Targeted Passage #1 – lines 1-14

The island of Bora Bora, where Mako lived, is far away in the South Pacific. It is not a large island—you can paddle around it in a single day—but the main body of it rises straight out of the sea, very high into the air, like a castle. Waterfalls trail down the faces of the cliffs. As you look upward, you see wild goats leaping from crag to crag.

Mako had been born on the very edge of the sea, and most of his waking hours were spent in the waters of the lagoon, which was nearly enclosed by the two outstretched arms of the island. He was very clever with his hands; he had made a harpoon that was as straight as an arrow and tipped with five pointed iron spears. He had made a canoe, hollowing it out of a tree. It wasn’t a very big canoe—only a little longer than his own height. It had an outrigger, a sort of balancing pole, fastened to one side to keep the boat from tipping over. The canoe was just large enough to hold Mako and his little dog, Afa. They were great companions, these two.

This passage establishes the setting and main character: Mako lives on the South Pacific island of Bora Bora.

- What kind of place is Bora Bora? Where is it located?
- Who is Mako?
- How does Mako spend his time?
- Who is Afa?
“Tupa lives in the great caves of the reef. He is longer than this house. There is a sail on his back, not large but terrible to see, for it burns with a white fire. Once, when I was fishing beyond the reef at night, I saw him come up right under another canoe—”

“What happened then?” Mako asked. He half rose on one elbow. This was a story he had not heard before.

The old man’s voice dropped to a whisper. “Tupa dragged the canoe right under the water—and the water boiled with white flame. The three fishermen in it were never seen again. Fine swimmers they were, too.”

Grandfather shook his head. “It is bad fortune even to speak of Tupa. There is evil in his very name.”

“But King Opu Nui has offered a reward for his capture,” the boy pointed out.

“Thirty acres of fine coconut land, and a sailing canoe as well,” said the old man. “But who ever heard of laying hands on a ghost?”

Mako’s eyes glistened. “Thirty acres of land and a sailing canoe. How I should love to win that reward!”

This passage begins to set up the motivation for Mako’s conflict with Tupa.

- Who is Tupa, and where does he live?
- What reward has the king offered for capturing Tupa?
- Why does Grandfather think that Tupa cannot be captured?
“Afa! Afa! Come back! Come quickly!” Mako shouted.

The little dog turned back toward the canoe. He was swimming with all his strength. Mako leaned forward. Could Afa make it? Swiftly the boy seized his spear. Bracing himself, he stood upright. There was no weakness in him now. His dog, his companion, was in danger of instant death.

Afa was swimming desperately to reach the canoe. The white shark had paused in his circling to gather speed for the attack. Mako raised his arm, took aim. In that instant the shark charged. Mako’s arm flashed forward.

All his strength was behind that thrust. The spear drove straight and true, right into the great shark’s eye. Mad with pain and rage, Tupa whipped about, lashing the water in fury. The canoe rocked back and forth. Mako struggled to keep his balance as he drew back the spear by the cord fastened to his wrist.

He bent over to seize Afa and drag him aboard. Then he stood up, not a moment too soon. Once again the shark charged. Once again Mako threw his spear, this time at the other eye. The spear found its mark. Blinded and weak from loss of blood, Tupa rolled to the surface, turned slightly on his side. Was he dead?

This passage presents the climax of the story: Mako spears the shark to save Afa.

- What does Tupa do as Afa swims towards the canoe?
- How does Mako save Afa from the shark?
- What happens after Mako drags Afa onto the canoe?
Mako flung back his head and shouted for joy. Hitching a strong line about the shark’s tail, the boy began to paddle toward the shore of Bora Bora. The dorsal fin, burning with the white fire of phosphorus, trailed after the canoe.

Men were running down the beaches of Bora Bora, shouting as they leaped into their canoes and put out across the lagoon. Their cries reached the boy’s ears across the water.

“It is Tupa—ghost of the lagoon,” he heard them shout. “Mako has killed him!”

That night, as the tired boy lay on the pandanus mats listening to the distant thunder of the sea, he heard Grandfather singing a new song. It was the song which would be sung the next day at the feast which King Opu Nui would give in Mako’s honor. The boy saw his mother bending over the cook fire. The stars leaned close, winking like friendly eyes.

Grandfather’s voice reached him now from a great distance, “Thirty acres of land and a sailing canoe . . .”

This passage concludes the story: it shows the attitude of the community toward their new hero.

- What does Mako do when he is sure that Tupa is dead?
- Who spreads the news of Mako’s victory over Tupa?
- What will Grandfather’s new song be about?
- How has Mako become a hero in his community?