



Teacher Guide

“Island Sting is a fast-paced, environmental thriller that teens will tear into. Once you start reading, you’ll find yourself flipping pages as fast as you can, eager to find out what happens next. Great action, great characters, and a message that will resonate with readers of all ages.”
 Frances O’Roark Dowell, Edgar-award-winning author of *Dovey Coe*, *Chicken Boy*, *The Secret Language of Girls*, and *Shooting the Moon*

<http://www.BonnieDoerrBooks.com>

Introductory Discussion

1. Examine the cover of *Island Sting*.
 - a. What elements are incorporated in the design? (bullet holes, skid marks, road sign, words of warning, hoof prints, etc.).
 - b. What feeling might the cover convey to a reader?
 - c. Using different sources (several dictionaries, including Encarta, web searches, etc.), What usages and meanings for the word —sting can you find?
 - d. Which definition, or definitions, do you think most appropriate to *Island Sting*? Explain your reasoning.
 - e. Do you think *Island Sting* is a good title for the book? Why or why not?
 - f. Do you think yellow and black are appropriate colors for the cover? Why or why not?
 - g. **Bonus:** The title is used in conversation in the text of *Island Sting*. Which character uses the words “island sting”? What does the character mean by these words?

Comprehension, Critical thinking, Literary Analysis, and Personal Response

1. Figurative Language and Writing Unit (including introductory poem, reference list of metaphors, similes, and idioms, sample discussion questions, quotations from novel, and answer key) available as separate PDF on website.

2. Imagine that you live in a wildlife refuge. What would be the advantages to living in such an area? What would be the disadvantages?
3. If you could help protect an endangered species, which one would it be? Are there any established organizations to protect the species you choose? Besides sending the organization money, what specific actions could you take to help?
4. Kenzie and Angelo work to decrease litter pollution on their island. Why is decreasing litter important? What could you do to decrease litter on school property?
5. In the story, Angelo apologizes to a character.
 - a) To whom does he make an apology and why?
 - b) Recall a time in your life when you owed someone an apology.
 - Were you able to say you were sorry?
 - If so, how did you feel before and after?
 - How did the person respond to your apology?
 - c) If you chose not to apologize, explain why and describe how you feel about that decision.
6. Angelo’s friends call him by a name that’s close to his given name, but different. How did his nickname come about?

7. In the story the author chose to have Mr. Sanchez use Angelo's given name and its Spanish pronunciation. Why do you think the author did that? Would anything about the story have felt different if Mr. Sanchez called Angelo by his nickname?
8. What elements of the story would be different if Fisher spoke with the same rhythm, style, and vocabulary as everyone else on the island? Do you think Fisher's speech pattern and mannerisms enhance or weaken his character?
9. Throughout the book, Kenzie does not have a cell phone. Why doesn't she? If you had to go without a cell phone, how would your days change?
10. In the last chapter, Kenzie receives a pendant that represents her key to the island. Do you think this is an appropriate gift for her? Why or why not?
11. If Angelo and Kenzie had first met in the flea market's book tent and not in the combined rescue of Molly, how might their relationship have been different?
12. Both Kenzie and Angelo kept their hunt for the poacher a secret from their family. Do you agree with that decision? Would you have done the same? Why or why not?
13. In one scene where Angelo and Kenzie misunderstand each other, Angelo is sure he is correct when he says:

"It's called turtle grass because... It's like dog chow. Get it? Think. Chow for dogs— dog chow. Grass for turtles—turtle grass. Sea turtles are herbivores."

Kenzie replies, "Are you sure that's true of all sea turtles?"

Angelo retorts, "That's what I said, didn't I?"

The story continues by explaining that:

"Kenzie's encyclopedic knowledge of sea turtles was about to explode. If she opened her mouth now, her words would torch him like dragon fire."

In the above scene Kenzie is aware of how much more she actually knows about a subject than Angelo, and Angelo is sure he knows more than Kenzie. Have you ever been in a similar position as Angelo or Kenzie? How did you respond?

14. If Mr. Sanchez and Ms. Ryan had each learned of what Kenzie and Angelo were up to, how you think they would have responded. In what ways do you think Mr. Sanchez' response would be similar to Ms. Ryan's? How might their responses have differed?
15. Kenzie refuses to speak to her father as in the following scene.
- "You handle it, Mom. I don't want to talk to him."*
- "Kenzie, we've been over this. Your dad loves you. He cares about what's going on in your life."*
- "If he cares so much, why'd he leave?"*
- "He didn't leave because he doesn't care about you. What happened was between—"*
- "Mom, I know what happened. I don't want to talk to him."*

Have you refused to talk to someone? If so, did you ever get over it? What do you think caused Kenzie's change of heart? Why do you think she finally called her father?

16. At the end of the book, in addition to the silver key pendant, Kenzie is given a puppy. What significance do you think that gift holds? Why do you think the author chose to have Angelo present her with the puppy?

17. Angelo and Kenzie both receive reward money. Do you agree with how Angelo plans to use his money? Kenzie doesn't make it clear how she will use hers. How do you think she will spend it? What about Kenzie's behavior or thinking led to your choice?

18. The author never reveals the amount of money Kenzie and Angelo receive. How much do you think a reward for catching the poacher should be? Defend your answer.

19. If you received a reward of five hundred dollars, how would you use the funds? What would factor into your decision?

20. Pretend you are a character in *Island Sting*. Describe your character and your purpose in the story. Choose a scene and rewrite it with you in it.

21. In addition to the goal of entertainment, what other purpose or purposes do you believe the author had for writing *Island Sting*. What events or passages in the novel support your answer?

22. Analyzing Structure and Plotting novel *Island Sting* Unit (including Plot Template) available as separate PDF on website.

Vocabulary in Context

Using the chapter by chapter vocabulary list as a resource, students discuss how the meaning of a word can be determined from its context.

Chapter-by-chapter vocabulary list available as PDF on website.

Students:

1. Read assigned chapter(s).
2. Refer to vocabulary list for assigned chapters.
3. Choose assigned number of words from list.
4. Refer to passage containing chosen words on list (or other unfamiliar words of their choice from the chapter(s)).
5. Discuss what is already known from story that helps reader understand.
6. Discuss what is known from personal experience (prior knowledge) that helps reader understand.
7. Discuss context clues that come before and after the word.

Example from chapter 2, page 11:
(Vocabulary word, *ventilate*)

Her mother held her lips to the doe's nose. "It's not—" She placed her fingers on the inside of the doe's dainty back leg. "Wait. There's a faint pulse. Maybe I could..." She looked up at Kenzie. "Oh boy, I've never ventilated a deer before, but why not? Kenzie, help me lay the little thing on its right side. Easy now."

She opened the deer's mouth and pulled its tongue forward. Next she covered its nose and mouth with her own mouth and blew little puffs of air into its nostrils. Amazingly, the tiny chest rose. She puffed again. Once more the chest rose.

If the definition of *ventilate* is unknown, could a reader still understand this passage? In the passage, what clues are there to the word's meaning?

Possible responses:

- *Readers may know that lips are very sensitive.*
- *Mom seems to indicate that the deer's not breathing when she places her lips by nose and says "It's not—"Her lips must not feel moving air.*
- *We already know Mom's a nurse.*
- *Reader may have seen CPR performed on TV or in life*
- *The following paragraph describes Mom blowing air into deer's nose.*

Activities

1. **Social Studies/Math** - Kenzie moves from New York City to Big Pine Key, Florida.

- a) On a map of the Eastern United States, trace two different routes Kenzie's mom could have driven—a scenic route and a direct route.
- b) Identify at least five points of interest stops along each route. Explain your rationale for choosing these locations.
- c) In order, north to south, name the states through which your preferred route would pass.
- d) Estimate your trip's total mileage. Explain how you arrived at your estimate.
- e) Assuming you average a speed of sixty miles per hour including short stops (not taking into account overnight stays or points of interest side trips), estimate the your driving time.

2. **Art**

- a) Design a key, pendant, or a coat of arms-like logo for the city, town, or neighborhood in which you live. Explain why you chose the elements incorporated in your design.
- b) Design a logo for the Keys Teens Care group or design one for your own Green Teens organization. Explain why your logo is appropriate.
- c) Build a diorama or create a poster to illustrate the habitat of an endangered or threatened species in your state or region. (Clickable US map: <http://www.endangeredspecie.com/map.htm> ; clickable world map <http://library.thinkquest.org/11353/e-animals.htm>)

3. **Graphic Organizing**

- a) Compare and contrast your summer vacation days to those of Angelo and Kenzie. Consider such points as activities (alone and with friends), entertainment, experiences. Chart your results on a Venn Diagram.

b) As Kenzie becomes involved with catching the poacher and working with other teens on the island, what does she learn about herself? Create a three column chart of her personality traits and/or behavioral characteristics in the beginning of the book, the middle, and at the end.

- Include any people and/or events that serve as catalysts to her growth.
- Repeat the process for Angelo.

Table, Line Graph, and Bar Graph Activities recording Key deer data (including blank graph template) – Available as separate PDF on website.

4. **Science** When the term *endangered species* is used, most people think of animals. Research and then list both plants and animals that are threatened or endangered in your state, providence, or country. Explain the difference between *threatened* and *endangered*. List your resources.

Additional Science Lesson plans available online:

Science - grades 5-6 From the National Teacher Training Institute- Population Simulation Census by Master Teacher Thomas Beard Trocco

<http://www.thirteen.org/edonline/ntti/resources/lessons/hideer/index.html>

Science and Career Ed - grade 8- From Learn NC- Key deer: Evolution and species survival by Tammy Johnson and Martha Tedrow

<http://www.learnnc.org/lp/editions/careerstart-grade8/5585>

5. Map/Computer Skills

- 1) Examine the map of Big Pine Key in the book. Without a scale, how can you estimate distance on this illustration? (Note the mile marker signs.)
 - a) Using the map in the book, estimate the distance from Kenzie's house on Big Pine Key to US#1. Compare this map with Google Earth maps. Estimate the distance on Google maps. (Accept answers close to 5.3 miles.)
 - b) Repeat the steps and estimate the distance from the National Key Deer Refuge maintenance center to the fish camp just before the bridge to No Name Key. (Accept answers close to 2.6 miles.)
- 2) Explore the water around Big Pine Key using Google Earth maps. You can see the changes in water color and often see the scars left by boats in shallow water.