

# *Island of the Blue Dolphin*

Teacher Key developed and written by Catherine R. Ney

## **About the Author: Scott O'Dell**

### **Before Reading:**

Ask why *Island of the Blue Dolphin* is listed as historical fiction. It is a fictional account of a historical (real) island. Scott O'Dell wrote about a fictitious island, *Island of the Blue Dolphin*. The real island the book is based on is San Nicholas Island, off the California coast. It is one of the Channel Islands. Today it is part of Channel Islands National Park. Santa Catalina (one of the Channel Islands) is a popular resort 22 miles from the mainland.

Use a map to locate San Nicholas Island (*Island of the Blue Dolphin*), off the coast of California. Ask how most islands are formed (volcanoes). Ask how living on an island compares with living on the mainland.

Teach students this song:

*Island of the Blue Dolphin* (adapted from the song ASanta Catalina)

Twenty-six miles across the sea,  
Island of the Blue Dolphin is waiting for me.  
Island of the Blue Dolphin, the isle I love.  
Beware! Beware! Beware!

Water all around me everywhere,  
Tropical breezes fill the air.  
Island of the Blue Dolphin, the isle I love.  
Beware! Beware! Beware!

Tell students Scott O'Dell choose to write *Island of the Blue Dolphin* in the first person, from the Karana's (the 12 year old heroine's) point of view. Have students use a mirror to write an autobiography. Challenge them to describe themselves so the reader can visualize them just from their writing.

Ask why the book is titled *Island of the Blue Dolphin* (the island is in the shape of a blue dolphin. Read chapter 2 for a description). Make a list of students' speculations.

Write *Survival* (the theme) in the center of a semantic map. Surround the theme with social studies and science subthemes. (Use Interdisciplinary Learning Activities (ILAs) WEB for *Island of the Blue Dolphin*).

## Study Guide Key

### Chapter 1 (pp. 9-15)

1. How does Karana describe her brother Ramo's movements? (quick as a cricket)
2. How does Karana describe her brother Ramo's eyes? (black like a lizard's)
3. How did Karana know it was a ship off shore, when Ramo didn't? (told her).
4. Why did Karana continue to dig roots as the Aleut ship approached? (village needed)
5. Why was the Russian in the Aleut boat? (leader)
6. Why did only Karana's father speak to the Russian?(chief)
7. What reason did the Russian give Karana's father for coming to the island? (hunt sea otters)
8. Why didn't Karana's father immediately agree to the hunt? (wanted equal parts)
9. If a league is 3 miles and the island is 2 leagues long and 1league wide, calculate the length and width of the island in miles? (6 miles x three miles).
10. Write a descriptive title for Chapter 1.(e.g.Aleuts and Russian Arrive)

### Chapter 2 (pp.16-21)

1. Use the author's description on page 16 to illustrate the island on the map handout. Make a legend on a lined sheet of paper. Include symbols for the village, the Aleut camp, canyon, cove, mesa on the hills, spring in your legend. Use the scale: 1cm=1/4 mile to locate the symbols from your legend on the map. (Remember a league is three miles.)
2. Why is the book called *Island of the Blue Dolphin*? (shape of the island)
3. Why didn't the islanders make friends with the hunters? (past trouble)
4. What was the good fortune that befell the islanders? (school of white bass)
5. Why wouldn't Karana's father share the good fortune with the Aleuts? (must think of his people first)
6. Think of a good title for Chapter 2. (e.g., Good Fortune)

### Chapter 3 (pp.22-25)

1. Why didn't Karana watch the Aleuts hunt sea otters? (otters friends) How do you feel about hunting animals for their pelts?
2. Why were the islanders working on the log that washed ashore? (canoe building)
3. Why were the islanders concerned about the Aleut hunters leaving the island? (leaving without paying)
4. What is an appropriate title for Chapter 3? (Questions)
5. Summarize what you have learned about Karana, her tribe, and the visitors.
6. Do you think the Aleuts will keep up their end of the bargain? Why or why not?
7. What clues does the author give that signal there may be trouble ahead?

### **Chapter 4 (pp.26-31)**

1. How did Karana know that her father was not pleased with Captain Orlov leaving? (angry, head-shaking movements)
2. Why wouldn't the chief agree to Captain Orlov's offer at first? (wanted 3 chest, not 1)
3. How did the chief try to get a fair deal? (kept pelts until chest delivered)
4. How did the battle between the islanders and the Aleuts end? (Aleuts won, chief died)
5. What was the myth that islanders believed lessened the chief's power? (told his real name)
6. Give the chapter a title. (e.g., Dishonest Russian)

### **Chapter 5 (pp.32-36)**

1. How many islanders were slain after the battle? (42-15=27)
2. How did the role of the women change after the battle? (women took place of dead men)
3. What was Karana and her sister Ulape's job? (gathering abalone)
4. Why didn't the men like the new roles of the women?(women should harvest; men should hunt) Do you agree?
5. Why were the islanders unhappy? (memories)
6. Why did the new chief, Kimi, leave the island? (find help at mission)
7. Give this chapter a name. (Sadness)

### **Chapter 6 (pp.36-41)**

1. What concern was more important than not enough water? (Aleuts return)
2. How did Matasaip have islanders prepare for Aleuts?(escape in canoes)
3. How was this ship different than the Aleut's? (smaller with red sail)
4. Why did the ship of white men come? (take islanders to the mission)
5. Give the chapter a title. (Good News)

### **Chapter 7 (pp. 42-47)**

1. What essentials did Karana pack for the boat trip? (3 fine needles, an awl, knife, 2 cooking pot, box)
2. How was the white man's ship different than a canoe? (4 times larger)
3. Why was Ramo left behind?(left his spear)
4. Why did Karana fling herself into the sea? (save Ramo)
5. Give Chapter 7 a title. (Ramo Returns)

### **Chapter 8 (pp.48-55)**

1. Why were the wild dogs running through the huts? (food search)
2. Why did the wild dogs come back to the village? (fish scent)

3. If Ramo wants to become chief, what rites must he do? (whipped and tied to an ant hill) What rites do American males today have to adulthood?
4. Why was Karana upset that Ramo went to get a canoe alone? (dog danger)
5. Why were the wild dogs barking and circling Ramo?(kill him)
6. How did Karana plan to avenge her brother's death? (kill the dogs)
7. Give this chapter a title.(Ramo Dies)
8. Make a list of Karana's strengths and weaknesses.
9. How has the author held your interest in the book? (Author creates problems for the main character, Karana, to solve, and we want to know the outcome.)
10. Write a paragraph describing Karana. (Include the losses she suffered, how her life on the island has changed since the beginning of the story, and what you think is in her future.)

### **Before reading Chapters 9-19**

1. What do you think will happen to Karana all alone on the island?
2. How will she survive by herself on the island?
3. What problems will she face? (e.g., wild dogs, food, shelter)
4. Imagine yourself completely alone. Write a paragraph telling how you feel, what you must do to survive, and what you would miss the most, and the least.

### **Chapter 9 (pp.56-65)**

1. Why did Karana decide never to live in the village again? (dead voices)
2. Mark the place Karana decided to live on your map.(1/2 league W Coral Cove)
3. Why was Karana digging around the chest the Aluets left behind? (weapons)
4. Why wouldn't Karana ever wear the beads and bracelets in the chest?(memories)
5. Why didn't Karana try to make her own weapons?(tribal law forbade it)
6. How did Karana decide to get the elephant seal's tusk to make weapon? (bow & arrow)
7. Why did Karana sleep on the rock ledge? (away from wild dogs)
8. Give this chapter a name. (e.g., Alone)

### **Chapter 10 (pp.66-75)**

1. Why did Karana move her bed off the rock ledge? (winds came)
2. Why did the wild dogs quit coming to attack her? (killed 3, not leader)
3. Why did Karana decide to leave the island? (loneliness)
4. How did Karana launch a six-person canoe by herself? (kelp path)
5. When did Karana feel afraid at sea? (island disappeared)
6. How did Karana keep going east?(North Star and Serpent Star)
7. How did Karana patch the leaky canoe?(skirt fiber)
8. Why did Karana decide to turn back to the island?(leaky canoe)
9. Why was Karana glad the dolphins came? (good omen)

10. Give this chapter a title. ( e.g., Good Omen)

### **Chapter 11 (pp.76-80)**

1. What were the signs that filled Karana with happiness? (otter, rocks, gulls, tide)  
What signs fill you with happiness?
2. Why would Karana never leave the island again?(happy to be home)
3. On your map, locate the three possible locations Karana could build her house.
4. Name this chapter.

### **Chapter 12 ( pp. 81-86)**

1. How did Karana construct the fence around her house? (whale bones)
2. How did Karana build her house? Draw a design of Karana's house and fence on graph paper. Then try building a model of Karana's house.
3. Use page 83 to calculate the number of poles she used altogether to construct her house. ( $4 \times 3 = 12$ ,  $12 \times 2 = 24$ ,  $24 = 12 = 36$ )
4. What are sai-sai? ( small fish so thick you can walk on them--probably grunions)
5. Once Karana was done building her house, what was her next plan? (kill dogs)
6. How did Karana plan to kill the wild dogs? (bow and arrow, and spear)
7. Give this chapter a title. (e.g. Plans)

### **Chapter 13 (pp. 87-92)**

1. Why was Karana determined to kill a bull elephant seal? (needed tusk for spears)
2. Draw the elephant seals using the author's description on page 88. Include bulls, calves, and cows in your drawing. Read the elephant seal article (McAuliffe, Kathleen, 1995, Elephant seals, the champion divers of the deep, *Smithsonian*, September: 43-56.) to learn more about these amazing animals. Write one amazing fact about these animals.
3. Why did Karana single out the young bull elephant seal to kill? (alone)
4. What was Karana's father's warning about weapons in the Ahands of a woman@? (bow would break in time of danger) Why do you think such superstitions persisted?
5. How do bull elephant seals battle? (fight with tusks and teeth)
6. Why didn't Karana shoot the young bull when it was battling the old bull? (she hoped it would win)
7. Why didn't Karana stay until the battle between the elephant seals ended? (dark and hurt her leg)
8. Name this chapter. (e.g., Elephant Seals)

### **Chapter 14 (pp.93-97)**

1. How did Karana get water on the fifth day of her injury? (crawled on hands and knees)
2. Why did Karana stay six days in the cave? (safe from wild dogs)
3. Draw the inside of the cave from the description on page 96. (Include the drawings of pelicans, dolphins, whales, elephant seals, gulls, ravens, dogs and foxes.)
4. Why did Karana go back to where the elephant seals battled? (collect tooth bones for spearheads)
5. Give this chapter a descriptive name. (e.g., Cave Dweller)

### **Chapter 15 (pp. 98-105)**

1. How did Karana try to get rid of the wild dogs? (smoked their cave)
2. How many wild dogs were left in the cave after the fire? (10 plus leader)
3. How did Karana use her remaining five arrows? (used two on the leader, one went wild, and killed two more wild dogs)
4. Why do you think Karana chose Anot to kill the leader of the wild dogs?
5. Why did Karana carry the leader of the wild dogs to her house?(nurse it)
6. Why did she name the leader of the dogs Rontu? (fox eyes that watched her)
7. Give the chapter a title. (Rontu)

### **Chapter 16 (pp.106-111)**

1. Why did Karana continue to work on the canoe? (escape from Aleuts)
2. How did Karana reshape the canoe? (loosened planks, cut sinew and planks)
3. Describe how Rontu, the leader of the wild dogs, became her friend? (summer pals)
4. Why wasn't Karana lonely anymore? (companionship with dog)
5. Draw the Asea cave from its description on p.109.
6. What was the great discovery that Karana and Rontu made? (canoe storage)
7. Draw a picture of the devilfish spraying a black cloud of liquid from p.110.
8. Give this chapter a title. (companionship)

### **Chapter 17 (pp.112-118)**

1. How did Karana make the devilfish spear? (elephant-seal tooth spear)
2. How did the devilfish spear work? (p.113 handheld spear with coil)
3. How did Karana know it was spring? (darting birds)
4. Why didn't Rontu go devil fishing with Karana? (returned to pack)
5. How had Karana's attitude toward Rontu changed?(enemy to friend)
6. Why didn't Karana stop the between Rontu and the two wild dogs?(happen again)
7. How did Rontu fight his two attackers? (crippled one, sunk teeth into other's)

throat)

8. How did Rontu proclaim his victory? (howled) Why didn't Rontu ever leave Karana again?
9. Give the chapter a title. ( e.g.,Rontu's Victory)

**Chapter 18 (pp.119-122)**

1. Draw the spring flowers (sand flowers, yuccas, and lupines) that covered the island from the description on p. 119.
2. Add birds (hummers, blue jays, peckers, red-winged blackbirds, crows, and scarlet headed and yellow-bodied birds) to your drawing.
3. Why did Karana clip the wing tips of two birds? (pets)
4. How did Karana make a shirt and sandals? (yucca twine)

5. Illustrate Karana and Rontu as they looked walking along the beach. (yucca shirt, long braided hair and wreath around her neck)
6. Give this chapter a title. (e.g., singing)

### **Chapter 19 (pp.123-130)**

1. How do starfish prey upon abalone? (suck out body)
2. How did the gulls open the scallops= shells? (scallops fell on the reef like rain when gulls dropped them from heights).
3. Why did Rontu drop his fish that Karana gave him? (spotted giant devil fish)
4. How did Karana catch the devilfish?(with spear and knife)
5. Why didn't Karana want the speared devilfish to swim to the cave? (escape her)
6. What happened to Rontu when he grabbed the devilfish? (three arms wrapped around his neck)
7. How did Karana get the devilfish to let go of Rontu? (stabbed it with a knife)
8. Give this chapter the common name for devilfish. (Octopus)

### **Chapter 20 (pp.131-138)**

1. How did Karana guard the abalone from the gulls? (hung shiny shells)
2. How did Karana preserve fish?(dried them)
3. Why did Karana kill ten cormorants?(made a cormorant skirt from feathers)
4. Locate Tall Rock and Black Cove on your map. (Tall Rock=1 league from island; South Coast=near cave where canoes stored)
5. Why did Karana go into Black Cave?(find hawk's home)
6. What were the two-dozen strange figures standing against the black wall in the cave? (ancestors)
7. Why did Karana and Rontu have to stay overnight in Black Cave? (tide)
8. How many years had Karana been alone on the island at this point?(2 years)
9. When had the Aleuts come back? (when Karana was away at Tall Rock)
10. How did Karana know it was the Aleuts= ship?(came from N with 2 red sails)
11. How did Karana and Rontu escape the Aleuts? (hid in canoe cave)
12. Give this chapter a name.(Aleuts Return)

### **Chapter 21 (pp.139-146)**

1. Why didn't Karana take Rontu with her when she left the cave? (might sniff out Aleut dogs)
2. Why was Karana afraid of the Aleut girl? (she might discover Karana)
3. Locate where the Aleuts camped on your map.(1 1/2 mile from cave on mesa)
4. Why didn't Karana move into the abandoned wild dog cave?(spring water close by)
5. Where did Karana decide to move? (ravine cave)
6. Why didn't the Aleut dogs track her to the cave? (no dogs)

7. How did Karana and Rontu spend the long days and nights in the cave?(Rontu watched her make cormorant skirt)
8. How long did Karana and Rontu spend in the cave? (1 moon=28 days)
9. Who was looking down at Karana from the brush?(Aleut girl)
10. Why didn't Karana spear her?(couldn't kill living thing)
11. How did Rontu react to the Aleut girl? (walked toward her)
12. What was the Aleut girl's name? (Tutok)
13. Why did Karana lie about living in the cave?(didn't want Aleuts to take her)
14. What did Karana have that interested the Aleut girl?(cormorant skirt)
15. How did Karana know someone had been to the cave? (blackstone necklace)
16. Give this chapter a name. (Aleut Girl)

### **Chapter 22 (pp. 147-152)**

1. How did Tutok react to Karana wearing her gift? (Wintscha=pretty)
2. How do you play the Aname game@ Tutok and Karana played?(exchange names for things)
3. What name did Karana tell Tutok her name was?(Wonapalei=Girl with the Long Black Hair)
4. Why didn't Karana give Tutok her real name? (superstition)
5. What gift would Karana make for Tutok?(circlet for her hair)
6. How did Tutok respond to Karana's gift?(hugged her)
7. Why didn't Tutok come to supper?(Aleuts left island)
8. How did Karana feel after Tutok left the island?
9. Give this chapter a name. (e.g.,Lonely)

### **Chapter 23 (pp. 153-156)**

1. What did the Aleut hunters leave behind? (wounded otters)
2. How did Karana tend to a young wounded otter?(brought fish to its pool)
3. Draw the young otter in its pool from the description on p. 154.
4. Why did Karan call the otter Monanee?(Little Boy with Large Eyes)
5. Why did Karana have to fish every day through winter?(food gone)
6. Draw how Karana looked walking along the cliff with Rontu. (Cormorant dress, necklace and earrings)
7. Give this chapter a title. (e.g.,Alone Again)

### **Chapter 24 (pp.157-161)**

1. How did Karana help the young gull?(bound its broken leg)
2. What memories prevented Karana from being completely happy?(Ulape)
3. Why was Monanee raising his two babies alone?(mother dead)
4. How do sea otters eat abalone? Draw it. (hold rock in mouth and crack shell with rock, while swimming on their backs)

5. Why had Karana become a conservationist, protector of animals? (friends)
6. Give this chapter a name? (Animal Friends)

### **Chapter 25 (pp. 162-165)**

1. Why did the sea otters leave the island in summer and return in winter? (hunters)
2. How did Karana keep track of time since she was on the island alone? (marked moons on pole)
3. Why did Rontu go to the abandoned dog cave? (to die)
4. How did Karana feel about losing Rontu? (sad)
5. Give this chapter a title. (Rontu Dies)

### **Chapter 26 (pp. 166-170)**

1. Why didn't Karana leave her house much that winter? (weather)
2. Why did Karana plan to catch that particular wild dog? (Rontu's son)
3. Why didn't the little red fox make a good pet? (ate hidden food)
4. How did Karana think a toluache reed, then a xuchal plant would help her catch the wild dog? (poison-like effect)
5. How did Karana finally catch the wild dog? (drugged spring water and carried him home)
6. Why did she call the wild dog Rontu-Aru? (Son of Rontu)
7. Why were Karana's thoughts of Tutok and Ulape more and more? (companionship)
8. Give this chapter a name. (Son of Rontu)

### **Chapter 27 (pp.170-175)**

1. How was Karana awakened from her nap under the canoe? (thundering sound)
2. What was the noise the author describes as a faint sound as if some giant animal were sucking the air in and in through its teeth? (tsunamis=huge waves)
3. What was the great white crest of sea that was moving down the island? (tidal waves)
4. What is the author describing in these words, Alike two giants they crashed against each other? (two waves)
5. Draw the waves the author describes as if great spears were breaking in battle and in the light of the sun the spray flew around them looked like blood.
6. How did Karana save herself from the waves? (climbed the cliff)
7. What destruction did the waves cause? (dead fish, lobster, and crabs and stranded 2 whales)
8. What was the wave of earth that rippled under Karana along the cliff? (earthquake)
9. Give this chapter a name? (Earthquake)

### **Chapter 28 (pp. 176-180)**

1. What damage did the earthquake cause Karana?(lost food, weapons, and canoe)
2. How did Karana try to replace the canoes?(rebuild pieces)
3. Besides gray clouds, what else did Karana see in the east, halfway between the horizon and shore? (ship)
4. How did Karana dress to meet the white man?(otter cape and carrying cormorant skirt, abalone box with necklace and earrings)
5. Why was Karana willing to leave the island? (companionship of people)
6. Why didn't this ship take Karana away from the island?(men left without seeing her)
7. Give this chapter a title. (Ship)

### **Chapter 29 (pp. 181-186)**

1. How did Karana dress to meet the white men when they returned two years later? (otter cape, cormorant skirt, blackstone necklace and earrings and clay markings)
2. Why couldn't Karana picture the white men or the past? (too long ago)
3. What is the sound the author is describing when he says, "there is no sound like this in all the world"? (human voice)
4. How did Karana communicate with the three men? (gestures)
5. What did the men make for her to wear? (blue trouser dress)
6. Why had the men come back to the island?(hunt sea otters)
7. Why didn't Karana tell the men where the otters had gone? (otter's friends)
8. Why hadn't the white men come back for Karana after her tribe left? (ship sunk)
9. How did Karana learn what happened to her tribe? (Father Gonzales at Mission Santa Barbara)
10. About how long did Karana live on the island alone? (18 years)

### **After Reading Chapters 20 -29**

1. What kind of life do you think Karana will have at the Santa Barbara Mission?
2. After reading the author's note (pp. 187-189), why do you think the author wrote this book? (interesting story)
3. What history from the real island girl's story did the author use in this fictional account? (girl really lived alone on island from 1835-1853; found her 18 years later wearing cormorant skirt, alone with dog in crude hut; and brother killed by wild dogs,)

## Student Study Guide

### Chapter 1 (pp. 9-15)

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8. Why didn't Karana's father immediately agree to the hunt?
9. If a league is 3 miles and the island is 2 leagues long and 1 league wide, calculate the length and width of the island in miles?
10. Write a descriptive title for Chapter 1.

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1. Use the author's description on page 16 to illustrate the island on the map handout. Make a legend on a lined sheet of paper. Include symbols for the village, the Aleut camp, canyon, cove, mesa on the hills, spring in your legend. Use the scale: 1cm=1/4 mile to locate the symbols from your legend on the map. (Remember a league is three miles.)
2. Why is the book called *Island of the Blue Dolphin*?
3. Why didn't the islanders make friends with the hunters?
4. What was the good fortune that befell the islanders?
5. Why wouldn't Karana's father share the good fortune with the Aleuts?
6. Think of a good title for Chapter 2.

### Chapter 3 (pp.22-25)

1. Why didn't Karana watch the Aleuts hunt sea otters? How do you feel about hunting animals for their pelts?
2. Why were the islanders working on the log that washed ashore?
3. Why were the islanders concerned about the Aleut hunters leaving the island?
4. What is an appropriate title for Chapter 3?
5. Summarize what you have learned about Karana, her tribe, and the visitors.
6. Do you think the Aleuts will keep up their end of the bargain? Why or why not?
7. What clues does the author give that signal there may be trouble ahead?

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1. How did Karana know her father was not pleased with Captain Orlov leaving?
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3. How did the chief try to get a fair deal?

4. How did the battle between the islanders and the Aleuts end?
5. What was the myth that islanders believed lessened the chief's power?
6. Give the chapter a title.

#### Chapter 5 (pp.32-36)

1. How many islanders were slain after the battle?
2. How did the role of the women change after the battle?
3. What was Karana and her sister Ulape's job?
4. Why didn't the men like the new roles of the women? Do you agree?
5. Why were the islanders unhappy?
6. Why did the new chief, Kimi, leave the island?
7. Give this chapter a name.

#### Chapter 6 (pp.36-41)

1. What concern was more important than not enough water?
2. How did Matasaip have islanders prepare for Aleuts?
3. How was this ship different than the Aleut's?
4. Why did the ship of white men come?
5. Give the chapter a title.

#### Chapter 7 (pp. 42-47)

1. What essentials did Karana pack for the boat trip? What essentials would you pack for a trip?
2. How was the white man's ship different than a canoe?
3. Why was Ramo left behind?
4. Why did Karana fling herself into the sea?
5. Give Chapter 7 a title.

#### Chapter 8 (pp.48-55)

1. Why were the wild dogs running through the huts?
2. Why did the wild dogs come back to the village?
3. If Ramo wants to become chief, what rites must he do? What rites do American males today have to adulthood?
4. Why was Karana upset that Ramo went to get a canoe alone?
5. Why were the wild dogs barking and circling Ramo?
6. How did Karana plan to avenge her brother's death?
7. Give this chapter a title.
8. Make a list of Karana's strengths and weaknesses.
9. How has the author held your interest in the book?
10. Write a paragraph describing Karana. (Include the losses she suffered, how life on the island changed, and what you think is in her future.)