



Close to Shore: The Terrifying Shark Attacks of 1916

By Michael Capuzzo

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Combining rich historical detail and a harrowing, pulse-pounding narrative, *Close to Shore* brilliantly re-creates the summer of 1916, when a rogue Great White shark attacked swimmers along the New Jersey shore, triggering mass hysteria and launching the most extensive shark hunt in history.

In July 1916 a lone Great White left its usual deep-ocean habitat and headed in the direction of the New Jersey shoreline. There, near the towns of Beach Haven and Spring Lake--and, incredibly, a farming community *eleven miles inland*--the most ferocious and unpredictable of predators began a deadly rampage: the first shark attacks on swimmers in U.S. history.

For Americans celebrating an astoundingly prosperous epoch, fueled by the wizardry of revolutionary inventions, the arrival of this violent predator symbolized the limits of mankind's power against nature.

Interweaving a vivid portrait of the era and meticulously drawn characters with chilling accounts of the shark's five attacks and the frenzied hunt that ensued, Michael Capuzzo has created a nonfiction historical thriller with the texture of *Ragtime* and the tension of *Jaws*. From the unnerving inevitability of the first attack on the esteemed son of a prosperous Philadelphia physician to the spine-tingling moment when a farm boy swimming in Matawan Creek feels the sandpaper-like skin of the passing shark, *Close to Shore* is an undeniably gripping saga.

Heightening the drama are stories of the resulting panic in the citizenry, press and politicians, and of colorful personalities such as Herman Oelrichs, a flamboyant millionaire who made a bet that a shark was no match for a man (and set out to prove it); Museum of Natural History ichthyologist John Treadwell Nichols, faced with the challenge of stopping a mythic sea creature about which little was known; and, most memorable, the rogue Great White itself moving through a world that couldn't conceive of either its destructive power or its moral right to destroy.

Scrupulously researched and superbly written, *Close to Shore* brings to life a

breathhtaking, pivotal moment in American history. Masterfully written and suffused with fascinating period detail and insights into the science and behavior of sharks, *Close to Shore* recounts a breathtaking, pivotal moment in American history with startling immediacy.

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Editorial Review

From School Library Journal

Grade 6-10-An adaptation of Capuzzo's adult book, *Close to Shore: A True Story of Terror in an Age of Innocence* (Broadway, 2001). During the summer of 1916, just as railroad travel enabled city dwellers to make day-trips to the seashore and swimming in the ocean became popular, bathers along the East Coast were frightened away by a series of vicious attacks in the water. During a one-month period, three men and one boy were killed. Initial opinions of the attacker ranged from sea turtles to killer whales or swordfish, before it was determined to be the work of a rogue white shark. Capuzzo describes the shark's quest to satiate his hunger with the flesh of humans, sometimes verging close to anthropomorphism as he builds an atmosphere of suspense about the creature, its wanderings and its means of attack. The menacing cover of a gaping shark's mouth, the addition of black-and-white photos and newspaper clippings, and the suspenseful writing add to the accessibility of this work for young people. There are no footnotes, but an explanation of the sources used to compile this account is offered along with a sampling of books consulted. Peter Benchley's *Shark Trouble* (Random, 2002) and Thomas B. Allen's *Shark Attacks: Their Causes and Avoidance* (Lyons, 2001) offer wider-ranging examples of shark attacks, along with ways to avoid them. *Pam Spencer Holley, Young Adult Literature Specialist, Virginia Beach, VA*
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From [Booklist](#)

Gr. 7-12. The jacket photo, a gruesome close-up of an open-mouthed shark, sets the tone for this riveting adaptation of Capuzzo's similarly titled adult book about what occurred when, in 1916, a rogue shark traveled inland along a New Jersey creek, terrorizing residents of nearby towns. Extensive trimming has eliminated much about the individuals most involved in what happened, which occasionally makes for some confusion. But this book has a rich assortment of photos and news clippings not in the original, and the vividness and sheer physicality of Capuzzo's writing remains intact. In many ways this is a new book. Capuzzo reconstructs events with a novelist's flair and a scientist's attention to detail, and his pacing is relentless as the story moves from cultural history and shark physiology to close-ups of the crazed, disoriented beast slicing through the water. When the shark dies at the hands of two astounded fishermen, readers will experience relief as well as a sense of tragedy. As with the adult book, there are no notes--only a list of further readings that kids can use to find out more. *Stephanie Zvirin*
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Review

"A remarkable read . . . a flash photo of the moment when our fascination with sharks transformed from awe into mortal dread."

—**Entertainment Weekly**

"The most perfect beach book ever. Better than *Jaws*—an amazing story, terrific writing, and the Gilded Age setting is fascinating. I loved it."

—**Linda Marotta, Shakespeare & Company, New York City**

"Popular history meets popular science in this thrilling shark story. As in *Seabiscuit*, the author interweaves social history with a suspenseful story told from different characters' points of view, including that most fascinating character of all: the shark itself."

—**Arsen Kashkashian, Boulder Book Store, Boulder, Colorado**

“This riveting book skillfully combines historical fact with shark science and lore. A first-rate thriller that’s all the more spine-tingling because it really happened.”

—Anne Edkins, Vroman’s Bookstore, Pasadena, California

“A riveting account of the terrorizing shark attacks [of 1916]. Meticulously researched, it provides fascinating information about the history of the great white shark as well as a social commentary of America during World War I. Informative, entertaining, enthralling.”

—Tova Beiser, Brown University Bookstore, Providence, Rhode Island

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Dan Hanner:

Nowadays reading books be a little more than want or need but also become a life style. This reading routine give you lot of advantages. The advantages you got of course the knowledge your information inside the book that improve your knowledge and information. The knowledge you get based on what kind of book you read, if you want get more knowledge just go with training books but if you want feel happy read one using theme for entertaining for example comic or novel. The particular Close to Shore: The Terrifying Shark Attacks of 1916 is kind of publication which is giving the reader unpredictable experience.

Stacey Sims:

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Michele Brown:

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