

Island of the Blue Dolphins, Chapter 20
Starlight and Caves

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.RL.2, 4.RL.3, 4.RL.5

Background Information

In chapter 20, O'Dell uses imagery to create meaning. At the beginning of the chapter, Karana discovers Black Cave and gets trapped there overnight because of high tide. O'Dell describes Black Cave in rich detail and makes it very clear that Karana is afraid of it. Black Cave is eerie for several reasons, not the least of which are the skeleton and the people made of reeds. The natural setting also contributes to the strange and frightening atmosphere. The darkness, the smallness of the entrance opening, and the stars that Karana sees through a hole at the top of the cave are some of the most vivid images in the chapter. In the chapter's final paragraph, O'Dell uses these same images to describe the cave where Karana plans to hide from the Aleuts. O'Dell does not describe Karana's feelings about the arrival of the Aleuts in detail, but his use of parallel images suggests that she is experiencing the same feelings of fear at the end of the chapter as she was at the beginning.

This lesson is designed to help students begin to understand how literary criticism works. Good readers look for patterns in the text and then think about how similarities and slight differences help to convey meaning that is not directly stated.

Materials

- Copy of activity sheet for each student (provided)
- Class set of *Island of the Blue Dolphins*

Procedure

1. Pass out the activity sheet and go over the instructions.
2. Allow students time to review the chapter and complete the activity sheet.
3. Invite students to share what they have learned with the whole class. Focus on author's craft and the use of imagery and symbolism during the discussion.

Enrichment Activities

Writing or discussion prompt: When Karana leaves her house to hide from the Aleuts, she is careful to take most of her things with her and hide or destroy the rest. Think about what you would do in a similar situation. What things would you make sure to take with you if you had to hide for an extended period of time? Why?

Name _____

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Directions: In chapter 20, O'Dell uses imagery to create meaning. At the beginning of the chapter, Karana discovers Black Cave and gets trapped there overnight because of high tide. O'Dell describes Black Cave in rich detail. He also describes how Karana is feeling while she spends the night there.

Reread the part of the chapter that describes Karana's night in Black Cave. While you are reading, pay special attention to any descriptions of the cave. Focus on descriptions of natural elements, like the crevice in the ceiling of the cave, rather than on objects in the cave made by Karana's ancestors. Then, complete the chart below. Choose at least three quotes that contain visual imagery, identify the central image in each quote, and explain how Karana is feeling at the time that she describes that part of the cave.

Descriptive passage from the chapter	Key vocabulary in the passage	Description of Karana's emotions at that point in the chapter
1.		
2.		

Descriptive passage from the chapter	Key vocabulary in the passage	Description of Karana's emotions at that point in the chapter
3.		
4.		