



## **Out of Season**

Kari Jones

Reading Level: 2.0

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AR Quiz # 150845

### **Book Summary**

Fourteen-year-old Maya sneaks out in her kayak before breakfast every day to check on a family of sea otters living in nearby Riley Bay. It's hard being an animal lover in a fishing family. The animals Maya loves threaten her family's livelihood, and Maya doesn't know if she can trust her family not to hurt them. She is determined to protect the sea otters, even if it means checking on them for the rest of her life. One morning, Maya discovers she's being watched. Who is it and why are they here? Soon Maya has to trust someone as she gets caught in a dangerous race to save the sea otters—and her family's livelihood—from poachers.

### **Author Biography**

**Kari Jones** is happy to call Victoria, British Columbia, home: it is a city where you can go down to the beach with your kayak, find an island, a lighthouse and an adventure, and be back in time for dinner. Kari is a college instructor who teaches students to write, but when school is out, she can often be found with her family and friends exploring the natural world and dreaming up adventures to share. Kari is the co-author of *Hiking Adventures with Children* as well as several essays and articles on being in nature with kids. She is also author of *Storm Tide*, another seaside adventure in the Orca Currents series.

## Connecting to the Text

### *Point of View*

Maya feels very protective of the sea otters that live in the kelp beds at Riley Bay. In the large group, read aloud the following from chapter 1:

*Last year a fisherman shot a sea otter farther up the coast. He said it was destroying the catch. That's what happens to animals that eat fish around here. No one has time for them.*

*Having sea otters is a gift. They're so beautiful, and rare. There is no way I'm letting anything happen to them, even if I have to check on them every day for the rest of my life.*

In the context of the novel, there are two points of view illustrated here: that of fishing families like Maya's, and that of people who work to protect animals, like Maya. As a debate exercise, have students discuss in pairs the above quote, looking at it from the two points of view. You may wish to invite students to feed back their findings to the large group. *Prompts:*

- What are the interests of each of the two groups?
- What is at stake for each?
- What do they have in common?
- Is there a compromise that the two groups can reach?

**Option:** During their debates, encourage students to incorporate some of the following vocabulary words used in *Out of Season* when they feed back:

capture	illegal	poaching	survive
consequences	innocent	protect	

### *Descriptive Language Using Similes*

There is a wonderful descriptive paragraph in chapter 1 that begins, "Riley Bay is full of rocks and tiny islands..." In this paragraph, Maya describes sea otters using illustrative similes: "Their black heads look like bull kelp bulbs. Their flippers are like waving seaweed...They have black eyes and teddy-bear snouts, and they curve and twist in the water like acrobats when they play in the waves." After reading the paragraph and discussing similes, ask students to write a similar descriptive paragraph about a favorite animal, sport, performer, store, car, large audience, lunchtime in your school's cafeteria, etc.

## Connecting to the Curriculum

### *Science*

Maya loves to watch the sea otters along the shoreline. As a research project, invite students to find out more about sea otters. Questions to guide their research could include:

- What family do sea otters come from?

- Where do they live and what do they eat besides sea urchins?
- What threats do this marine species face?
- Note one interesting fact about sea otters. What surprised you while you were researching?

### ***Current Events***

In chapter 7, Maya and her family discover that poachers are stealing sea urchins out of season. Saul said, “They get into people’s traps...They mean business, Maya. They probably planned to take Dad’s boat.”

Poaching is a problem in many countries and in many ecosystems. As a research project, ask students to choose an animal, bird, fish or sea creature that is being (or has been) poached. Questions to guide students’ research could include:

- Describe the animal, bird, fish or sea creature you chose. What about this interests you?
- Describe the method of poaching and what happens after the poaching. Is the animal, bird, fish or sea creature sold in whole or in part?
- For the animal, bird, fish or sea creature you choose, are there organizations, permits or laws that protect it?

### ***Language Arts***

Use the following excerpts from *Out of Season* for creative writing activities (or students can choose their own). They can be used as the first line (or prompts for ideas) for a letter, poem or short story. Some ideas to get students started follow each quote.

(ch. 3) *There are huge footprints in the mud near the edge of the trees. I track them for ten paces into the woods. Then they disappear.*

- I wish I hadn’t got separated from the others on the hike but I was just so curious, I had to find out more about the strange footprints...

(ch. 4) *I have to figure out what’s going on. There are so many questions chasing each other in my mind that I can’t concentrate at school.*

- The School Trivia contest is tomorrow and I sure hope I win. That first prize will sure come in handy when school’s out...

(ch. 4) *Anger rises up my face like a red tide. I clench my hands. I’ll show them what it feels like to be spied on.*

- But things didn’t go as I planned, as usual. Now my best friend and I are stuck here in the school gym for the whole weekend. Good thing the locker room is open!

**Vocabulary**

The following words/terms are used in *Out of Season* in the context of Maya's experiences along the seashore while observing the sea otters. Invite students to write an imaginary diary entry in Maya's voice, describing her experience. Ideas for themes could be:

- *I've seen lots of wildlife along the shore...*
- *I'm not supposed to go out alone because Mom doesn't think I'll be safe, but...*
- *Here's my routine for visiting the sea otters...*

backpack	headland	oxygen tank	shoreline
binoculars	kayak	paddle	stern
cockpit	kelp	rocks	strokes
flippers	life jacket	sea otters	survival suit

**Connecting to the Students—Ideas for Exploration**

1. If students want to read more about a youth living at the seaside of British Columbia's west coast, introduce them to *Storm Tide*, also by Kari Jones. In *Storm Tide*, Simon and his sister Ellen live on Discovery Island and their family operates a lighthouse. Neither Simon nor Ellen is prepared for the mysterious and potentially dangerous visitor who brings with him an unexpected storm and a riddle that may lead to treasure—treasure that could help them save the lighthouse.
2. Another novel that shares an outdoor adventure theme (including kayaking) is *Camp Wild* by Pam Withers. When Wilf is sent to camp, he decides to escape and spend the rest of his vacation alone in the woods. Things don't go as Wilf plans and he ends up in a fight with an unforgiving river.
3. If students want to read more with a theme of poaching, they will enjoy *Bear Market* by Michele Martin Bossley. In this novel, Robyn, Nick and Trevor learn that grizzly bears are being poached and their gall bladders removed for use in alternative medicine. The stakes are high and the suspects many, as these kids head into a dangerous adventure.

**Web Resources**

[www.worldwildlife.org](http://www.worldwildlife.org)

[www.defenders.org/sea-otter/basic-facts](http://www.defenders.org/sea-otter/basic-facts)