

Island of the Blue Dolphins

Study Guide for Unit Test

Eller 4th Grade

Summary of the book:

While gathering food on an island, Karana and Ramo are interrupted by the arrival of a red ship with red sails. They both observe the Aleuts and their leader (a tall, blonde Russian) confer with Karana's father, Chief of Ghalas-at, regarding hunting for sea otter. Karana is surprised when her father reveals his secret name, Chowig, to this stranger because her tribe believes this will make him lose his magic. After much negotiation, they reach an agreement that the Aleuts may hunt but they must give half the otter to the tribe.

Captain Orlov and the Aleuts camp on the island's higher ground and begin to hunt. They keep separate from Karana's tribe although both sides regularly spy on each other. Tension mounts when Karana's tribe refuses to share a large catch of white bass with the Aleuts.

One day the tribe catches the Aleuts packing up their camp and trying to sneak off without paying for their share of otter. When confronted, Captain Orlov offers to pay with a chest of colored beads. This offer is rejected and soon the Aleuts and the Indians find themselves in the middle of a huge battle. At first it seemed that the villagers would win, but Captain Orlov returns with more men from the ship and soon the villagers are completely overcome. The Aleuts leave the island and the villagers are left with the horrible realization that almost all the men have been killed, including the chief.

After the battle, the village is plunged into mourning. A new chief, Kimki, is chosen, who gives jobs to all the villagers. Eventually Kimki decides to go by boat to a country in the east. He hopes to find a better place for the tribe to live and send for them to join him.

While waiting for Kimki to return, the tribe chooses a new chief, Matasaip, to lead them. The tribe grows afraid that the Aleuts will return and so he develops a plan to flee. The tribe hides canoes supplied with food and water. Sure enough, one day a ship is sighted. The tribe begins to panic but then discovers that the ship is carrying white men who have been sent by Kimki to bring his people to safety!

The village quickly packs and boards the ship. When Karana gets on board she looks for Ramo, her brother, and finally sees him on shore. She pleads for the ship to wait for him but the captain refuses. In desperation, Karana leaps overboard and swims back to the island.

Alone on the island, Karana and Ramo set about making a life for themselves on the island. They are lonely but at least they have each other. Their only real danger is a pack of vicious wild dogs that roams the island. One day Ramo says that he is going to get a canoe so they can use it to fish. Karana tells him he is too little to do such a dangerous thing. Karana awakes the following morning to see that Ramo is gone. She suspects that he has gone to get the canoe. At first she isn't worried but as time goes by and he doesn't return, she goes to look for him. She discovers his lifeless body: he had been savagely attacked by the wild dogs. Karana is filled with grief and vows that she will kill each and every one of the dogs.

Now Karana is truly alone on the island. Because the empty huts are a painful reminder, she burns them and chooses a new home on the headland. She needs weapons for hunting and defense and realizes that she must make her own. This fills her with fear because the laws of her people forbade women to make weapons. She decides that she must defy the taboo and makes her first spear, bow, and arrows.

As the seasons pass, Karana realizes that no ship would return for her. Karana decides to escape by canoe and travel to the country in the east by herself. She embarks in a canoe on the treacherous journey, taking only some food and water. By evening, the canoe begins to leak. Karana tries to plug it up but eventually realizes that her only chance of survival is to return to the island. The only thing that cheers her up is a swarm of dolphins that accompany her back to the island.

Karana settles in to her new life and makes a permanent home for herself on the headland. She makes a fence out of whalebones so the animals won't be able to steal her food. By the end of the winter, she has a cozy home. She begins to plan how to kill the wild dogs and realizes she will need a sea elephant tooth for a spear. Karana sets out to kill a sea elephant. When she arrives at the beach, she chooses a small bull to kill but before she can attack she sees an old bull arrive and challenge the young one. This leads to a bloody battle between them and as they fight they head straight towards her! Karana falls and badly injures her leg.

It takes a lot of time for her injury to heal. One day, when she goes to get some water, she sees the leader of the wild dogs watching her. As soon as she is able, she returns to the beach and finds the old bull that was killed. She gathers some teeth and makes her spear. When she is ready, she attacks the dogs. She manages to wound the leader. For some reason, instead of killing him, she decided to take him back to her home and nurse him back to health. The two of them become the best of friends and she names him Rontu.

Karana and Rontu spend their days together fishing and gathering food. One day Karana stumbles across a giant devilfish and tries to kill it. A fierce battle ensues and it almost drags Karana into the ocean. Eventually Karana pulls it up to the beach and Rontu runs up to seize it. Quickly it wraps 3 arms around Rontu and tries to kill him. Karana attacks it with her knife and, after an exhausting struggle, is finally able to save Rontu.

While traveling about the island, hunting for food, Karana and Rontu discover a cave filled with straw and skeleton figures. These figures frighten Karana but she discovers that she is trapped inside the cave due to the rising tide. After spending a sleepless night, she escapes and vows never to return to the cave again.

One day the Aleut ship returns. Karana hides all trace of herself and her belongings and lives in the caves so that they won't discover her. As she is outside one day, admiring a new skirt of cormorant feathers she just finished, an Aleut girl steps into the clearing. Karana is filled with fear but is also fascinated by the Aleut girl. They begin to communicate using sign language and Karana discovers her name is Tutok. That evening, Karana discovers a beautiful necklace lying by her cave. This begins a close friendship between the two girls. They spend time together every day until one day Tutok doesn't come to visit and Karana discovers that the Aleuts have left and she is again alone on the island.

Karana turns to the companionship of the animals around her to help relieve her loneliness. She tames some birds, Tainor and Lurai, and she also finds a wounded otter that she nurses back to health and names Monanee. One day Monanee leaves the island and this makes Karana sad. But the next spring he returns with 2 babies and she realizes he is actually a she and renames him Wonanee. Because of her friendships with the animals, Karana makes a vow never to kill animals again.

The years went on and Karana remained alone on the island. One sad day she discovers that Rontu had died in the night. She buries him on the headland. Because she is so lonely, she decides to catch another dog that she thinks is Rontu's son so that she can make friends with him. She does this by putting xuchal in the drinking water. After he falls asleep from the drug, she takes him home and they do become friends.

One hot summer day, Karana is awakened by a rumbling sound. She realizes that the island is being shaken by a huge earthquake! When she realizes what is happening she rushes to the high cliffs for safety. She gets there just in time as an enormous tidal wave crashes into the island! Although Karana is safe, much damage was done to her belongings, especially her canoe.

One day she sees a ship land on the island. In a panic she hides and does not come out even when she hears a man shout out when he sees her fire and canoe. Two years later, the ship returns to the island. This time Karana decides not to hide. Three men came ashore to greet her. She couldn't understand them but she was happy to be with people again. The men take her on the ship to Mission Santa Barbara. When she arrives there, she discovers that the ship that took her people to the east had sunk in a great storm and, as a result, all of her village had been lost. Her happiness at being rescued was saddened by this terrible news.

Do you feel comfortable about:

- identifying the four main characters
- identifying the setting
- identifying the 2 main problems (conflict) in the story
- identifying the 2 main solutions (resolution) to the problem
- deciding the 7 most important events in the story
- answer a short essay question about how and why Karana changed in the book
- answer a short essay question about a theme for the book.
 - You need 2 examples
 - You need convincing details
 - You need to include the author's purpose