

Year of the Shark?

(Post visit)

Grade Level: 6th-8th

Purpose: To have students work with different types of media to report on sharks. Students will get a scenario and a job description (i.e. TV reporter, newspaper reporter, etc.) and will need to develop a story based on the scenario. These reports will be presented to the class as if the class were the general public.

Materials:

- Video camera, tape recorder, computer access
- Resources for them to research past reports (good place to start is the International Shark File Data at <http://www.flmnh.ufl.edu/fish/Sharks/ISAF/ISAF.htm>)

Teacher Background Information:

In the summer of 2001, the media reported on several shark attacks in America. That summer was called the “Year of the Shark” by the media and many in the public were afraid to go into the water. Contrary to what is often depicted the total number of deaths by sharks’ average 4-7 worldwide. In fact, shark attacks have only increased because more people are in the water, therefore, there is more of a chance the two species will meet. Sharks frequently hunt during dawn and dusk, will usually approach prey from underneath the animal and use the animal’s silhouette as a visual cue. These factors lead to the occasional mistake by the shark, as they perceive swimming people as fish and surfers as turtles. **Suggestion: you might want to see if local TV, radio and newspapers might be willing to talk to your groups about how they do their job and their research.**

Initial report: At 7:46 pm, a shark attacked a teenager in Orlando County, Florida as he swam in the ocean during his family’s vacation. Currently the teenager is listed as critical.

Procedure:

- 1) Split your class into a maximum of five groups. Have the groups choose a type of media to represent (radio, TV stations, tabloid group, newspapers, etc.) One group of your class will be assigned the role of “victim and family”. The “victim and family” group can choose to stick to the bare facts of the original report or they can embellish the encounter by adding what it felt like, how the person was saved, etc.
- 2) Give a copy of the initial report to each group and have the group research how their choice of media usually handles these incidents.
- 3) During the next few days have the teams meet with the victim and family to get their stories and reactions. Have them meet with shark experts (this can be the teacher or another person within the school).
- 4) After gathering all the information, have each group present their stories as if they were actually radio, newspaper or TV personas. For example, any group that is a newspaper will need to produce an article, TV groups will need to present a video of the story or if they are radio they will need to do a radio spot.

If your school does not have all of these capabilities then you can have them do their stories in class with them acting as if they are in these situations. For example, a teacher’s

desk can be an anchor's desk, one of the students can be the anchor person, another the camera man who inserts a video tape with their recorded footage of their interviews, etc.

Discussion Questions:

- 1) How well did the different stories match each other? The original report?
- 2) What challenges did each type of media face?
- 3) What are the actual facts about the shark attacks from the summer of 2001?
- 4) How many sharks do humans kill each year? Humans by sharks?