

SYNOPSIS

Mafatu means Stout Heart, a brave name for a Polynesian boy to carry. Mafatu is also the son of the chief. Much is expected of him. However, he suffers from a great problem. He is afraid of the sea. When he was very small a hurricane swept him and his mother out to sea. She died from the ordeal.

The old people put the blame for his fear on ghostspirits. The girls laugh at him. The boys fail to include him in any of their games. He must stay at home when all the others go on adventures.

Mafatu feels he is a coward. He must prove himself. He decides to head for the distant islands and make a name for himself. He steals a canoe and heads for the terrifying world of water and wind. Only Uri, his nondescript yellow dog and Kivi, an albatross go with him.

The first part of the journey is mild; the sea is calm and beautiful. Then a storm moves in. The mast of his small canoe is snapped off. Only the unreasonable terror he feels keeps his arms lashed to the steering paddle. Suddenly a vast wave is lifting the canoe. All of his belongings are destroyed. He is naked, defenseless and without food or weapon. Still he clings to life. The hot hours of sun have blistered and cracked his skin. His tongue swelled in his throat, all seems lost to him. Only Uri, his dog keeps him going with a show of courage. Kivi, the albatross still leads him onward. Suddenly a strip of sand, white in the night appears. He feels earth beneath his feet. He has reached his island.

The island is a lush paradise with all kinds of fruit, animal life and beautiful plants. Mafatu climbs a plateau. It has a commanding view. Here he builds a shelter for himself.

In the distance he can see the Smoking Island. He knows that the eaters-of-men live there. He must keep a watch for them. We sense that he is beginning to feel some confidence.

He sets several goals for himself. He will kill a wild boar. He will make a necklace from its tusks. Finally, he will build a fine canoe for himself out of a tamana tree.

After settling in he discovers a wide trail through the jungle. To his astonishment it leads to a huge grotesque idol. Many bones lay at its feet. He realizes at once that this is an idol of the eaters-of-men.

After careful inspection of the idol he sees a spear head near its feet. It's just what he needs. He reaches out for it. It takes every ounce of will he has to grasp it, but he does grasp it and dashes off into the jungle. He begins to feel courage.

When a wild boar attacks him, a perfectly timed thrust kills the boar. Its tusks make the fine necklace he had planned on.

Finally, his canoe is ready. "It floats lightly; as easily as a gull poised for flight." He takes it for a test run. All goes well except that his knife drops into the sea. When he dives in after it an octopus lashes out like a length of rubber hose. It encircles his waist. A fierce struggle ensues. One of Mafatu's wild blows goes into the octopus's eye and it releases him.

Tomorrow he will start for home. In the early morning dawn he hears the measured booming of drums. The eaters-of-men have arrived. Four of them spot him. He races to his canoe. The men swim after him, along with six canoes filled with warriors. He senses "death in their hearts." The wind is just a puff, but it's enough to get his canoe out of their reach.

Long days of monotony, tiger sharks and blistering sun follow. He almost gives up in despair. Then he sees his mother's face in the cool depths. He feels an overpowering anger. "You destroyed my mother." "Now I no longer fear you Sea!" At last he is free of his fear.

The lagoon of his native island appears. His father, the chief, comes to greet the "stranger." Mafatu says, "I have come home." His father replies, "Here is my son come home from the sea. Mafatu, Stout Heart, a brave name for a brave boy!"

SETTING

Beautiful Polynesian Islands. Each chapter is filled with breathtaking description.

CHARACTERS

Mafatu—A teenage boy; his name means Stout Heart

Tawana Nui—Mafatu's father

Uri—Mafatu's dog

Kivi—An albatross

Kana—The only boy who is friendly to Mafatu

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Armstrong W. Sperry, writer-illustrator, was born in 1897 in New Haven, Connecticut. He has lived in Hanover, New Hampshire, and on a farm in Vermont. He attended the Yale School of Fine Arts and the Art Students League in New York. He also studied in Paris, France. The author's main interest has been "islands," and his many travels to Tahiti and the West Indies have resulted in new ideas and authentic backgrounds for his stories. Armstrong Sperry has received many awards for his books including the 1941 Newbery Medal for *Call It Courage*.

CALL IT COURAGE

INSTRUCTIONAL OBJECTIVES

1. To understand why it is so important for a boy in the Polynesian culture not to fear the sea
2. To feel the great beauty of this area of the world through the description in the story
3. To trace the gradual growth in Mafatu's self confidence
4. To discuss primitive cultures—how their view of life might differ from ours
5. To examine the power that peer pressure can have on a teenager

MEANING STUDY

POLYNESIAN VOCABULARY

Below are words, phrases, sentences, or thought units that have a particular meaning in the story. Explain the meaning each has in this book.

1. tupapu
(ghostspirit)
2. bonitos
(huge school of fish)
3. himene
(a gathering house for the old)
4. Ara Moana
(Paths of the sea)
5. Moana
(The Sea God)
6. Maui
(God of Fisherman)
7. puua viri
(wild boar)
8. Marae
(sacred place)
9. motu tabu
(forbidden island)
10. pahua
(a shell with a cutting edge)
11. pareu
(cloth)
12. ma'o
(hammerhead shark)
13. feké

(the octopus)
14. Varua Ino
(idol of eaters-of-men)

COMPREHENSION STUDY

Answer the following questions in your own words. There is not always a right answer. Your judgment is important and you should be ready to defend your answers by referring to passages in the book.

1. What does Mafatu's name mean? Why is this ironic?
(Mafatu means Stout Heart. It is ironic because he is just the opposite. He is afraid of the sea.)
2. How is Mafatu treated by these three groups of people: the old, girls and boys of the village?
(The old forgive Mafatu's fear and they blame ghostspirits. The girls simply laugh at him. The boys will not let him be part of any of their games.)
3. Who are Uri and Kivi? How do they help Mafatu?
(Uri is a nondescript yellow dog; he gives Mafatu his love. Kivi is an albatross; she gives Mafatu direction.)
4. How did the sea almost keep Mafatu from reaching another island?
(A huge storm almost stopped Mafatu. The storm destroyed all of his belongings. He was adrift in the sun. His skin was blistered and cracked.)
5. Describe the island Mafatu lands on.
(It is lush, a true paradise. Fruit, wild pigs, coconuts, breadfruit, wild bananas, etc. He has all of this to himself. He builds a shelter for himself on a high plateau. It is truly wonderful.)
6. Show how the Smoking Islands can be a danger to Mafatu.
(The Smoking Islands are where the eaters-of-men live. If they should come to his island he will be in danger.)
7. Where did Mafatu get his spearhead from?
(He found the spearhead at the feet of Varua Ino; a God of the eaters-of-men.)
8. Identify three incidents in the story that helped Mafatu gain self-confidence.
(a. When the wild boar attacked him. He killed it with a perfectly timed thrust.
b. When he built himself a great canoe, "it floated as easily as a gull poised for flight."
c. When he freed himself from the octopus.
d. When he outraced the eaters-of-men. He reached his home island.)
9. Why was Mafatu overwhelmed by despair just before he reached his home island?
(Mafatu felt that Maui, the God of fishermen had deserted him. He had only days of monotony and tiger sharks circling him.)
10. How do you think Mafatu's life changed after he returned? Be creative with your answer.
(Answers will vary.)

COMPREHENSION GUIDE

Literal—Questions 1, 2, 3, 4, 7
Interpretive—Questions 6, 9

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Critical—Questions 8 & 10

Creative—Questions 5 & 10

TEACHING NOTES

STUDENT INVOLVEMENT ACTIVITIES

1. Draw a picture of the lush island where Mafatu made his home.
2. Look up the word *Polynesian* in your encyclopedia. Give an oral report to the class on the topic. Include facts about the people, their culture and a map showing their location.
3. Pretend that Mafatu kept a diary. Write five entries that show how exciting it was to live on this island.
4. Write several paragraphs from the viewpoint of the eaters-of-men. Think about how they felt about this sacred island.
5. Make some simple hand puppets. You will need an octopus, wild boar, eaters-of-men, and Mafatu. You can also include others. Make up an adventure story. Take your show on the road to a lower grade.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Sperry, Armstrong, *Call It Courage*, New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 116 pages.

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COMPREHENSION TEST A

Part I: True or False (20 points)

In the space provided write **T**, if the statement is *completely* true. Write **F** if *any* part of the statement is false.

- _____ 1. Mafatu had a fear of sea creatures.
- _____ 2. Girls would laugh at Mafatu.
- _____ 3. A storm sank Mafatu's canoe.
- _____ 4. Mafatu made his shelter on a plateau.
- _____ 5. The Fire Island is 50 miles away.
- _____ 6. Mafatu always kept his fire lit.
- _____ 7. Mafatu fought a hammerhead shark.
- _____ 8. The whale skeleton gave Mafatu many things.
- _____ 9. The octopus lashed out like a rubber whip.
- _____ 10. Maui is the God of fisherman.

Part II: Character Match (10 points)

Place the letter of the character in front of the description which matches.

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|---------------|
| _____ 1. Mafatu's father | A. Mafatu |
| _____ 2. An albatross | B. Tawana Nui |
| _____ 3. Stout Heart | C. Uri |
| _____ 4. A dog | D. Kivi |
| _____ 5. A boy friendly to Mafatu | E. Kana |

Part III: Multiple Choice (20 points)

Complete each of the following statements with the best answer. Indicate your choice by writing the letter of the appropriate response in the space provided.

- _____ 1. Mafatu's mother was killed by (a) a wild boar (b) an eater-of-men (c) a hurricane (d) an octopus.
- _____ 2. Bonitos are (a) a school of fish (b) a special fruit (c) a native game (d) a beautiful flower.
- _____ 3. Kivi is (a) a dog (b) a parakeet (c) a sea gull (d) an albatross.
- _____ 4. The eaters-of-men live on (a) Fire Island (b) Black Island (c) Smoke Island (d) Eaters Island.
- _____ 5. At the Sacred Place Mafatu found (a) a spear head (b) a knife (c) darts (d) fishhooks.
- _____ 6. Which part of the wild boar did Mafatu want for himself? (a) the teeth (b) the tusk (c) the feet (d) the tail.
- _____ 7. The Polynesian word for octopus is (a) Maui (b) Bonitos (c) Uri (d) feké.
- _____ 8. Mafatu's father was (a) a God (b) the chief (c) a fisherman (d) an eater-of-men.
- _____ 9. Each day Mafatu checked on the eaters-of-men by (a) climbing a tree (b) climbing a plateau (c) climbing a mountain (d) climbing a pole.
- _____ 10. Mafatu stabbed the octopus in its (a) eye (b) tentacle (c) mouth (d) pressure cup.

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COMPREHENSION TEST B

Part I: Fill in the Blank (12 points)

Pick the correct word below and fill in the blank provided at left with the correct letter.

- _____ 1. Mafatu makes good use of the _____ bones he found.
- _____ 2. _____ was a brave companion.
- _____ 3. A _____ attacked Mafatu.
- _____ 4. The pile of bones was found in a _____.
- _____ 5. Mafatu would have _____ of his mother.
- _____ 6. Mafatu cut and dried some_____.
- A. flashbacks
B. Sacred Place
C. whale
D. wild boar
E. Uri
F. tentacles
G. coward

Part II: Multiple Choice (20 points)

- _____ 1. Which of these was a chief? (a) Mafatu (b) Uri (c) Kana (d) Tawani Nui.
- _____ 2. How many warriors in canoes went after Mafatu? (a) 50 (b) 60 (c) 70 (d) 100.
- _____ 3. In which of these ways did the old people treat Mafatu: (a) kindly (b) with scorn (c) they laughed (d) they didn't care.
- _____ 4. When the huge wave hit his canoe which thing did Mafatu *not* lose? (a) his clothes (b) his food (c) his weapon (d) his dog.
- _____ 5. Mafatu's home island is called (a) Bonitos (b) Motu Tabu (c) Hickuerri (d) Maui.
- _____ 6. The ancient idol was covered with (a) bones (b) flowers (c) fungus (d) wild coconuts.
- _____ 7. When Mafatu woke up he heard (a) the wind (b) chimes (c) wild boars (d) drums.
- _____ 8. Mafatu said the reef was (a) a bad place (b) part of his heritage (c) always beautiful (d) dangerous.
- _____ 9. All of these were in the story *except* (a) sword fish (b) wild boar (c) an octopus (d) a hammerhead shark.
- _____ 10. When Mafatu reached home the beach was (a) empty (b) crowded (c) on fire (d) washed out.

Part III: Fact and Opinion (20 points)

In the space provided write **fact** if the statement could be checked up on. Write **opinion** if it is just what a person feels is right.

- _____ 1. Mafatu was truly afraid of the sea.
- _____ 2. The boys loved to fish for Bonitos.
- _____ 3. Canoes are dangerous.
- _____ 4. This book has great descriptive scenes.
- _____ 5. The eaters-of-men live on Smoke Island.
- _____ 6. Idols are always ugly.
- _____ 7. Whale bones have many uses.
- _____ 8. Clear water can confuse scale of distance.

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- _____ 9. You should always dry octopus tentacles.
_____ 10. Both Maui and Moana are Gods.

Part IV: Match the Quotation (8 points)

Take the letter from the character and put it in front of the correct quotation.

- _____ 1. "You cheated me once Mafatu, but someday, someday I will claim you!"
_____ 2. "Wait, Kana! I'll Go! I'll try _____."
_____ 3. "Here is my son, come home from the sea."
_____ 4. "Mafatu is a coward."
- A. Tawani Nui
B. Mafatu
C. Kana
D. the reef speaking

Part V: Sequence (10 points)

Place the letter before the number to indicate the order in which these events occurred.

- _____ 1. (a) Mafatu steals a canoe.
_____ 2. (b) The boys never ask him to play.
_____ 3. (c) Mafatu comes back home.
_____ 4. (d) An octopus attacks Mafatu.
_____ 5. (e) Mafatu's mother is killed.

Essay Questions (30 points)

1. What does Mafatu mean? Why is this ironic?
2. Who are Uri and Kivi? How do they help Mafatu?
3. Show how Mafatu used the things he found on the island to help him.
4. Why did Mafatu always check out the Smoking Islands?
5. This story is filled with beautiful descriptions; recall to mind two of your favorite descriptive parts.

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COMPREHENSION TEST A ANSWER KEY

Part I: True or False

- | | |
|------|-------|
| 1. F | 6. T |
| 2. T | 7. T |
| 3. F | 8. T |
| 4. T | 9. F |
| 5. F | 10. T |

Part II: Character Match

- | | |
|------|------|
| 1. B | 4. C |
| 2. D | 5. E |
| 3. A | |

Part III: Multiple Choice

- | | |
|------|-------|
| 1. C | 6. B |
| 2. A | 7. D |
| 3. D | 8. B |
| 4. C | 9. B |
| 5. A | 10. A |

Part IV: Sequence

- | | |
|------|------|
| 1. C | 4. E |
| 2. A | 5. B |
| 3. D | |

Part V: Fill in the Blank

- | | |
|------|------|
| 1. C | 4. F |
| 2. E | 5. D |
| 3. B | |

Essay Questions:

1. See comprehension question No. 2.
2. See comprehension question No. 5.
3. She was killed by a great hurricane. She was swept out to sea.
4. See comprehension question No. 8.
5. Answers will vary:
 - a. fight with hammerhead shark
 - b. knife drops into the sea
 - c. octopus attack

COMPREHENSION TEST B ANSWER KEY

Part I: Fill in the Blank

- | | |
|------|------|
| 1. C | 4. B |
| 2. E | 5. A |
| 3. D | 6. F |

Part II: Multiple Choice

- | | |
|------|-------|
| 1. D | 6. C |
| 2. B | 7. D |
| 3. A | 8. B |
| 4. D | 9. A |
| 5. C | 10. B |

Part III: Fact and Opinion

- | | |
|------------|------------|
| 1. fact | 6. opinion |
| 2. fact | 7. fact |
| 3. opinion | 8. fact |
| 4. opinion | 9. opinion |
| 5. fact | 10. fact |

Part IV: Match the Quotation

- | | |
|------|------|
| 1. D | 3. A |
| 2. B | 4. C |

Part V: Sequence

- | | |
|------|------|
| 1. E | 4. D |
| 2. B | 5. C |
| 3. A | |

Essay Questions:

1. See comprehension question No. 1.
2. See comprehension question No. 3.
3. He built his shelter and made his clothes from things he found on the island. When he found a whale skeleton he used its bones for tools. His canoe was cut from an island tree.
4. See comprehension question No. 6.
5. Answers will vary.

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