

Alicia's Treasure

by Diane Gonzales Bertrand

Themes:

- Brother/ Sister Relationships
- First trips
- Discoveries

About the book:

Alicia's Treasure narrates a young girl's first special and eventful trip to the ocean. Along for the ride with her older brother and his girlfriend, Alicia longs for the beach to be a place all to herself. The discoveries she makes about what the beach is really about come after some hard learned lessons.

Critic's Praise:

"Alicia's account of her experience brims with the bracing flavors of the beach and the immediacy of each moment as it rolls in like a wave and breaks upon her." —*Booklist*

Teaching Overview:

Alicia's Treasure is an enduring story of discovery and severing estranged relationships. Through her magical trip to the ocean, Alicia learns about the beach and how to get closer to her older brother. The characters and situations lend to studies of the beach and ocean life, as well as discussions of sibling relationships. The novel is ideal for grades 4-6.

This teacher's guide offers Language Art activities, which satisfy generalized content standards. They are suggested as initial activities on which the teacher can expand, substitute, and/or incorporate into their instruction.

Comprehension strategies:

The following Before, During, and After Reading strategies contain activities for improving reading and writing skills. Where appropriate, the skill addressed by each of the activities is noted in parenthesis.

BEFORE READING:

Opening Discussion/Writing Activities:

Invite students to free write for 10 minutes on these three topics. Introduce the prompt and provide no more information. Allow them to unload as many thoughts as they have on the subjects. (**Writing:** purposes/ to express/ to explore).

- A) a place I want to visit
- B) a trip in a car
- C) a memory of a place and a food I ate there

After they have all stopped writing on the last item, allow time to share this writing with others in the classroom. Either ask for volunteers to share one item from the list or have students pair up with someone they rarely interact with. Emphasize respect in sharing, listening skills, and bridging their stories if possible. (**Listening/Speaking:** listening/speaking/appreciation).

Next, invite students to talk about traveling outside of their hometowns or home cities. What is hard about leaving home? What makes it fun? Make a list of class pros and cons of vacations. Then, allow them to expand on the various meanings of Vacation. (**Listening/Speaking:** listening/speaking/appreciation).

Allow students to examine the novel's cover. Looking at the picture, what can a reader determine about the setting? Looking at the back of the book, what does the writing reveal about the story? Have each student answer the following questions:

1. What do you think will be Alicia's Treasure?
2. From the back cover, make a list of the events that will happen in the story. Predict some other adventures that a

person at the beach might have.

Collect these responses for discussion at the end of the story. (**Writing:** purposes/ to record/ to reflect on ideas).

AS READING PROGRESSES

The following sample questions enable students to identify main ideas, make predictions, and draw conclusions (**Reading:** drawing inferences and supporting with textual evidence). Have students refer to a dictionary as they encounter unfamiliar words (**Reading:** Vocabulary development).

Chapter One

1. Based on the first chapter, what kind of relationship do Alicia and Sergio have? Find examples from the story to support your claim. Is Alicia's relationship with Sergio alike or different to your own with your siblings? Describe.
2. What are some of the things Alicia wants to do and see at the beach? From where has she gathered her information? Is her information reliable?
3. How does the title of the chapter prepare the reader? Discuss some other title suggestions.

Chapters Two & Three

1. Based on chapters two and three, what does Alicia expect to do and see at the beach? Have her desires and expectations changed since the first chapter? How and why?
2. What things does Alicia not expect, but enjoy nonetheless?
3. What kind of disappointments has Alicia felt? How does she handle the disappointments?
Use examples from the chapters to support your claim.
4. List and describe the members of the Sandoval family.
5. How does Alicia react to the Sandoval family?
6. How is the Sandoval family similar or different from the people in your family? Use specific examples.

Chapter Four

1. Who is the jellyfish girl? Why is the chapter titled that way? (Support your claim with examples from the chapter.)
2. What things does Alicia enjoy about the ocean? What things surprise or disappoint her?
Use specific examples.

Chapter Five

1. How are the Ramos brother and sister similar to the Sandoval brothers and sisters?
How are they different? Use examples from the novel to support your claim.
2. What does Alicia learn about herself and her feelings about families as a result of the Sandoval Sand War?
3. Describe the different kinds of reactions that Alicia has to the tar on herself and on her bathing suit? What is the *cause* of these reactions?

Chapter Six

1. Sergio tells a story about Alicia at her uncle's ranch. What does it reveal about Alicia's personality? Are those traits still part of Alicia? Find support for your claims in the story.
2. Why is fishing with the others so important to Alicia?
3. By this point in the book, do you think Alicia is enjoying the beach?
4. Do you see any differences in Alicia or Sergio and how they treat each other?
5. Using chapters one through six, describe some things about Alicia that show she's a typical ten year old. What things does Alicia do or say that show she's unique and more mature for her age?
6. If you could guess Alicia's favorite subjects in school, what would they be? Support your claims with examples

from chapters one through six.

Chapter Seven

1. Chapter Seven has an unusual title. What does it mean in relation to Alicia=s experience fishing on the pier?
2. Describe the actions of Frankie and Sergio as fishermen. What do their actions reveal about their knowledge and experience as fishermen?

Chapter Eight

1. Describe Alicia=s two experiences hooking a fish. What is different in her second attempt to catch a fish? Be specific.
2. By the end of chapter eight, what new ideas has Alicia discovered about herself? Use examples from chapters seven and eight to support your claim.

Chapter Nine

1. There are two different settings for this chapter. First, the front porch of the beach cottage, and then the park area near the ferry boat landing. Make a list of Alicia=s different emotions and feelings in both of these settings.
2. Explain the meaning of the title of this chapter. Use examples from the chapter to support your claim.

≡ Before reading chapter ten, make some **predictions**. Do you think Sergio will keep his promise to Alicia? Support your claim with examples from previous chapters.

Chapter Ten

1. In your opinion, why does Sergio break his promise to Alicia?
2. Examine the various adventures that Alicia creates on page 97. Illustrate one of those adventures in a comic strip or draw it out on a larger piece of paper.

≡Making Comparisons:

Look again at Chapter Four and compare it with chapter Ten. How has Alicia=s perception of certain things changed in only one day=s time? What do you think are reasons for these changes?

Chapter Eleven

1. Why is the sea horse so important to Alicia?
2. Make a comparison of each character=s reaction to Alicia=s sea horse.
3. Explain how this sentence relates to the story. AI know the chance of finding another sea horse and getting a different brother are just about even.@

Chapter Twelve

1. What does Alicia learn about Carmen and the broken promise in chapter ten? How does this effect Alicia=s relationship with Sergio? How does Carmen redeem her mistake?
2. Look again at the conversation between Alicia and Sergio. What are the benefits when they both try to listen and see things from the other person=s viewpoint?
3. Why do you think Alicia is so happy at the end of the chapter? Support your claim with examples from the chapter.

Chapter Thirteen

1. What has changed in Alicia and Sergio=s relationship since Chapter One? Are there any indications that these

two siblings must continue to work on their relationship?

2. After reading the novel, present your ideas that answer the question, What is Alicia's treasure?

Use examples from the story to support your claim.

3. How does Alicia's last stop at the beach reflect her experiences at the beach? What has she learned about herself?

AFTER READING

Viewing Activities

1. Note the illustration on page 18. Why do you think this is the first illustration in the book? What does it say about the character and plot of the book? (**Viewing:** interpretation; how illustration extends meaning of text).
2. The rest of the illustrations take place on the beach (pages 19, 32, 45, 103, 124). Look at each picture and describe why each illustration is important to the understanding of the story. Note which one is your favorite and why. (**Viewing:** representing; how illustrator's choice of elements helps to represent the text's meaning).
3. Think about what scene in the story would have made a good illustration. Draw what would have gone on a page in the novel had you been the book's illustrator. (**Viewing:** production; producing visual to extend or represent meaning).
4. Note illustrations on pages 19, 45, and 124 together and then those on pages 32 and 103. From whose point of view is each set of pictures created? What difference does it make to the way you view the picture? Is there a preferred method in your opinion? (**Viewing:** interpretation; understanding visual image, message and meaning).

Writing Activities

1. The descriptions in the last chapter use different senses to give the reader a better understanding of the store.

Think of a place that you know well, and using all five senses, describe the place in a few short paragraphs to someone who has never been there. (**Writing:** purposes/ to describe/ to record).

2. Using the Sergio adventures on page 97, develop a short, funny story using the title of one of those adventures as inspiration. (**Writing:** purposes/ to express/ to explore).

3. Select a scene from the story and tell it from another character's (or animal's) point of view. Think of a scene that could be humorous, as an example, from the viewpoint of another. (**Writing:** purposes/ to reflect on ideas/ to discover).

OTHER FOLLOW-UP/ EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

1. Research an aspect of the sea life Alicia encounters. Among your choices are the jellyfish, squid, shrimp, clams, salt water catfish (hardhead), seahorse, etc. Use the resources around you (your teacher, books, internet, etc.) to learn as much about the species. With the information you collect, make a page to go in a book about the sea. Include both pictures and descriptions to help your reader understand. (**Reading/Writing:** inquiry/ research/ to explain).
2. Describe an actual or imaginary trip to the beach in a new way. Write a poem, a play, anything! Make it creative and fun, while still conveying the main ideas of the trip. (**Writing:** purposes/ to express/ to describe).

From the author:

I was inspired to write this story when my daughter held up a plastic starfish and asked me questions about the beach. Port Aransas, Texas, is one of my favorite vacation spots. Like Alicia, I love the mixture of smells, tastes, and sounds there. I relate best to the Sandoval family, because my family put up a tent, cooked out on the beach, and enjoyed fishing together. I ate a lot of sand, caught many hardhead catfish, and swallowed my share of saltwater. Every year I go back, and now I take my own children. And through *Alicia's Treasure*, I get to share my favorite place with those, like Alicia, who are experiencing the beach for the very first time.

Diane Gonzales Bertrand

Diane Gonzales Bertrand is the author of numerous books for children and young adults. Her books for young children include *The Empanadas That Abuela Made/ Las empanadas que hacía la abuela* (Piñata Books, 2002), with illustrations by Alex Pardo DeLange; *Uncle Chente's Picnic/El picnic de Tío Chente*, (Piñata Books, 2001) with illustrations by Pauline Rodriguez Howard; *The Last Doll/La última muñeca* (Piñata Books, 2001), with illustrations by Anthony Accardo; *Family, Familia* (Piñata Books, 1999), with illustrations by Pauline Rodriguez Howard; and *Sip, Slurp, Soup, Soup / Caldo, caldo, caldo* (Piñata Books, 1997), with illustrations by Alex Pardo DeLange. Bertrand's books for young adults include *Close to the Heart* (Piñata Books, 2002), *Trino's Time* (Piñata Books, 2001), *Trino's Choice* (Piñata Books, 1999), *Lessons of the Game* (Piñata Books, 1998), *Alicia's Treasure* (Piñata Books, 1996), and *Sweet Fifteen* (Piñata Books, 1995). A lifelong resident of San Antonio, Bertrand teaches at St. Mary's University, where she is also Writer in Residence.