

Summary Writing- 5

Sharks have long had a fearsome reputation, particularly along South Africa's Indian Ocean coast, where there were 86 recorded shark attacks between 1992 and 2008, 11 of which were fatal. Their powerful bodies and stealthy movements have earned them the title of "man-eaters." But while they certainly have the potential to be dangerous, expert divers and marine specialists argue that shark behaviour is often misunderstood.

Dive instructor Kenny reminded the group of divers to stay close, remain upright in the water, and give the animals space. These instructions suggest that sharks can sense body language and respond to calm, non-threatening human behaviour. In fact, experienced divers believe that when treated with respect and observed with caution, sharks can be safely appreciated like any other wild animal.

Once underwater, the first sight of a shark was electrifying. A 3-metre-long ragged-tooth shark—commonly called a "raggie"—passed by, showing no sign of aggression or interest in the divers. Its slow, effortless swimming gave the impression of confidence and control. This behaviour was strangely reassuring: it did not see the diver as a threat or as food.

Raggies, in particular, demonstrate some interesting traits. They lose teeth continuously throughout their lives, a feature that reflects their evolutionary adaptation to a predatory lifestyle. Yet despite their sharp, intimidating teeth, ragged-tooth sharks are known to be non-aggressive. Their appearance may be fearsome, but their movements are slow and deliberate, and they tend to keep a respectful distance from divers.

Even when circling close, these sharks tend to show curiosity rather than hostility. Their behaviour can feel unsettling—one diver described a shark gliding towards him, its cold, unreadable eye passing within a metre of his face—but it made no sudden moves. Sharks do not communicate emotion in the way many animals do. Their eyes offer no expression or warmth, making them harder to interpret. This lack of visible response can make people uneasy.

Sharks are primarily driven by instinct, not emotion or complex thought. According to Jaweria, the dive school owner, their brains are small and wired for survival. Scientific studies support this idea: lemon sharks, for example, have shown no brain activity in response to human blood, but react sharply to fish blood. This implies that sharks are not instinctively interested in humans as prey.

Another diver, Nick, compared shark behaviour to dogs: if you panic and flee, they might chase or even attack, but if you stay calm, they tend to leave you alone. Sharks assess movement and posture; they appear to distinguish between prey and non-prey based on the signals they receive.

Not all sharks are dangerous. The whitetip reef sharks the group encountered are considered harmless, unlike their oceanic cousins, which have a record of attacking humans. This highlights the diversity within shark species, with significant differences in behaviour and threat level.

While sharks are naturally curious, their interest does not usually escalate to aggression unless provoked or confused. The dive ended peacefully, surrounded by colourful fish and corals, and the experience left a lasting impression: sharks, while mysterious and powerful, are not mindless killers.

Through calm observation and respectful distance, one can witness the true nature of sharks—instinctive, cautious, and far less threatening than their reputation suggests.

(a) Summarize the different characteristics and behaviours of sharks in 150 words.

(b) Imagine you are Jaweria Amer, the owner of a dive school. A diving enthusiast wants to enroll in a diving school and is much too confident in his abilities. He asks you, "sharks aren't dangerous at all are they? I can easily tame them by my wiles. What do you think?"

Jaweria's Answer:-