

16 Octopus in a Coconut

A small octopus found half an empty coconut shell on the ocean floor. She turned the shell over and held the center of her body over the hollow bowl. She stretched her eight arms over the edge of the shell and down to the sand. Then she lifted the shell and walked across the seabed on the tips of her arms. When she came to a second half-shell, she pulled it on top of the first shell, and hid safely inside.

From what you pictured...

What is the main idea of this story?

Where do you think the coconut shells came from?

Why do you think the octopus would want to hide inside the shells?

Why do you think the octopus carried the shell across the seabed?

Why do you think she needed two half-shells to hide?



35 Giant Pumpkin

A farmer plants a small pumpkin vine in a bare patch of dark soil. Soon the vine sprouts big green leaves and lots of small pumpkins. The farmer cuts off small leaves and many pumpkins until there are just lots of big leaves and one big pumpkin. He waters the vine each day for months, watching the pumpkin grow and grow. At harvest time, the farmer and a friend drive a tractor and a truck out to the pumpkin patch. The farmer walks up to the giant pumpkin, which now comes up to his waist, and cuts it off the thick vine. The two men wrap the giant pumpkin with straps and hook them onto the tractor's crane. Gently, they hoist the pumpkin off the ground, set it in the truck bed, and drive off to a Giant Pumpkin Contest.

From what you pictured...

What is the main idea of this story?

Why do you think the farmer cuts off all the other pumpkins?

Why do you think the farmer has a friend help him harvest the pumpkin?

Why do you think the farmer and his friend wrap the pumpkin with straps?

Why do you think the farmer and his friend need both the tractor and the truck?

What do you think will happen at the contest?



37 Sperm Whale Nap

A small pod of sperm whales swims in the ocean. When they are hungry they take huge breaths of air at the surface. Then they dive deep into the dark sea to hunt giant squid. After the whales are done hunting, the pod gathers to rest near the surface. The whales take a breath and let their tails sink down so their heads point straight up. In this way the whales fall asleep, slowly bobbing up and down in the water, taking a breath each time they break the surface. After a few hours, the whales wake up and swim off again.

From what you pictured...

What is the main idea of this story?

Why do you think the whales need to take huge breaths of air?

Why do you think the whales dive deep into the sea to hunt squid?

Why do you think they sleep after they hunt?

What do you think would happen if a whale did not bob back up while he was sleeping?

What do you think the whales do next?



54 Foxes, Eagles, and People

Over five years, scientists noted that the number of foxes on the Channel Islands kept dropping. A scientist named Gary Roemer made up his mind to find out why. Roemer searched the islands for clues. He found one in a clearing between some bushes: the partial remains of a fox. He could tell by the scrapes and bite marks on the body and bones that an eagle had killed it. Soon Roemer found many more fox remains. Most of them had the same types of scrapes and bite marks as the first.

Roemer was puzzled; bald eagles and foxes had lived in peace on the islands for a long time. And bald eagles were fierce about chasing other kinds of eagles away from the islands. So Roemer began to count the eagles on the islands. He learned that, in fact, there were very few bald eagles left. In their place, Roemer found many golden eagle nests. He even watched in surprise as a golden eagle attacked a fox. Roemer feared that since the eagles were such strong hunters, the foxes would soon be killed off.

Roemer learned that farmers had poisoned the bald eagles by accident. Years ago, farmers sprayed a strong bug poison called DDT on crops. The poison killed the bugs, but it also got into the soil and plants. Mice and rats got poisoned too, and they were eaten by the bald eagles. The poison made eagles lay thin-shelled eggs that were easy to break, and fewer eggs hatched. As bald eagles became more rare in the Channel Islands, the smaller golden eagles moved in.

To save the last of the foxes, Roemer decided to catch and move the golden eagles. He set up nets as traps and baited them. But sharp-eyed eagles watched Roemer from more than a mile away as he set the traps. Most times, the eagles did not come near them. In five years, Roemer was only able to catch thirty golden eagles in the nets. He took these eagles to mountains on the mainland far away, and set them free. But many golden eagles still remain on the islands.