

# Sharks, by Matthew and Kimberly

Did you know that there are over 350 kinds of sharks in the ocean? Sharks are found near the surface of the ocean, or at the bottom, too. Sharks are the most amazing creatures to us.

Sharks have unique physical traits that are different with each species. These creatures can range in size from 10 inches to bigger than a school bus when they are fully grown. The majority of sharks are shaped like a torpedo so they glide through the water faster. Sharks that live on the ocean floor have flat-shaped bodies so they can hide in the sand. You may think that sharks have blowholes like a whale but they actually have gills like all fish. A shark's underside is flat and smooth unlike the top of the body which is rough and scaly. Can you imagine 3,000 teeth biting into your body? That is how many teeth a shark has. Sharks have five rows of teeth, and when one falls out another takes its place.

# Lead with a Question

## THINKING

The lead in nonfiction is at least as important as it is in narrative writing. Nonfiction doesn't have to be dry; it can actually be written with voice.

## TEACHING

A good lead acts as a greeting, a kind of "shaking hands" with the reader. Let's see what kind of lead two fifth graders used to craft this piece of writing.

● Read "Sharks."

What did you notice about this piece of writing?

Discuss.

What did you notice about the beginning? Did it make you want to keep reading?

Discuss.

This piece starts with the authors asking you a question just the way anyone would: "Did you know that...?" Whether you're writing fiction, personal narrative, or nonfiction, you want to craft the kind of lead that will hook your readers. You want to capture their interest, make them want to keep reading. Starting with a question—especially one that contains an interesting fact like this one does—is one way you can do that. A question lead creates instant voice; it gets our attention because we can hear the writer directly asking us a question to think about.

## FOLLOW UP

The question lead is often used by nonfiction writers. (See *All About Owls* or *All About Rattlesnakes*, by Jim Arnosky.) You might point out to sophisticated writers that the question used in this lesson is a rhetorical one; in other words, the writer uses the question as a device to get across an intriguing bit of information. Questions can be used in the body of a nonfiction piece, too, as illustrated in "Sharks."

Conference Questions:

Do you think a question lead would work in the piece of writing you're working on?

Which question would you begin with?

## PREP

● "Sharks"