



Sharks: A 400 Million Year Journey

Ted Reclin

Ted Reclin, Illustrator

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In this exceptional book, hard science is boiled down to its essence and put into context through outstanding visuals.

Ted Reclin provides an informative and beautifully illustrated history of sharks in his graphic novel *Sharks: A 400 Million Year Journey*.

Many children and adults are fascinated by sharks, but while there are many guides to these predators as they exist today, *Sharks: A 400 Million Year Journey* goes back to their less commonly known origins. The creatures of early Earth are impressively drawn here—a perfect introduction to some of life's stranger incarnations—and among them dwells a small proto-shark, the first fish with a flexible skeleton and other features recognized in sharks today.

This history of life's development not only puts sharks in context, it's fascinating in itself. As millions of years pass in its pages, *Sharks* shows us the transition of some fish to land and a series of apex predators who rule the ocean in turn, all while documenting the many species of sharks that have come and gone alongside dinosaurs, whales, and other massive creatures.

One of the book's high points is the suspenseful reveal of megalodon, a seventy-foot shark who ruled the Miocene era. All of this background breeds a deep appreciation for sharks' ability to survive and sets the stage for a brief but effective message of modern-day shark conservation near the book's end: "There are more than four hundred different species of sharks alive today—and many of them are in trouble." Reclin evokes sympathy for sharks and debunks the myth of them as human-killing machines, favorably comparing the number of people killed by sharks each year to those killed by car accidents, bee stings, dog bites, and falling vending machines.

Sharks is written in a straightforward style, with small doses of text blocked off in individual captions, making the book more digestible for younger and reluctant readers. But the quality of that text is consistently high, and Reclin doesn't shy away from the hard-to-pronounce ancient animal names that children often love to memorize: *Dunkleosteus*, *Cretoxyrhina*, *Tylosaurus*, and more. Hard science is thus boiled down to its essence and further put into context through the outstanding visuals.

Reclin has a talent for drawing sharks, dinosaurs, and animals in general, and his enthusiasm for this project permeates the book. The colors are brilliant, the paper quality and packaging superb, and the backgrounds—a combination of drawn art and the smart, restrained use of computer-manipulated photographs—give a true sense of immersion into the environments depicted.

Sharks: A 400 Million Year Journey is likely to strike a chord with any young reader, and many older ones. It's an entertaining and educational tour through time and deserves a place in school, public, and private libraries everywhere.

PETER DABBENE (April 4, 2018)

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