



## Sharks: Guardians of the Ocean

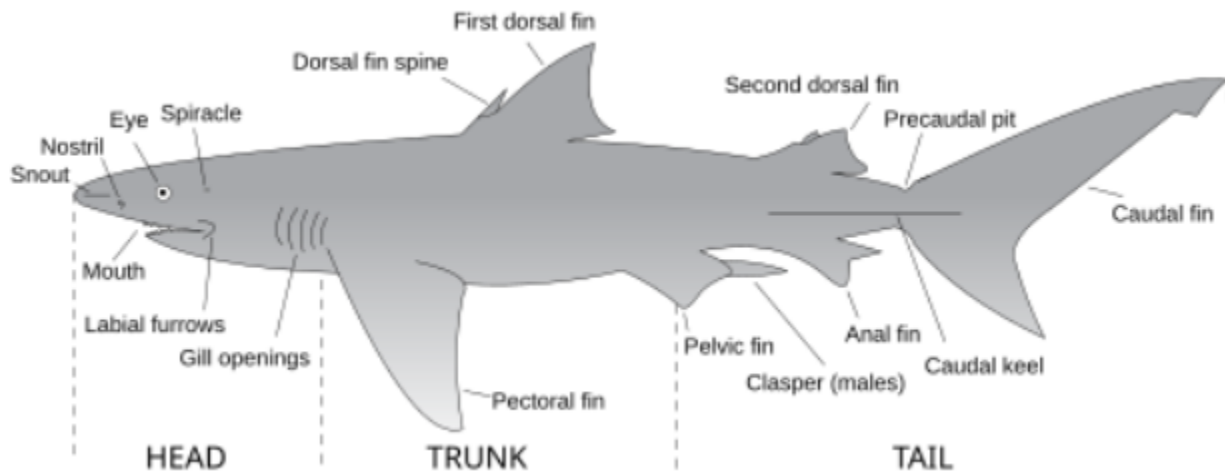
**Directions:** Read the passage carefully. Then answer the questions that follow.

### Passage 1

Sharks have been swimming in Earth's oceans for more than 400 million years — long before dinosaurs existed! They come in many shapes and sizes, from the tiny dwarf lanternshark to the giant whale shark. Sharks play an important role in keeping the ocean community, or ecosystem, balanced and healthy. An ecosystem is like a neighborhood where plants, animals, and the environment work together. Without sharks, this “neighborhood” could become overcrowded with certain species, which would harm the balance of life in the sea. Their presence helps ensure that the ocean remains a place where many different creatures can survive and thrive.

Sharks are not just fierce hunters; they are important for keeping the ocean healthy. By hunting weaker or slower animals, sharks prevent the spread of disease and protect the overall health of the ocean. This helps coral reefs and other marine habitats stay strong, which benefits fish, sea turtles, and even humans who rely on healthy oceans for food and oxygen. Imagine a coral reef without sharks – small fish might multiply too quickly, eating too much algae and upsetting the delicate balance. Sharks act like nature's cleanup crew, making sure everything stays in order.

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Sharks have special features that make them excellent hunters. Their skeletons are made of cartilage, a strong yet flexible material also found in human noses and ears, which is lighter and more flexible than bone. This allows them to move quickly and turn sharply while chasing prey. They also have amazing senses – they can smell a drop of blood from far away and detect tiny electrical signals from other animals. Some sharks can even see well in low light, allowing them to hunt at night. These abilities make them one of the most efficient predators in the ocean.

Sadly, many sharks are in danger because of overfishing, habitat loss, and shark finning. Overfishing happens when too many sharks are caught faster than they can reproduce. Habitat loss occurs when pollution or climate change damages the places sharks live. Shark finning is the removal of a shark's fin for the purpose of making shark fin soup or other products, often while the rest of the shark is discarded back into the ocean. This practice is both wasteful and cruel. Sharks are important for the health of the ocean and for the future of marine life. If sharks disappear, the balance of the ocean will be disrupted, and many other species could suffer.

**1. Part A: What is the central idea of the passage?**

- a) Sharks are dangerous animals that should be avoided
- b) Sharks are important for keeping the ocean healthy
- c) Sharks are the fastest swimmers in the ocean
- d) Sharks are more important than any other sea creature

**Part B: Which sentence best supports the answer to Part A?**

- a) Their presence helps ensure that the ocean remains a place where many different creatures can survive and thrive
- b) "Sharks have extraordinary senses that make them excellent hunters"
- c) "The whale shark is the largest shark in the world and feeds on plankton"
- d) "Sharks have existed for more than 400 million years"

**2. Part A: What is the author's claim in this text?**

- a) Sharks are dangerous animals that should be avoided
- b) Sharks are essential to the health of the ocean and must be protected
- c) Sharks are the fastest swimmers in the ocean
- d) Sharks are more important than any other sea creature

**Part B: Which sentence from the passage best supports the answer to Part A?**

- a) "By hunting weaker or slower animals, sharks prevent the spread of disease and protect the overall health of the ocean"
- b) "Sharks have extraordinary senses that make them excellent hunters"
- c) "The whale shark is the largest shark in the world and feeds on plankton"
- d) "Sharks have existed for more than 400 million years"

**3. What does *cartilage* mean as it is used in paragraph 3?**

- a) A rough tissue found only in sharks
- b) A strong yet flexible material found in human noses and ears
- c) A type of bone that grows faster than normal bones
- d) A layer of skin that protects sharks from predators

**4. What does *ecosystem* mean as it is used in paragraph 1?**

- a) A group of living things and their environment working together
- b) A large body of salt water
- c) A type of underwater plant
- d) A group of predators that hunt the same prey

**5. Select two details that should be included in a summary of the passage.**

- a) Sharks are ancient animals that play an important role in keeping the ocean's ecosystem balanced
- b) The whale shark can grow up to 40 feet long
- c) Sharks help keep the ocean healthy by controlling other animal populations
- d) Sharks have special organs called ampullae of Lorenzini that detect electrical signals
- e) Some sharks can go into a trance-like state called tonic immobility

**6. Which paragraph best explains *why* sharks are important to coral reefs?**

- a) Paragraph 1
- b) Paragraph 2
- c) Paragraph 3
- d) Paragraph 4

**7. Which sentence from the passage shows cause and effect?**

- a) "Sharks have special features that make them excellent hunters"
- b) "By hunting weaker or slower animals, sharks prevent the spread of disease and protect the overall health of the ocean"
- c) "Some sharks can even see well in low light, allowing them to hunt at night"
- d) "Overfishing happens when too many sharks are caught faster than they can reproduce"

**8. Which text feature could be used to best help a reader understand the different types of prey sharks hunt?**

- a) A map of shark migration patterns
- b) A chart comparing different types of sharks
- c) A timeline of shark evolution
- d) A diagram showing a shark's food web

**9. Which statement is an opinion?**

- a) Sharks have skeletons made of cartilage
- b) Shark finning is a cruel practice that should be stopped
- c) Sharks are important for keeping the ocean healthy
- d) Sharks can detect tiny electrical signals from other animals

**10. Which detail from the passage best supports the idea that sharks are skilled hunters?**

- a) "They can smell a drop of blood from far away"
- b) "Sharks have existed for more than 400 million years"
- c) "Sharks play an important role in keeping the ocean community balanced"
- d) "Overfishing happens when too many sharks are caught faster than they can reproduce"

**11. Which event would most likely happen if sharks disappeared from the ocean?**

- a) Coral reefs would become healthier
- b) The ocean would have fewer fish species
- c) Certain fish populations might grow too large and harm the ecosystem
- d) The ocean's water temperature would rise

**12. Which sentence from the passage is a fact?**

- a) "Sharks are the most fascinating animals in the ocean"
- b) "Shark finning is the removal of a shark's fin for the purpose of making shark fin soup or other products, often while the rest of the shark is discarded back into the ocean"
- c) "Sharks are the most important creatures in the sea"
- d) "Sharks are the scariest predators in the ocean"