks only swim in icy waters.
- B Sharks are afraid of people.
- C People are afraid of sharks and sharks are afraid of people.
- D Sharks are hunters and 27 species of sharks attack humans.

2. Why do scientists use shark cages to study sharks?

- A Sharks cannot see the cages.
- B Cages protect them as they watch the sharks.
- C Cages help sharks get used to seeing people.
- D The cages move faster than the sharks do.

3. Why are sharks amazing?

- A That is why scientists study the habits of sharks.
- B Sharks are not fish.
- C Their bones are very strong.
- D Sharks have been around for 100 million years and are among the oldest living creatures on Earth.

4. Why are sharks called “living fossils”?**5. Think about why scientists study sharks. What makes their work important? Use details from the selection in your answer.****Writing Prompt**

Should people study sharks? Write a two-paragraph speech that tells what you think. Use information from the selection to help you write your speech.

