

The Shark and the Scar

AUTHOR

SARAH MOORE FITZGERALD

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RECOMMENDED FOR: Lower Secondary



SYNOPSIS

Thirteen-year-old Jay survived a shark attack. He has a big scar on his body, and he doesn't remember exactly what happened. Sadly, his estranged mum didn't survive the horrific accident, and Jay and his dad have moved to the west coast of Ireland, where he surfs and keeps his past a secret. He's not allowed a phone, and they don't have the internet at home.

But when he and his friend Jess do some research for her family's surfing school, he discovers something that makes him sure his dad has been lying. Suddenly Jay doesn't recognise the dad he's trusted all his life. What really happened on the terrible day he can't remember? What actually happened to his mum? And does he even want to know?

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Sarah Moore Fitzgerald grew up in Dublin but now lives in County Clare, where she's part of the creative writing team at the University of Limerick. She's also director of UL's Creative Writing Winter School and founding member of Writepace, a Limerick-based writing co-operative.

Follow her on Twitter @SMooreFitz

STUDY NOTES

- What predictions can you make about the story from the title? Work in pairs or small groups and predict ten key words you think you will see in this book.
- The blurb says, 'but what if his dad is lying?' Do you think it was a shark attack? If it wasn't, what else could have caused Jay to have a big scar on his body?
- What is the significance of 'the semi-circles of grey – like stains or bruises' under Jay's dad's eyes?
- Jay's dad refers to Jay as 'buddy', does this tell you anything about their relationship? What other words are similar to 'buddy'?
- 'It might make you feel a bit woozy.' Can you think about what the word 'woozy' means in this context? Can you think of any synonyms for the word 'woozy'?
- 'Jay's head felt full of fog.' What does this expression mean? What is fog? How do you think Jay was feeling at this moment in time?
- Do you think the nurse, Tom, did a good thing by allowing Jay to see his scar?

- Working in groups, discuss the positive and negative points about talking about an accident or a terrible memory.
- ‘Jay felt a weird loneliness’—What impact do you think this had on Jay’s mental health?
- How important do you think it is to consider some normality after such a terrible time?
- Lonnie asks Jay a question: ‘If your emotions were a colour, what colour do you think they would be?’ What colour do you think Jay’s emotions are at this point when he is still surrounded by a medical team?
- Was Jess in the wrong for staring at Jay? How do you feel when someone stares at you? Should Jess feel shameful about her reaction towards Jay? How do you think she should have reacted?
- What is the significance of the phrase ‘The shark that attacks you is the shark you do not hear’ and ‘Jay wearing his headphones in the water?’
- Should sharks be a protected species?
- Are people at risk from shark attacks when the probability is so low?
- Write a diary entry from Jay’s perspective. Consider how he is feeling, thinking about the points below:
 - Leaving France and his friends
 - Leaving behind everything familiar to him
 - Sustaining severe injuries
 - Recovery
 - The scar
 - Realising his mother was to blame
 - A new sibling
 - His father lying to him
 - A new life ahead.
- Can you make a hashtag wall in your classroom to reflect on all the key language and topics covered in the book? Choose your own hashtag words reflecting on what you have understood and remembered. Discuss all of the hashtags on the wall and share ideas, thoughts and reflections on this book.