

Ghost of the Lagoon

Short Story by Armstrong Sperry

What makes a HERO?



ILLINOIS OBJECTIVES

READING STANDARDS

1.6.07 Make and verify predictions

2.6.06 Recognize points of view

KEY IDEA Many different people can be considered heroes. A person’s heroes might include well-known sports figures, firefighters, survivors of disaster, teachers, or respected friends and relatives. A **hero**, with his or her bravery, inner strength, or kindness, gives us inspiration for our everyday lives. In “Ghost of the Lagoon,” a boy faces a difficult situation with heroic skill and courage.

CHART IT Think of three heroic people you know. Write their names in a chart like the one shown. Then identify the actions and personal qualities that make them heroes to you.

Heroes		
Person	Actions	Qualities
1. Aunt Gwen	helps injured animals	kind, funny
2.		



LITERARY ANALYSIS: THIRD-PERSON POINT OF VIEW

When a story is told from the **third-person point of view**, the **narrator** is not a character in the story but is observing from the outside. Because of this, the third-person narrator is often able to reveal more information about all the characters' thoughts, feelings, and actions than any single character from the story could reveal.

As you read "The Ghost of the Lagoon," look for details the narrator provides about the main character.

READING STRATEGY: PREDICT

Writers often give their readers clues to help them **predict**, or make a reasonable guess about, what might happen in a story. As a reader, you combine details from the story with your own knowledge and experience to help you make predictions about what you are reading.

As you read, use a chart like the one shown to write down your predictions and the clues from the story that helped you make them.

My Prediction	Clues in Story
Mako will use his harpoon during the story.	Mako is clever, the harpoon he made is sharp and has five iron spears.

VOCABULARY IN CONTEXT

Armstrong Sperry uses the boldfaced words to help tell an adventure story. Use context clues to figure out the meaning of each of the boldfaced words.

- The boy ran off in **pursuit** of a frightening sea creature.
- It had always made the calm, watery **lagoon** its home.
- Creatures would sometimes hide in gaps in the **reef**.
- The hunter was feeling **tense** from stress.
- Mako had spent a **restless** night worrying.
- He felt very **vulnerable** in his small, flimsy boat.

Story Lover As a boy growing up in Connecticut, Armstrong Sperry loved listening to his grandfather's wonderful tales of the South Sea Islands. In 1925, after studying art in college and working as an illustrator, Sperry headed to the South Pacific. He spent several months on the island of Bora Bora, charmed by the island's beauty and culture. He was inspired by its brave people, who rebuilt their island after it was destroyed by a hurricane during Sperry's time there.



Armstrong Sperry
1897–1976

World Traveler Sperry returned to the United States and settled in Vermont, but he couldn't resist going back to sea. He set sail again, traveling the world in search of ideas for stories. The books and stories Sperry wrote often have characters who, like the people of Bora Bora, overcome a great challenge with strength and courage.



MORE ABOUT THE AUTHOR

For more on Armstrong Sperry, visit the Literature Center at ClassZone.com.

Background

Pacific Island Bora Bora, where this story takes place, is one of more than 100 small islands in French Polynesia in the southern Pacific Ocean. The island is almost completely surrounded by coral reefs and is known for the crystal clear waters of its lagoon.

GHOST of the LAGOON

Armstrong Sperry

The island of Bora Bora, where Mako lived, is far away in the South Pacific. It is not a large island—you can paddle around it in a single day—but the main body of it rises straight out of the sea, very high into the air, like a castle. Waterfalls trail down the faces of the cliffs. As you look upward, you see wild goats leaping from crag to crag.

Mako had been born on the very edge of the sea, and most of his waking hours were spent in the waters of the **lagoon**, which was nearly enclosed by the two outstretched arms of the island. He was very clever with his hands; he had made a harpoon that was as straight as an arrow and tipped with
10 five pointed iron spears. He had made a canoe, hollowing it out of a tree. It wasn't a very big canoe—only a little longer than his own height. It had an outrigger, a sort of balancing pole, fastened to one side to keep the boat from tipping over. The canoe was just large enough to hold Mako and his little dog, Afa. They were great companions, these two. **A**

ANALYZE VISUALS

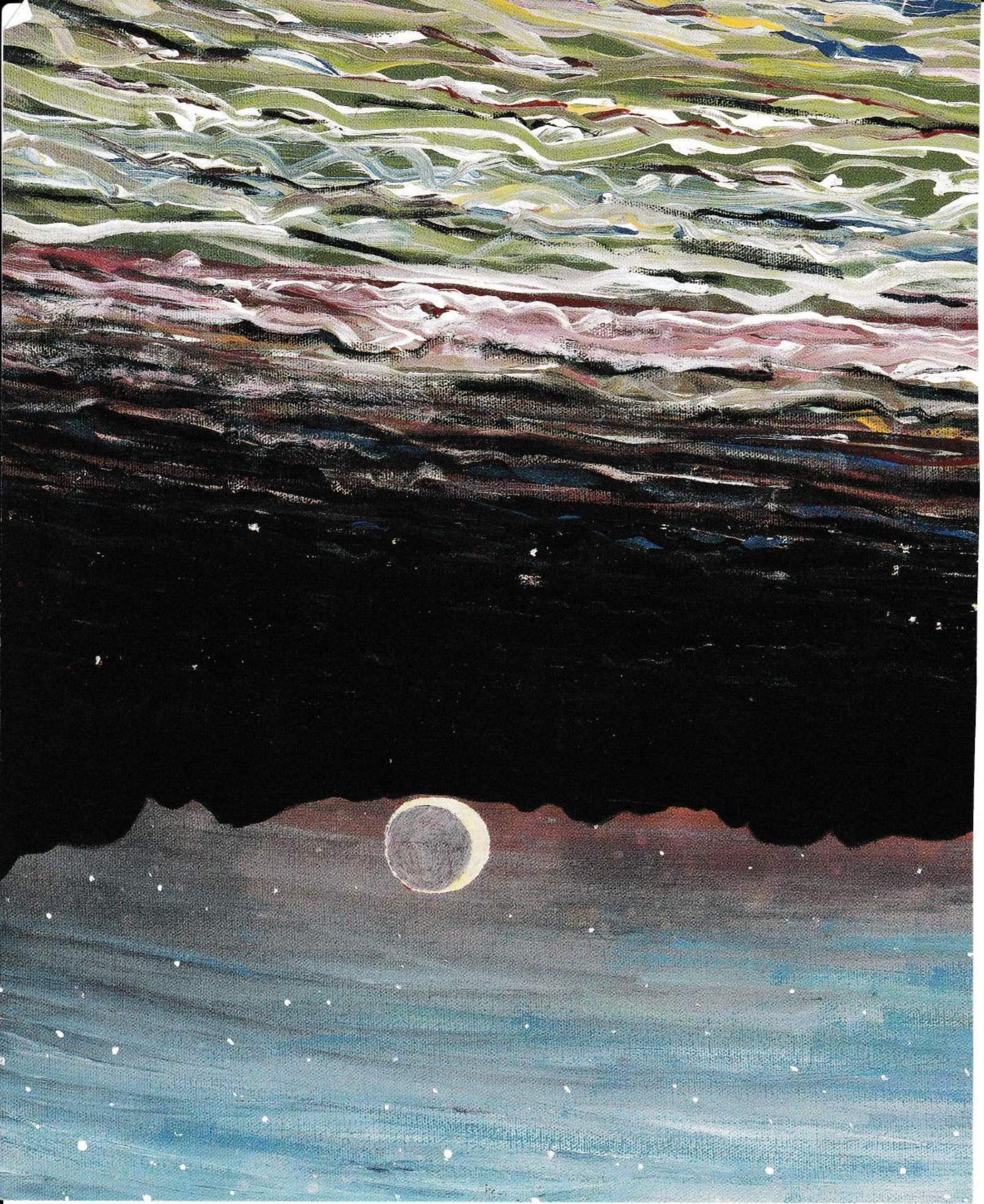
What sense does this painting give you of the story's **setting**?

lagoon (lə-gōōn') *n.* a shallow body of water separated from a larger body of water by sandbars or other barriers

A THIRD-PERSON POINT OF VIEW

Reread lines 6–14.

What does the **narrator** reveal about Mako?



One evening Mako lay stretched at full length on the pandanus mats,¹ listening to Grandfather's voice. Overhead, stars shone in the dark sky. From far off came the thunder of the surf on the **reef**.

The old man was speaking of Tupa, the ghost of the lagoon. Ever since the boy could remember, he had heard tales of this terrible monster. Frightened fishermen, returning from the reef at midnight, spoke of the ghost. Over the evening fires, old men told endless tales about the monster.

Tupa seemed to think the lagoon of Bora Bora belonged to him. The natives left presents of food for him out on the reef: a dead goat, a chicken, or a pig. The presents always disappeared mysteriously, but everyone felt sure that it was Tupa who carried them away. Still, in spite of all this food, the nets of the fishermen were torn during the night, the fish stolen. What an appetite Tupa seemed to have!

Not many people had ever seen the ghost of the lagoon. Grandfather was one of the few who had.

"What does he really look like, Grandfather?" the boy asked, for the hundredth time.

The old man shook his head solemnly. The light from the cook fire glistened on his white hair. "Tupa lives in the great caves of the reef. He is longer than this house. There is a sail on his back, not large but terrible to see, for it burns with a white fire. Once, when I was fishing beyond the reef at night, I saw him come up right under another canoe—"

"What happened then?" Mako asked. He half rose on one elbow. This was a story he had not heard before.

The old man's voice dropped to a whisper. "Tupa dragged the canoe right under the water—and the water boiled with white flame. The three fishermen in it were never seen again. Fine swimmers they were, too." **B**

Grandfather shook his head. "It is bad fortune even to speak of Tupa. There is evil in his very name."

"But King Opu Nui has offered a reward for his capture," the boy pointed out.

"Thirty acres of fine coconut land, and a sailing canoe as well," said the old man. "But who ever heard of laying hands on a ghost?"

Mako's eyes glistened. "Thirty acres of land and a sailing canoe. How I should love to win that reward!"

Grandfather nodded, but Mako's mother scolded her son for such foolish talk. "Be quiet now, son, and go to sleep. Grandfather has told you that it is bad fortune to speak of Tupa. Alas, how well we have learned that lesson! Your father—" She stopped herself.

reef (rēf) *n.* a ridge of rocks, sand, or coral that rises to the surface of a body of water

SOCIAL STUDIES CONNECTION



Only six miles long, Bora Bora is one of the "Society Islands" of French Polynesia in the South Pacific.

B PREDICT

Reread lines 31–42. What kind of creature do you think Tupa is? Note this information on your chart.

1. **pandanus** (pān-dā'nās) **mats**: mats made from the fiber of leaves from a palmlike tree.



Detail of *Fishermen, Finisterre* (1951), Keith Vaughan. Oil on canvas, 91.4 cm × 71.1 cm. Private collection. © Bridgeman Art Library. © 2008 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York/DACS, London.

ANALYZE VISUALS
What do the **details** in this painting tell you about the three men?

“What of my father?” the boy asked quickly. And now he sat up straight on the mats.

“Tell him, Grandfather,” his mother whispered.

The old man cleared his throat and poked at the fire. A little shower of sparks whirled up into the darkness.

60 “Your father,” he explained gently, “was one of the three fishermen in the canoe that Tupa destroyed.” His words fell upon the air like stones dropped into a deep well.

Mako shivered. He brushed back the hair from his damp forehead. Then he squared his shoulders and cried fiercely, “I shall slay Tupa and win the king’s reward!” He rose to his knees, his slim body **tense**, his eyes flashing in the firelight. **C**

“Hush!” his mother said. “Go to sleep now. Enough of such foolish talk. Would you bring trouble upon us all?”

Mako lay down again upon the mats. He rolled over on his side
70 and closed his eyes, but sleep was long in coming.

The palm trees whispered above the dark lagoon, and far out on the reef the sea thundered.

tense (tĕns) *adj.*
nervous; feeling strain

C PREDICT
Consider the conversation between the **characters** and what you know so far about Mako. What do you think is going to happen? Add this information to your chart.

The boy was slow to wake up the next morning. The ghost of Tupa had played through his dreams, making him **restless**. And so it was almost noon before Mako sat up on the mats and stretched himself. He called Afa, and the boy and his dog ran down to the lagoon for their morning swim. **D**

When they returned to the house, wide-awake and hungry, Mako's mother had food ready and waiting.

80 "These are the last of our bananas," she told him. "I wish you would paddle out to the reef this afternoon and bring back a new bunch."

The boy agreed eagerly. Nothing pleased him more than such an errand, which would take him to a little island on the outer reef, half a mile from shore. It was one of Mako's favorite playgrounds, and there bananas and oranges grew in great plenty.

"Come, Afa," he called, gulping the last mouthful. "We're going on an expedition." He picked up his long-bladed knife and seized his spear. A minute later, he dashed across the white sand, where his canoe was drawn up beyond the water's reach.

90 Afa barked at his heels. He was all white except for a black spot over each eye. Wherever Mako went, there went Afa also. Now the little dog leaped into the bow of the canoe, his tail wagging with delight. The boy shoved the canoe into the water and climbed aboard. Then, picking up his paddle, he thrust it into the water. The canoe shot ahead. Its sharp bow cut through the green water of the lagoon like a knife through cheese. And so clear was the water that Mako could see the coral gardens, forty feet below him, growing in the sand. The shadow of the canoe moved over them.

A school of fish swept by like silver arrows. He saw scarlet rock cod with ruby eyes and the head of a conger eel² peering out from a cavern in the coral. The boy thought suddenly of Tupa, ghost of the lagoon. On such a bright day it was hard to believe in ghosts of any sort. The fierce sunlight drove away all thought of them. Perhaps ghosts were only old men's stories, anyway!

Mako's eyes came to rest upon his spear—the spear that he had made with his own hands—the spear that was as straight and true as an arrow. He remembered his vow of the night before. Could a ghost be killed with a spear? Some night, when all the village was sleeping, Mako swore to himself that he would find out! He would paddle out to the reef and challenge Tupa! Perhaps tonight. Why not? He caught his breath at the
110 thought. A shiver ran down his back. His hands were tense on the paddle. **E**

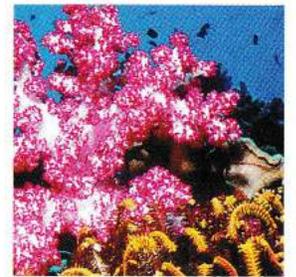
restless (rĕst'lis) *adj.*
unable to sleep or rest

D THIRD-PERSON POINT OF VIEW

Reread lines 73–77.

What is the **narrator** able to reveal about Mako that the other **characters** in the story wouldn't know?

VISUAL VOCABULARY



coral (kôr'əl) *n.* a type of marine animal, the skeletons of which build up a rocklike underwater structure called a reef

E THIRD-PERSON POINT OF VIEW

Reread lines 105–111.

How do you learn what Mako is thinking even though he hasn't spoken?

2. **rock cod . . . conger eel:** Rock cod is a type of saltwater fish, and a conger eel is a large eel.

As the canoe drew away from shore, the boy saw the coral reef that, above all others, had always interested him. It was of white coral—a long slim shape that rose slightly above the surface of the water. It looked very much like a shark. There was a ridge on the back that the boy could pretend was a dorsal fin, while up near one end were two dark holes that looked like eyes!

Times without number the boy had practiced spearing this make-believe shark, aiming always for the eyes, the most **vulnerable** spot. So true and straight had his aim become that the spear would pass right into the eyeholes without even touching the sides of the coral. Mako had named the coral reef Tupa. **F**

This morning, as he paddled past it, he shook his fist and called, “Ho, Mister Tupa! Just wait till I get my bananas. When I come back, I’ll make short work of you!”

Afa followed his master’s words with a sharp bark. He knew Mako was excited about something.

The bow of the canoe touched the sand of the little island where the bananas grew. Afa leaped ashore and ran barking into the jungle, now on this trail, now on that. Clouds of sea birds whirled from their nests into the air with angry cries.

Mako climbed into the shallow water, waded ashore, and pulled his canoe up on the beach. Then, picking up his banana knife, he followed Afa. In the jungle the light was so dense and green that the boy felt as if he were moving underwater. Ferns grew higher than his head. The branches of the trees formed a green roof over him. A flock of parakeets fled on swift wings. Somewhere a wild pig crashed through the undergrowth while Afa dashed away in **pursuit**. Mako paused anxiously. Armed only with his banana knife, he had no desire to meet the wild pig. The pig, it seemed, had no desire to meet him, either.

Then, ahead of him, the boy saw the broad green blades of a banana tree. A bunch of bananas, golden ripe, was growing out of the top.

At the foot of the tree he made a nest of soft leaves for the bunch to fall upon. In this way the fruit would not be crushed. Then with a swift slash of his blade he cut the stem. The bananas fell to the earth with a dull thud. He found two more bunches.

Then he thought, “I might as well get some oranges while I’m here. Those little rusty ones are sweeter than any that grow on Bora Bora.”

So he set about making a net out of palm leaves to carry the oranges. As he worked, his swift fingers moving in and out among the strong green leaves, he could hear Afa’s excited barks off in the jungle. That was just like Afa, always barking at something: a bird, a fish, a wild pig. He never caught anything, either. Still, no boy ever had a finer companion.

VISUAL VOCABULARY



dorsal fin (dôr'səl fĭn) *n.*
the main fin on the back
of a fish or shark

vulnerable
(vül'nər-ə-bel) *adj.* open
to attack or damage

F PREDICT

Reread lines 118–122.
Based on the description
of the coral, what do
you predict will happen
next? Write your
prediction on your chart.

pursuit (pər-sōot') *n.*
the act of following
or chasing

The palm net took longer to make than Mako had realized. By the time it was finished and filled with oranges, the jungle was dark and gloomy. Night comes quickly and without warning in the islands of the tropics.

Mako carried the fruit down to the shore and loaded it into the canoe. Then he whistled to Afa. The dog came bounding out of the bush, wagging his tail.

160 “Hurry!” Mako scolded. “We won’t be home before the dark comes.”

The little dog leaped into the bow of the canoe, and Mako came aboard. Night seemed to rise up from the surface of the water and swallow them. On the distant shore of Bora Bora, cook fires were being lighted. The first star twinkled just over the dark mountains. Mako dug his paddle into the water, and the canoe leaped ahead.

The dark water was alive with phosphorus.³ The bow of the canoe seemed to cut through a pale liquid fire. Each dip of the paddle trailed streamers of light. As the canoe approached the coral reef, the boy called, “Ho, Tupa! It’s too late tonight to teach you your lesson. But I’ll come
170 back tomorrow.” The coral shark glistened in the darkness. **G**

And then, suddenly, Mako’s breath caught in his throat. His hands felt weak. Just beyond the fin of the coral Tupa, there was another fin—a huge one. It had never been there before. And—could he believe his eyes? It was moving.

The boy stopped paddling. He dashed his hand across his eyes. Afa began to bark furiously. The great white fin, shaped like a small sail, glowed with phosphorescent light. Then Mako knew. Here was Tupa—the real Tupa—ghost of the lagoon! **H**

His knees felt weak. He tried to cry out, but his voice died in his throat.
180 The great shark was circling slowly around the canoe. With each circle, it moved closer and closer. Now the boy could see the phosphorescent glow of the great shark’s sides. As it moved in closer, he saw the yellow eyes, the gill slits in its throat.

Afa leaped from one side of the canoe to the other. In sudden anger Mako leaned forward to grab the dog and shake him soundly. Afa wriggled out of his grasp as Mako tried to catch him, and the shift in weight tipped the canoe on one side. The outrigger rose from the water. In another second they would be overboard. The boy threw his weight over quickly to balance the canoe, but with a loud splash Afa fell over into
190 the dark water.

Mako stared after him in dismay. The little dog, instead of swimming back to the canoe, had headed for the distant shore. And there was the great white shark—very near.

G THIRD-PERSON POINT OF VIEW

Reread lines 166–170. How would this paragraph be different if Mako were telling the story?

H PREDICT

What do you think Mako will do next? Write your prediction on your chart.

3. **phosphorus** (fōs’fer-es): a substance that glows with a yellowish or white light.



“Afa! Afa! Come back! Come quickly!” Mako shouted.

The little dog turned back toward the canoe. He was swimming with all his strength. Mako leaned forward: Could Afa make it? Swiftly the boy seized his spear. Bracing himself, he stood upright. There was no weakness in him now. His dog, his companion, was in danger of instant death.

Afa was swimming desperately to reach the canoe. The white shark had
200 paused in his circling to gather speed for the attack. Mako raised his arm, took aim. In that instant the shark charged. Mako’s arm flashed forward. All his strength was behind that thrust. The spear drove straight and true, right into the great shark’s eye. Mad with pain and rage, Tupa whipped about, lashing the water in fury. The canoe rocked back and forth. Mako struggled to keep his balance as he drew back the spear by the cord fastened to his wrist.

He bent over to seize Afa and drag him aboard. Then he stood up, not a moment too soon. Once again the shark charged. Once again Mako threw his spear, this time at the other eye. The spear found its mark.

210 Blinded and weak from loss of blood, Tupa rolled to the surface, turned slightly on his side. Was he dead?

ANALYZE VISUALS

How does the shark shown **compare** with your mental picture of Tupa?

Mako knew how clever sharks could be, and he was taking no chances. Scarcely daring to breathe, he paddled toward the still body. He saw the faintest motion of the great tail. The shark was still alive. The boy knew that one flip of that tail could overturn the canoe and send him and Afa into the water, where Tupa could destroy them.

Swiftly, yet calmly, Mako stood upright and braced himself firmly. Then, murmuring a silent prayer to the shark god, he threw his spear for the last time. Downward, swift as sound, the spear plunged into a white

220 shoulder. **I**

Peering over the side of the canoe, Mako could see the great fish turn over far below the surface. Then slowly, slowly, the great shark rose to the surface of the lagoon. There he floated, half on one side.

Tupa was dead.

Mako flung back his head and shouted for joy. Hitching a strong line about the shark's tail, the boy began to paddle toward the shore of Bora Bora. The dorsal fin, burning with the white fire of phosphorus, trailed after the canoe.

Men were running down the beaches of Bora Bora, shouting as they
230 leaped into their canoes and put out across the lagoon. Their cries reached the boy's ears across the water.

"It is Tupa—ghost of the lagoon," he heard them shout. "Mako has killed him!"

That night, as the tired boy lay on the pandanus mats listening to the distant thunder of the sea, he heard Grandfather singing a new song. It was the song which would be sung the next day at the feast which King Opu Nui would give in Mako's honor. The boy saw his mother bending over the cook fire. The stars leaned close, winking like friendly eyes.

Grandfather's voice reached him now from a great distance, "Thirty acres
240 of land and a sailing canoe . . ." 

I PREDICT

How do you predict the story will end?



READING STANDARD
1.6.07 Make and verify predictions

Comprehension

1. **Recall** Where does Mako spend most of his time?
2. **Recall** What weapon does Mako use in his battle with Tupa?
3. **Clarify** What makes Mako so determined to kill Tupa?

Literary Analysis

4. **Predict** Look at the chart you made while reading. Match the predictions you made with what happened in the story. Which of your predictions were correct?
5. **Understand Cause and Effect** A story's events are related by cause and effect when one event becomes the cause of another. Reread lines 147–156. What effect does Mako's decision to gather oranges have on the story?
6. **Examine Conflict** Mako's battle with the shark is an example of **external conflict**, the struggle between a character and an outside force. What **internal conflict**, or struggle within a character's mind, does Mako face when Afa falls into the water?
7. **Analyze Third-Person Point of View** Skim through the story, focusing on descriptions of Mako. Use a chart like the one shown to note information provided by the **narrator** that Mako might not have included if he were telling the story.

Mako's Thoughts	Mako's Feelings	Mako's Actions

8. **Evaluate Character** How does Mako demonstrate the qualities of a **hero**? Explain your answer using details from the story.

Extension and Challenge

9.  **SOCIAL STUDIES CONNECTION** Bora Bora is one of more than 25,000 islands in the South Pacific. These islands are broken up into three major groups: Melanesia, Micronesia, and Polynesia. Do some research to learn more about the islands in one of these groups. Look for information about how the islands were formed, their climate and vegetation, and the cultural history of the people who live there.



RESEARCH LINKS

For more on the islands of the South Pacific, visit the **Research Center** at ClassZone.com.

Vocabulary in Context

VOCABULARY PRACTICE

Show that you understand the vocabulary words by deciding if each statement is true or false.

1. A person who is **restless** has a hard time relaxing.
2. A **lagoon** is an enormous body of water.
3. If a vase is fragile, it is **vulnerable** to being damaged.
4. The leader in a race is the one in **pursuit** of the other racers.
5. A **reef** is a parking lot for cars.
6. A **tense** moment is one that makes people laugh.



VOCABULARY IN WRITING

Imagine you are Mako. Write a paragraph describing how you felt when you were fighting Tupa. Use at least three vocabulary words. Here is a sample of how you might begin.

EXAMPLE SENTENCE

I felt very **vulnerable** while I was fighting Tupa.

VOCABULARY STRATEGY: WORDS CONNECTED WITH WATER

THE VOCABULARY WORD *lagoon* is the name for a certain kind of water body. A *reef* is the name for a kind of structure found in the water. Learning other words connected with water can help you to be more specific when speaking and writing about the environment.

PRACTICE Match each word with its meaning, using a dictionary if needed.

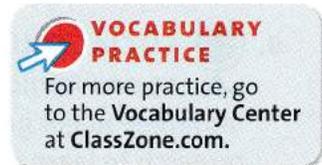
- | | |
|------------|---|
| 1. current | a. man-made waterway, dug across land |
| 2. levee | b. part of the sea extending into the land |
| 3. tide | c. directional flow of water |
| 4. canal | d. high bank to keep a river from overflowing |
| 5. strait | e. rise and fall of the ocean, caused by the pull of the moon |
| 6. bay | f. narrow waterway connecting two bodies of water |



ILLINOIS OBJECTIVES

READING STANDARD

1.6.03 Determine the meaning of a word using word, sentence, and cross-sentence clues



VOCABULARY PRACTICE

For more practice, go to the Vocabulary Center at ClassZone.com.

Reading-Writing Connection



Increase your understanding of “Ghost of the Lagoon” by responding to these prompts. Then complete the **Grammar and Writing** exercise.

WRITING PROMPTS

SELF-CHECK

A. Short Response: Make a Prediction

After the upcoming feast in his honor, Mako’s life may change. Write a **one-paragraph prediction** about what Mako’s future will hold now that he’s seen as a **hero**. Use details from the story to support your writing.

A reasonable prediction will . . .

- show understanding of a hero’s role in a community
- build on the ending of the story

B. Extended Response: Write a Scene

How would the story have been different if it had focused on the thoughts and feelings of a character other than Mako? Choose a scene in the story and, in **two or three paragraphs**, retell it through the eyes of Mother, Grandfather, or even Afa.

An effective scene will . . .

- show another side of the character
- be consistent with the rest of the story

GRAMMAR AND WRITING

USE CORRECT PRONOUN CASE Personal pronouns have subject and object cases, and the two are often used incorrectly, especially in compound subjects and compound objects. Use a **subject pronoun** (*I, she, he, we, or they*) if the pronoun is part of a compound subject. Use an **object pronoun** (*me, her, him, us, or them*) if the pronoun is part of a compound object. (*You* and *it* function as both subject and object pronouns.)

Original: Afa and me are going to the island to get bananas.

Revised: Afa and I are going to the island to get bananas.
(*The pronoun is part of a compound subject, so it should be I, not me.*)

PRACTICE Choose the correct pronoun to complete each sentence.

1. (They, Them) and their families lived in fear of the “monster.”
2. (He, Him) and Afa found Tupa that night.
3. The men shouted to Mako and (he, him).
4. (We, Us) and our families were glad that the monster was gone.

FOR MORE HELP WITH PRONOUN CASES, SEE PAGE R53 IN THE *Grammar Handbook*.



WRITING STANDARD
3.6.06 Demonstrate use of parts of speech

Tuesday of the Other June

Short Story by Norma Fox Mazer

How do you deal with a BULLY?



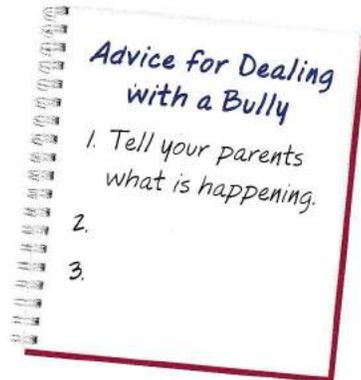
ILLINOIS OBJECTIVES

READING STANDARDS

- 1.6.21 Interpret an image based on information in the passage
- 2.6.07 Determine what characters are like

KEY IDEA A **bully** can turn your life into a nightmare. All your thoughts become focused on the next awful encounter. Advice for dealing with a bully is often to “walk away.” When actually dealing with a bully, however, many people dream of standing up for themselves. In “Tuesday of the Other June,” you’ll read about a girl who becomes the target of a bully.

LIST IT Imagine that your best friend is being bothered by a bully and has come to you for help. What advice would you give? Prepare a short list of suggestions.



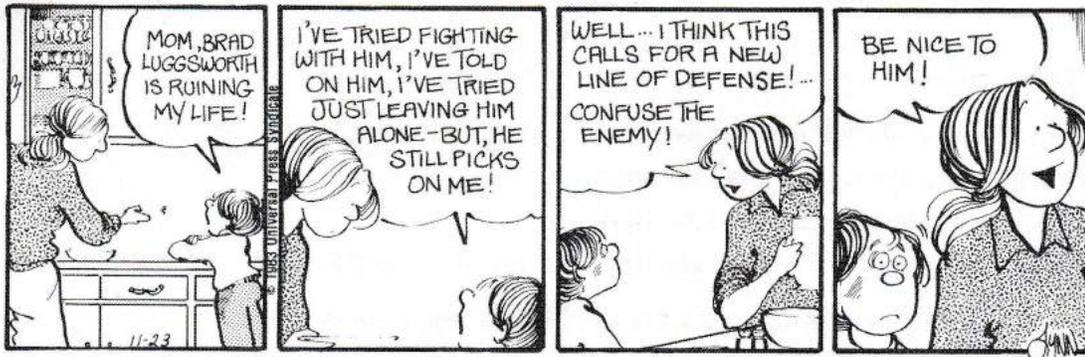
SECTION C

THE STAR JOURNAL

C5

For Better or For Worse

by Lynn Johnston



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