

The Galapagos

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Summary

The book is about two young people, Sophie and David, and their visit to the Galapagos Islands in the Pacific Ocean. There, they see many exotic animals, fish and plants and they make a movie about their experience.

Pages 1–5: At the beginning we are introduced to Lonesome George, one of the last of the giant tortoises living on the islands. A lot of people come to the islands to see him, and take pictures. Sophie and David go out in a boat and see many interesting fish. Later, they see a volcano erupting on one of the islands and they and some scientists go to the island and rescue a giant tortoise.

Pages 8–13: In this part we learn about boobie birds, which catch fish under water and frigate birds, which are very big and heavy. Other animals mentioned are sea lions, iguanas, penguins, and crabs. The scientists speculate as to where the giant tortoise they rescued came from and whether it is Lonesome George's relative. We learn about Charles Darwin, the famous naturalist, who visited the islands in 1835 and asked many interesting questions about the animals living there.

Pages 16–19: Sophie and David are finishing their movie about the islands. They go swimming with a huge whale shark. The scientists discover that the tortoise isn't from George's family. At the end, the movie is shown on the islands and then later in California at a movie festival. Sophie and David receive 10,000 dollars and they decide they are going to go back to the islands to help the animals.

Background and themes

Protection of our natural environment: Many animals are in danger of extinction and areas of natural beauty are threatened by human activity. David and Sophie want

to help the animals in the Galapagos and so they made a movie about the beautiful things they saw.

Evolution: The naturalist, Charles Darwin, was very interested in the islands because they provided a unique location in which to study the physical evolution of various animals.

Discussion activities

Before reading

- Write and game:** Put students into small groups and ask them to write all the animals they know in English. The group with the longest list wins. Write the animals on the board. Put the students in small groups and play "Twenty Questions." Each student chooses an animal in turn. The other students have twenty questions to guess the animal. Answers can only be *yes*, *no* or *sometimes*. Elicit possible questions from the whole class first: *Is it big? Does it have four legs? Does it live in my country? Does it eat meat? Does it swim? Is it brown? etc.*

Pages 1–5

After reading

- Ask and answer:** Write *What is the name of the town on the island of Isabela?* on the board and elicit the answer from the students (Villamil). In small groups, students now write four questions about pages 1–5. Check their work as they do this. Each group, in turn, asks the other groups their questions.

Pages 8–13

After reading

- Write and ask:** Put students into pairs and tell them one of them is Sophie and one is David. Student A re-reads pages 8–10 and Student B pages 11–13. Tell them to write five questions about the information on these pages. Students then ask and answer each other's questions. See Discussion activities key for example questions and answers.
- Research:** Write the following movie titles on the board: *Happy Feet, Jaws, Ice Age, Madagascar, Finding Nemo, Chicken Run*. Ask the students if they have seen any of the movies. Explain they are movies in which animals are the central characters. Ask them if they know any similar movies. Then divide the class into groups of three and ask them to look for information on the Internet about three of the movies above. Each student chooses one of the movies. Students then tell the rest of their group about the movie they have done research on and they decide which one they think is the most interesting.