

BookLife Review January 2024

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

Nancy Roop

With inviting art and an inventive, intuitive layout blending comics, instant messages, and some more traditional text elements, this interactive children's book kicks off Roop's Alex and Jordan Explore series with a splash. Young Stephen shares his story of a family vacation to Baltimore's National Aquarium with his friend, Alex, who decides to use Stephen's story as a chance to brush up on his interviewing skills. Through Stephen's narrative young readers will learn about frogs, turtles, sharks, and skates, while Alex and later Jordan demonstrate practical skills like how to conduct an interview, how to research for facts for a report, and the difference between writing fiction and nonfiction, plus vital guidance about handling some complex emotions.

Roop engages young readers through interactive questions, vibrant images of sea and amphibian life, and thought-provoking comparison charts that will get young minds thinking. Each character provides young readers with a new lesson: Stephen delves into ways to quell fear, how to say no when feeling uncomfortable, and calming anxiety; Alex, the young reporter, highlights ways to interview through insightful questions and securing proper consent when sharing someone else's story; and Jordan explores the skill of research to be sure that the accurate knowledge is being provided. With keywords in each chapter and a glossary in the back matter, young readers will learn new words and all about sea animals through this informative story.

Serious information about the soft skeleton of a shark, the different habitats of sea creatures, and introductions to new and unusual sea life is mostly presented with a spirit of fun, though some text passages documenting facts learned at the aquarium are on occasion dry. Still, *The Big Aquarium Adventure* is a pleasure to look at on the page, alive with sharks, fish, frogs, and more, plus engaging comic panels and pop-in messages from the cast. Each chapter encourages readers to pause and think about the information provided and also asks engaging questions.

Takeaway: Smart chapter book about sea life, researching, handling emotions, and more.

Comparable Titles: Cass Kim's *Stephanie's Spectacular Aquarium Visit*, Laura Daisy's *The Amazing Adventures of Us*.

Production grades

Cover: **A**

Design and typography: **A**

Illustrations: **A**

Editing: **A-**

Marketing copy: **A**