

The Big Aquarium Adventure: Learn About Frogs, Fish, Turtles, Sharks, and Skates!

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The first book in the Alex and Jordan Explore series, The Big Aquarium Adventure centers marine life and its allure.

In Nancy Roop's educational chapter book *The Big Aquarium Adventure*, a fourth grader recounts his first visit to an aquarium, encouraging research and enlightenment.

Stephen visits an aquarium for the first time during his vacation and shares his experience with his inquisitive friend Alex when he returns to school. Alex, who has never been to an aquarium, is in awe. He proceeds to quiz Stephen, documenting his answers in a notebook. With Stephen's permission, Alex shares all that he learned with his friend Jordan, who uses the information to create an insightful report. Intrigued and encouraged by their findings, the duo write a story, making it as factual as possible.

The book's neat format makes the presented information appealing. During the interview, circles with Alex's and Stephen's faces are placed beside what they say, making their casual chatting experience visual, as in a mobile application. The characters' thoughts are also captured in bubbles that add humor to the story, as when Stephen thinks about how Alex is always asking questions at the beginning and how he is glad to be done with the interview when it's over. They also aid in explaining some terms that might be unfamiliar, as with an illustration of a sandbar when Stephen talks about the sandbar shark he saw. Indeed, the expressive and detailed illustrations complement the narration throughout.

Lessons abound: Stephen's explanation of how he knew it was okay to touch the clearnose skates while in the aquarium is an encouragement to pay attention to signs everywhere as they could have important information. He also shares a helpful method for dealing with anxiety to avoid breaking down in public places. Also included in the book are activities and questions that enable introspection and interactive discussions. And Jordan's research and report, influenced by Stephen's account, is a handy template of what a report should contain. It shares the book's warm color scheme and includes concise information about five sea animals that live in or near the eastern United States. At the end of the report, these five sea animals are compared and contrasted.

The Big Aquarium Adventure is an informative three-part book about aquatic learning—the first in the Alex and Jordan Explore series, with this entry centering marine life and its allure.

GABRIELLA HARRISON (January 17, 2024)

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