

*Island of the Blue Dolphins*, Chapter 11  
**Creating an Island Home**

**Grade Level**

Upper Elementary: Third Grade through Fifth Grade

**Subject**

Literacy and Language Arts, Social Studies

**Common Core Standards**

4.SL.1, 4.RL.1, 4.W.1A–D, 4.W.2C, 4.W.3

**C3 Framework for Social Studies**

D2.Geo.2.3–5

**Background Information**

In chapter 11, Karana realizes she will need to create a home for herself if she is going to survive winter on the island. She has burned down her village, and she needs a new start. Karana chooses the location for her shelter very carefully.

This activity is designed to help students understand the thinking process Karana goes through during this chapter. In a read-pair-share format, students identify available building materials and location considerations in order to choose a place to build a shelter.

Read-pair-share: This learning strategy positions the teacher as a facilitator and allows students to learn through peer collaboration. First, the teacher asks the class a question(s) and gives the students a certain period of time to read or reread a text in order to find an answer(s). Then, the students talk about their answers with a partner (either chosen or assigned). Once students have concluded their one-on-one conversations, they participate in a whole-class discussion about the questions raised.

**Materials**

- Blank paper for drawing
- Markers, crayons, or colored pencils (optional)
- Class set of *Island of the Blue Dolphins*

**Procedure:**

1. Ask students to read or reread chapter 11 of *Island of the Blue Dolphins*.
2. Have students identify the passages describing what is important for Karana to consider as she decides where to build her island home.
3. Have students work in pairs to discuss and write down their findings.
4. Ask students to share what they have discovered with the whole class.
5. Make a list of student answers on the board or screen for student reference.  
Create two headings:
  - Building Materials (what is available on the island)

- Location Considerations (what offers best protection and accessibility to resources)

The discussion list may include:

- Materials: vegetation, small branches, whale bones, animal skins
  - Location: wind (intensity); fresh water sources (springs); types of soil for the foundation (sand, rock, dirt); accessibility to vegetation and food sources (ocean and land); reach of high tides; erosion factors; topography (hills, cliffs, valleys, beaches, etc.)
6. Provide paper and drawing materials for students to create their own island shelters. Ask students to draw an outline of an island. **Make sure students draw their island as large as possible.**
  7. Have students work in pairs or independently to create and *clearly label* water/land/terrain features on their island home, including as many as possible of the previously identified features generated from the discussion (e.g., island topography, water sources, vegetation, and food sources).
  8. Ask students to decide where is the best location to put their shelter and what materials it will be built out of, based on pros and cons identified in the previous discussion. Students then draw a shelter in their chosen location and label island materials used.
  9. Have students share maps with class and/or other partner groups.
  10. Have students write an informational or point-of-view paragraph, explaining why they decided to build their shelter in this location. *Use precise language and link ideas with information using words and phrases (e.g., for example and because).*