

Island of the Blue Dolphins, Chapter 15
Island Dogs—Friend or Foe?

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

Background Information

In chapter 15, Karana decides that she is ready to get revenge on the pack of wild dogs that killed her brother. She takes her weapons to the cave where the pack lives and smokes them out. She decides that her primary goal is to kill the leader of the pack, the big Aleut dog. Karana hits him squarely in the chest with an arrow, but he manages to escape into the brush. Eventually, Karana tracks him down, hoping to confirm his death. When she finds him, however, he is still alive and she finds herself curiously unwilling to shoot him. Instead, she takes him to her home, nurses him back to health, and makes him her pet, naming him Rontu.

Karana does not understand her own actions in this chapter. Students should use the text and their experiences to speculate about Karana's feelings and motivations.

Think-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 and gives the students a certain period of time to think about how they would answer that question. 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

- Copy of question list for teacher (provided)
- Class set of *Island of the Blue Dolphins*

Procedure

1. Decide on how you will divide students into pairs and how much time you will allow for thinking, partner discussion, and class discussion. For this activity, one to two minutes of thinking time and two to three minutes of partner talking time should be sufficient.
2. Assign each student a partner.
3. If needed, explain the steps of think-pair-share to students and tell them how much time they will have to think about and discuss each question. Encourage students to refer to the text as they think and talk about the questions.
4. Pose the first question.

5. Give students time to think.
6. Give students time to discuss their thoughts with their partners.
7. Repeat steps 5–7 until you have covered all the questions.
8. Invite students to share what they have discussed with the whole class.
9. To shorten this activity: Give students fewer questions or less time to think and talk.
10. To lengthen this activity: Have students write their answers before discussing their thoughts with their partners (step 6). Students could also be asked to write about what they have learned before joining in a wider class discussion.

Enrichment Activities

Writing prompt: What part of this chapter stood out to you the most? Why? Use quotes to help your reader understand why you found a particular event or scene so interesting.

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1. Why does Karana decide to go after the pack of wild dogs? Think of as many reasons as you can to explain why she would want to kill the pack.
2. Why do you think Karana decides to save her arrows for the leader of the pack, the Aleut dog? Think of as many reasons as you can to explain why she hates him specifically.
3. When Karana enters the cave, she sees a litter of puppies. She thinks about holding one, but the mother dog won't let her come near. If she wants a pet, why doesn't she shoot the mother dog and take a puppy home?
4. Why do you think Karana decided to take the wounded Aleut dog home and care for it instead of killing it? What do you think you would have done in the same situation? Why?