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Introduction

A good book can touch our lives like a good friend. Within its pages are words and characters that can inspire us to achieve our highest ideals. We can turn to it for companionship, recreation, comfort, and guidance. It can also give us a cherished story to hold in our hearts forever.

In Literature Units, great care has been taken to select books that are sure to become good friends!

Teachers who use this unit will find the following features to supplement their own valuable ideas.

- Sample Lesson Plans
- Pre-reading Activities
- A Biographical Sketch and Picture of the Author
- A Book Summary
- Vocabulary Lists and Suggested Vocabulary Activities
- Chapters grouped for study with each section including:
 - *quizzes*
 - *hands-on projects*
 - *co-operative learning activities*
 - *cross-curriculum connections*
 - *extensions into the reader's own life*
- Post-Reading Activities
- Book Report Ideas
- Research Ideas
- A Culminating Activity
- Three Different Options for Unit Tests
- Bibliography
- Answer Key



We are confident this unit will be a valuable addition to your planning, and we hope your students will increase the circle of “friends” they have in books!

Island of the Blue Dolphins

by Scott O'Dell

Houghton Mifflin Co., 1960

(Available in Australia through Puffin)

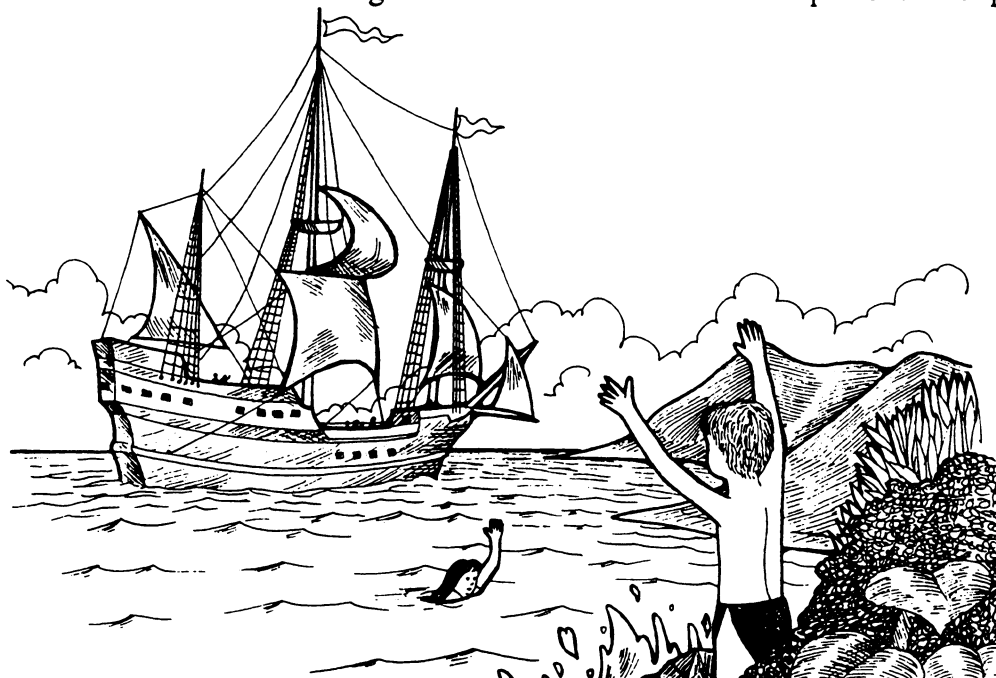
Karana is an Indian girl living the ideal life with her people on an island off the California coast. They are a peaceful people who live as one with the island and its environment.

All this changes, however, with the arrival of a big ship with red sails. The Russian ship has arrived there to hunt the sea otter that leap and play on the island's reefs and waves. Past experiences with the Russian hunters had taught the islanders to be wary, yet Chief Chowig chooses to make a deal with the Aleuts, allowing them to hunt otter.

Soon things change as the two groups grow resentful and distrustful of each other. The Russians kill without regard to the shrinking otter population. Day after day the animals are skinned on the beach. The cove becomes littered with mounds of carcasses and the waves are red with blood. When it is time to leave, the killing continues. This time it is Karana's people who are the victims. The ship opens up with cannon fire and the hunters kill the chief and most of the villagers before leaving.

Karana's group is left alone and the new chief paddles to the east, seeking refuge for his people. Finally a ship arrives to take them off the island. Unfortunately, Karana's little brother is left on the island. Karana risks death and dives off the ship to protect her brother. The ship, however, does not return and they are stranded.

The remainder of the story tells of Karana's determination, imagination, and bravery as she attempts to survive. The elements, wild dogs, returning Aleuts, devilfish, a tidal wave, and an earthquake all hurl their forces against her. She faces personal as well as physical hardship as she experiences the death of her brother, who is eaten alive by wild dogs. She survives all of these hardships for 18 years...alone. Karana's tremendous courage is rewarded in the end as she is rescued by a priest and brought to a mission in Santa Barbara. There she begins her new life with her old companions—her pet birds and her dog.



Vocabulary Activity Ideas

Each section contains several vocabulary words. You may wish to divide these words and assign them to small groups of students. The groups may define the words, find them in the context of the book, and present the information to the class to record in a vocabulary notebook.

You can help your students learn and retain the vocabulary in *Island of the Blue Dolphins* by providing them with interesting vocabulary activities. Here are a few ideas to try.

- People of all ages like to make and solve puzzles. Ask your students to make their own **Crossword Puzzles** or **Wordsearch Puzzles** using the vocabulary words from the story.
- Challenge your students to a **Vocabulary Bee!** This is similar to a spelling bee, but in addition to spelling each word correctly, the game participants must correctly define the words as well.
- Play **Vocabulary Concentration**. The goal of this game is to match vocabulary words with their definitions. Divide the class into groups of 2-5 students. Have students make two sets of cards the same size and color. On one set have them write the vocabulary words. On the second set have them write the definitions. All cards are mixed together and placed face down on a table. A player picks two cards. If the pair matches the word with its definition, the player keeps the cards and takes another turn. If the cards don't match, they are returned to their places face down on the table, and another player takes a turn. Players must concentrate to remember the locations of the words and their definitions. The game continues until all matches have been made. This is an ideal activity for free exploration time.
- Have your students practice their writing skills by creating sentences and paragraphs in which multiple vocabulary words are used correctly. Ask them to share their **Compact Vocabulary** sentences and paragraphs with the class.
- Ask your students to create paragraphs which use the vocabulary words to present **History Lessons** that relate to the time period of historical events mentioned in the story.
- Challenge your students to use a specific vocabulary word from the story at least **10 Times In One Day**. They must keep a record of when, how, and why the word was used!
- As a group activity, have students work together to create an **Illustrated Dictionary** of the vocabulary words.
- Play **20 clues** with the entire class. In this game, one student selects a vocabulary word and gives clues about this word, one by one, until someone in the class can guess the word.
- Play **Vocabulary Charades**. In this game, vocabulary words are acted out.

You probably have many more ideas to add to this list. Try them! See if experiencing vocabulary on a personal level increases your student's vocabulary interest and retention.