

- In what ways does this text attempt to engage the reader in the idea of 'Shark Week'?

The Washington Times

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# No snacking in the surf

It's television's "Shark Week<sup>1</sup>," and time to fear going near the water



This photo provided by Discovery Channel shows a Great Hammerhead, one of the largest sharks in the world, during an episode of "Shark Week." The Hammerhead's strangely shaped head is part of an electrosensory system, helping it locate its prey... [more >](#)



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By THE WASHINGTON TIMES -- Wednesday, July 8, 2015

The water has never been the same since "Jaws," the 1975 movie starring a hungry great white shark snacking on beachgoers at the fictitious New England resort of Amity Island. The unexpected sight of a shadow in the surf — real or imagined — sets off a panicked flight atop the whitecaps to the safety of dry sand.

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- The Discovery Channel struck it rich this year when its annual "Shark Week" was enlivened with real-world sharp-toothed predators of the deep going after swimmers on the Atlantic coast. But watching the beasts swim across a television or movie screen is nothing like meeting one up-close and personal.
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- On the Fourth of July, a Marine swimmer from Camp Lejeune became the eighth person attacked by a shark this season. He was bitten on the hand and forearm at Surf City, North Carolina. The injuries were not severe. Others were not so lucky, relatively speaking. A 16-year-old boy lost an arm at Oak Island, N.C., on June 14, where a 13-year-old girl gave up a hand on that same day. Swimmers have encountered sharks along the coasts of North and South Carolina since May 15. There has been an accompanying deluge of shark stories, some true and some not.
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- Some Americans, particularly television fans across the fruited plain<sup>2</sup> far from the water's edge, can't get enough of "Shark Week," which the network calls "the most wonderful week of the year." In one commercial, what in an earlier era was called a shapely brunette beauty ("Feeding Frenzy Fan of the Night") hungrily attacks a Dunkin' Donut. Announcers at Accuweather, no doubt bored with endless recitations about fronts, humidity measurements and temperature readings in Medicine Hat<sup>3</sup>, revealed — in rich tones suggesting an invasion of sharks in everyone's upstairs bathtubs — that hot summer days lead to warm water temperatures that draw sharks to coastal communities teeming with swimmers who, to a shark's eye, look like T-bone steaks ready for the grill. "Shark Week" hype notwithstanding, run-ins with sharks are nobody's fault.
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- The scavengers from the deep have been skimming the waves for 400 million years and only in the latest few thousand years have encounters with humans made them the terrors of the sea. In July 1916, The New York Times splashed a front-page headline across Page One, "Shark Kills Bather Off Jersey Beach," and other papers, ever on the scent of a good story, quickly followed. The sharks accommodated. In 12 days, three more swimmers were killed and one survived an attack. Panicked seaside communities quickly shielded their beaches with protective nets, but the damage was done, and resort owners took a bath<sup>4</sup>.

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- Television news editors work to the rule inherited from the tabloids that "if it bleeds, it leads" (even if the cut is nothing more than a nick taken while shaving). Shark stories were an attractive alternative to early accounts of a Great War in a faraway place.

The chances of being eaten by a shark are roughly 1 in 4 million. On the other hand, humans — mostly commercial and recreational fishpersons — kill thousands of the scary creatures annually. Sharks might think that's hardly fair, that they deserve a week of their own. When moving shadows darken the water, it's only right to remember that the surf is their turf.

Adapted from the website of the *Washington Times* (July 8 2015)

<sup>1</sup> Shark Week: an annual, week-long TV programming block which features shark-based programming

<sup>2</sup> fruited plain: quote from the song "America the Beautiful" referring to the agricultural belt of the USA

<sup>3</sup> Medicine Hat: a city in Canada

<sup>4</sup> took a bath: lost a lot of revenue