

Island of the Blue Dolphins, Chapter 8
Alone on the Island—Exploring Thoughts and Feelings

Grade Level

Upper Elementary: Third Grade through Fifth Grade

Subject

Literacy and Language Arts, Social Studies

Common Core Standards

4.SL.1, 4.RL.1

Background Information

Chapter 8 is the last time that Karana ever speaks to another member of her community—her brother Ramo. The two are alone on the island, adjusting to being on their own for the first time.

This new situation allows O’Dell to highlight Karana and Ramo’s characters. Karana, for example, feels very protective of her younger brother, even though he sees himself as very grown-up and declares himself to be Chief of Ghalas-at. While Ramo views their time alone on the island almost as a game, Karana knows that the situation is serious—they might have to wait a long time before they are reunited with their fellow islanders. The circumstances surrounding Ramo’s untimely death also give the reader a window into Karana’s thoughts and feelings.

This close reading activity is designed to help students examine the text for words and actions that demonstrate how Karana and Ramo are feeling during this pivotal moment in their lives.

Jigsaw: This strategy allows students to become “experts” about one aspect of the text so that they can teach other students what they have learned. Divide students into small groups. These groups will be called their home or base groups. Once home/base groups have been established, assign each student a number within their group. These numbers will be their expert numbers and will represent the topic or question for which they will be responsible. Regroup students into their expert groups by numbers. If the class is large, you may want to modify this activity by simply having students work with a partner who has the same number/topic. Give students time to learn about their topic with their expert groups. Then, ask them to return to their home/base groups to share what they have learned and to learn about the other topics from their group members.

Materials

- Copy of activity sheet for each student (provided)
- Class set of *Island of the Blue Dolphins*

Procedure

1. Give each student a copy of the activity sheet.
2. If necessary, explain the jigsaw strategy.
3. Assign students to home/base groups.
4. Assign students expert numbers within their home/base groups.
5. Regroup students into expert groups.
6. Review the directions and example on the activity sheet.
7. Give the students time to work.
8. Ask students to return to their home/base groups.
9. Give students time to teach their classmates what they have learned.
10. To shorten this activity: Instead of using the jigsaw strategy, have students complete the activity sheet with a partner.
11. To lengthen this activity: Follow up with a class discussion about what students have learned.

Enrichment Activities

1. Although Ramo declares himself Chief of Ghalas-at, Karana ends up alone on the island. Does she act like a chief? Use evidence from the novel to support your answer. Be sure to compare her actions and attitude to those of one of the chiefs in the novel: Ramo, Chowig, or Matasaip.
2. Writing prompt: Do you think Karana is a good sister?