

Jason and the Sea Otter

TEACHER'S NOTES

by *Joe Barber-Starkey* illustrated by Paul Montpellier

GENERAL DESCRIPTION

Jason and the Sea Otter is a story of the contemporary life of a West Coast First Nations boy. Jason takes exploratory trips in his canoe and discovers the return of the sea otter to his village on Nootka Island. As the story unfolds, Jason's grandfather provides insights into native lore and history. The rich colour illustrations by Paul Montpellier are wonderfully clear and detailed, and capture both the closeness of nature and a sense of continuity of native tradition.

COMMENT

Jason and the Sea Otter is an enchanting story for young children. It could be used in the classroom to provide a focus for thematic units on coastal First Nations people, endangered species and life in the sea. The descriptive language creates additional imagery to the detailed illustrations.

CURRICULUM INTEGRATION

Language Arts—reading and listening for information, character study, descriptive writing, vocabulary development, research reports, summarizing

Science—the sea shore, the sea otter, natural resources, endangered species

Social Studies—geography, the voyages of Captain Cook, the fur trade, contemporary and traditional native culture

Art—illustrating, dioramas

Healthy Living—the wisdom of elders, traditional cultures v.s. contemporary cultures

VOCABULARY LIST

Seashore

jigged
kelp
anchored
tides
insulated
current
mudflats
crabs
shellfish
sea pen
abalone
mink
sea otter

muzzle
islands
groom
driftwood
harbour
swimming
seaweed
herring
sea urchin
anemone
starfish
seal
waterproof

First Nations

canoe
cedar
legends
smoking
harpoons
feasting
clamshells

village
dugout
preserving
drying
medicines
Nootka
fur

General

calm
ancient
drowsy
reflection
abundance
treacherous
acrobatics
numbing
fascination

slender
odours
soothing
spaghetti
particles
gabbled
fearful
stern
favourite

BEFORE YOU READ

LANGUAGE ARTS

Vocabulary

Review vocabulary about sea life. Students may work in small groups to list the words they know and to share knowledge. Bring the groups together to combine their lists to create a word bank.

Discussion

Discuss the term *endangered species* with your students. Why are species endangered? what does that mean? what animals do you know of that are on the endangered species list? what can we do to protect animals that are in danger of extinction?

SCIENCE

Museum Collection

Plan this activity several days before you read the story; you may also want to use this activity to open a theme on sea life, endangered species or First Nations. Ask your students to bring in items that relate to the theme: pictures, drawings, models, games, posters t-shirts, books, magazines. Create a space in the classroom where these can be displayed as in a museum. Students can write important information for their pieces on pieces of paper provided at the centre.

AS YOU READ

LANGUAGE ARTS

First Reading

Read the story aloud for the enjoyment of Jason's adventure. Discuss when the story takes place—what proof is there in the text and illustrations that the story is set in the present? (the plastic pail, Jason's clothes, the fish boats, the houses). Discuss the significance of Jason's discovery—why was Jason excited about sharing the news with his grandfather?

Listening

Have students identify the animals in the text via pictures as you read. If there are animals not illustrated you may refer to the museum collection, or have objects from the collection handy to show while reading.

Discussion

Discuss the way Jason acts and approaches wildlife. Why does he act this way?

SCIENCE

Tidal Currents

What are tide rips and undercurrents? Why should people who live on the coast know what these are? What other dangers do we learn about the ocean from the story?

Reflections

Discuss why Jason could see better underwater with his jacket over his head. Have your students had other experiences when reflections interfered with seeing?

FIRST NATIONS AWARENESS

Past and Present

After reading the story aloud for enjoyment of the plot, ask your students to listen again for information about Jason's life and the history of his people. Record the information on chart paper for future reading.

AFTER YOU READ

LANGUAGE ARTS

Sentence Expanding

Discuss with your students how the author uses descriptive words as a technique to create word pictures. Use examples from the book. Students can then work individually or in small groups to complete the SENTENCE EXPANDING worksheet. Encourage creative descriptors (discourage tired words: *nice, good, etc.*). The final sentence may read something like, "The golden, brown sea otter swam quietly in the early morning towards a glistening, wet rock."

Animal Heroes

Ask your students if they know other stories in which people were saved by animals. Read *Saved by the Orca, A Sled Dog for Moshi, Belle's Journey*

Story Summary

Work through the STORY SUMMARY worksheet with your students for *Jason and the Sea Otter*. When your students are familiar with the form and your expectations, ask them to complete the form independently for another story about animal heroes.

Story Writing

Ask your students to write a story about an animal saving a person, or to retell one of the stories on this theme that you have read aloud.

Skill Development

Use the vocabulary list to practise spelling, phonics, dictionary skills, etc.

Descriptive Writing

Reread the second and third pages of the story. Discuss how all the senses are used to create a feeling about the place. What sense is not used in this description? Ask your students to describe a favourite place, telling what they see, hear, smell, feel and taste.

ART

Dioramas

Invite your students to create dioramas of an underwater scene. Provide plasticene, paper and other suitable materials.

FIRST NATIONS AWARENESS

Use *Jason and the Sea Otter* to launch a study to raise awareness of First Nations culture and history. Plan your unit to examine the culture from a child's point of view.

SCIENCE

Sea Otters

Use chart paper to record information about sea otters learned from the story. Locate other sources of information about sea otters to expand students' knowledge (*Sea Otter Pup, The Nature of Sea Otters*)

Land/Water Animals

Students will now be familiar with Venn diagrams. Have students complete the LAND OR WATER ANIMALS? OR BOTH? worksheet about animals mentioned in the story. This activity would be suitable for small groups as there may be some discussion as to where animals live.

Research

Ask your students to choose one plant or animal from the story to research further or to write about and illustrate. Create a class book about Sea Life.

HEALTHY LIVING

Water Safety

Discuss how knowledgeable Jason was about being safe on the water. Was he careful? What do your students know about water safety? Discuss hypothermia.

Comparing Life Styles

Discuss how Jason's life differs from the life of a typical student in your class. Use a Venn diagram (SAME AND DIFFERENT worksheet) to compare and contrast the two lifestyles. You may want to include factors such as involvement with the community and the way elders are treated.

NOTES



Pacific Edge Publishing
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R.R. 2, Site 21, C-50, Gabriola, B.C., Canada V0R 1X0
Telephone: (604) 247-8806 Fax: (604) 247-8299
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Date _____

Name _____

SENTENCE EXPANDING

Here is a sentence. The otter swam.

Add words to describe the otter.

The _____ otter swam.

Tell how the otter swam.

The _____ otter swam _____.

Tell when the otter swam.

The _____ otter swam _____

_____.

Add where the otter swam.

The _____ otter swam _____

_____.

Read the first sentence. Read the last sentence you wrote. Which one is more interesting to read? Make any other changes that would make your last sentence even better. Print it on the lines below.

Date _____

Name _____

LAND OR WATER ANIMALS? OR BOTH?

*Print the names of these animals to show where they live:
codfish, sea birds, insects, snails, crabs, herring, sea urchins, sea pens, abalone,
anemones, mink, seals, river otters, clams, salmon, sea otters, starfish.*

LAND

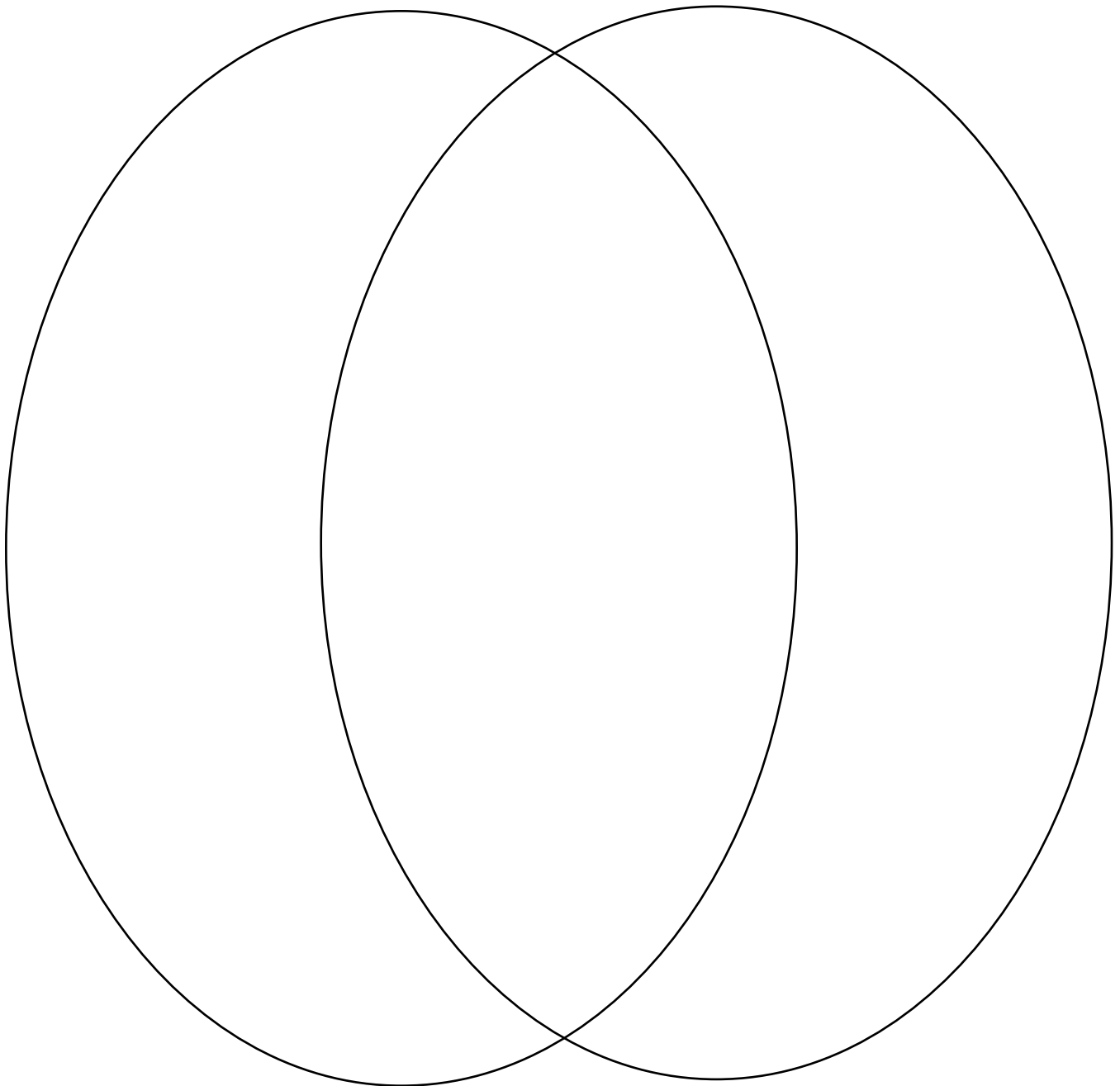
SEA

Date _____

Name _____

SAME AND DIFFERENT

Print words to tell about you and Jason inside the ovals. Print only words that are true for both Jason and you where the ovals overlap.



JASON

Date _____

Name _____

STORY SUMMARY

Setting

Character

Problem

Solution
