



A Curriculum Guide to:

***The Islanders: Search for Treasure***

By Mary Alice Monroe with Angela May

**About the Book**

Jake Potter is back on Dewees Island for another summer with his grandmother, Honey and his friends Macon and Lovie. Jake is excited that his dad will also be on island as he continues to recover from his war injuries. Father and son must get used to a new normal, which isn't easy. His dad discovered treasure coins as a child and stored them in an old tree fort on the island. Jake knows if he can find the tree fort, maybe his dad will be happy again—and he knows Macon and Lovie are the perfect fellow treasure hunters. The search for treasure is on!

Meanwhile, Macon is adjusting to being a big brother, while Lovie is navigating a new relationship with the two visiting boys on the island. The treasure search leads them to battle some unwelcome guests on the island--both the two and four-legged kind!

On the Islanders' biggest quest yet, the three friends realize that the treasures they really want in life were with them all along.

“Exciting, tender, and absolutely wonderful.” *Kirkus starred review.*

### Discussion Questions

1. This book is the second in a series. Did you read the first book, *The Islanders*? If so, compare the same characters from the first book and this one, and discuss how Jake, Macon, Lovie, and Honey have changed in one year? How they have not changed? How does the addition of new characters, like Jake’s father, change each character from the first novel?
2. If you did or didn’t read the first book, make a list of character traits that you would attribute to each character when they’re with each other, and another list to describe them when they’re with their families. Do the main characters act differently around different characters? Do you think this is common? How do you act differently with peers when adults are around?
3. How is reading books from a series different from reading a standalone novel? Share the names of some book series that you’ve liked, and why you liked them. Can you think of some reasons why an author might want to write a series? Can you think of some reasons why readers enjoy reading books in a series?
4. Identify some of the themes of this book (examples: friendship, family, nature). Which theme do you think is the strongest, or the main theme? Discuss some of the ways the authors support this main theme throughout the book using characters, plot, and setting.
5. *Search for Treasure* continues the focus on nature, conservation, and the way nature can heal found in the first book, *The Islanders*. Name some of the ways that the authors weave respect for nature into the story. Honey says ““Who needs magic? . . . We have nature.”” (Chapter twenty-two) Describe some examples of nature’s magic from the book. **Have you ever found nature to be magical or healing? How?** What are your favorite parts about being outside?

6. Eddie and Andy disrespect nature and the island's wildlife, calling Jake and Macon "nature nerds." They mean it as an insult, but Jake is proud of the term. How would you feel if someone called you a nature nerd? If you are passionate about something does that make you a nerd? Is everyone a nerd in some way? Is being called a nerd an insult?
7. Honey tells Jake when he wants to play video games, "'We need the quiet that lets the wild into our hearts and our souls.'" (Chapter two) What do you think Honey means when she says this to Jake? Describe a time when you felt like you wanted quiet time, and what it felt like when you found it. Then talk about a time when you wanted to be with other people, your friends or family, or playing a video game. How were your feelings different in each scenario? Does everyone want quiet sometimes?
8. Discuss the friendship of Jake, Macon, and Lovie. How does it compare to the adult friendship of Chief Rand and Jake's father? Do you think some of your friendships will last until you are adults? What sort of friendship attributes might be important to kids, but less important to adults? What traits might adults look for in a friend, which might not be important to kids? What do you think it means to stay friends for so long, even when someone moves away?
9. How would you feel if two people in a group of friends started to like each other romantically, as Jake and Lovie do? What problems can this cause? What do Macon and Jake do that makes Lovie feel left out? Can a person have more than one best friend? Have you ever been jealous of your friends' new friends? How do Jake and Macon communicate with Lovie about the outsider boys, Eddie and Andy? Were there times in the story where the main characters might have prevented misunderstandings? How?
10. When Jake and Macon meet Eddie and Andy, they quickly dislike the newcomers. Why? How is Eddie and Andy's arrival on Dewees in *Search for Treasure* different from Jake's in *The Islanders*? Do you think Jake should have been more welcoming, considering he was recently new too? Or was his first reaction justified? Why do you think Eddie and

Andy start calling the island boys names? What other books have you read where the role of the outsiders is important to the plot?

11. As it turns out, Jake and Macon are correct in their assessment about Eddie and Andy. But they are wrong about another Dewees resident, Scary Harry, who they learn later is a really nice man. Honey says, ““You don’t know much by looking at the outside. It’s what’s inside that matters.”” (Chapter twenty) Can you think of times when you have misjudged someone? Why? Were you reacting to a stereotype? What are some other things that cause people to misjudge others? When you are the new kid, how do you want to be treated? Would the challenges and behavior of Eddie and Andy have been different if there had been only one of them as the newcomer? How?
12. As soon as the kids see the newspaper article about Mr. Maynard finding the gold coin, they begin *Operation Treasure Hunt*. Have you heard of the pirate Blackbeard? Why were the kids so excited? How would you have felt in the same situation? Why do you think people are interested in finding treasure? Have you ever used a metal detector? What would you do with a treasure if you found it?
13. Throughout the book, the authors make the point that there are many kinds of treasure. Lovie says that ““Finding your family history is a kind of finding a treasure too. It’s important to know about your family. The good and the bad.”” (Chapter four) What do you think she means by this? Can you think of other “treasure” discoveries in the book?
14. In the book, the Islanders discover the beauty of bioluminescence. Bioluminescent marine species include fish, bacteria, and jellies. Fireflies are a bioluminescent species found on land. Have you ever seen bioluminescence in the sea? Have you ever seen fireflies in your neighborhood?
15. Jake feels that seeing his dad happy was “the best treasure of all.” (Chapter ten) The relationship between Jake and his dad is at the center of this book. What does Jake mean when he says, “Living with Dad was like walking on eggshells?” (Chapter two) Have you

ever felt like you needed to be that careful not to upset your parents? He also says, “I couldn’t remember doing anything fun with him.” What kind of fun activities do you do with your parents? Should kids have to support their parents through adult crises? How do you show kindness and compassion for your own parents?

16. Jake gets mad at his dad when he gives up on trying to get to the tree fort and calls his dad a hypocrite because he has always told Jake to face his fears. How do you feel about what Jake said to his father? Do think that sometimes parents don’t take their own advice? How does that make you feel? What is some advice that you’d like to give to your parents?
17. Jake notices that no one can say the words “prosthetic leg.” Having a parent experience limb loss can be a difficult event for children to understand. Concern and worry can stem from feelings of fear, sadness, confusion, and even anger. Jake’s father may be going through phases of grief or outbursts, but Jake does as well. Do you understand the frustration that Jake’s dad is feeling because of his limitations? Do you know any service members who have had injuries, or psychological setbacks, due to their military service? Is it better to say nothing about a disability or talk about it?
18. Dad says to Jake, “Sometimes you have to let go of the past to be free to live your future.” (Chapter fifteen) Talk about how the authors support this phrase with Dad’s actions and experiences in the book. What do you think Jake needs to let go of to heal his relationship with his dad?
19. The alligator on the island, Big Al, is a major character in the novel. The authors revealed how disturbing and harassing wildlife has consequences. The dangerous situation in the book could have meant life or death for both the outsider boys and the alligator. Discuss what you learned about alligators and what to do—and not to do—with alligators in the wild. What other animals need a wide berth in the wild? Have you ever encountered a dangerous animal? What did you do?

20. “Action conquers fear” is another thing Jake’s dad says after his injury, and Jake thinks of this when he stands up to Eddie and Andy. (Chapter nine) Can you share some more examples from the book that illustrate how action conquers fear? Can you think of any examples from your life? This is also a common theme in novels. What other books have characters choosing action over fear?

## **Extension Activities**

### ***Writing***

1. Choose two characters from the story and write a character profile of each. Choose a scene from the book that features both characters, then compare the way they act and respond to the scene’s events.
2. At one point, Jake decides that “change could be a good thing.” Do you agree? Write an essay agreeing or disagreeing with Jake. Consider how change affects people, and how it affects nature.
3. Chapter twenty-two’s heading says: “True friends are the best treasure.” Write an essay about the theme of friendship and how the authors use plot, character, and even setting to support this theme.
4. Choose another book that features a treasure hunt, either fiction or nonfiction. Read it and then write an essay comparing it with this book.
5. Imagine that you and some of your friends discover there might be treasure in your town. Write a short story about how you would conduct your own *Operation Treasure Hunt*.
6. Describe another book that explores similar themes of the healing power or nature or choosing action over fear.

### ***Art***

1. Create a treasure map, real or imagined, that leads the way to your own treasure.

2. Honey tells Jake's dad: "You're never too old to journal!" Start your own nature journal with drawings of trees, animals, or plants that can be found in your neighborhood.
3. Choose one of these statements from the book's chapter headings and make a poster that illustrates it:
  - Nature makes children of us all.
  - Don't judge a book by its cover.
  - One man's trash is another man's treasure.
  - It's the alligator you don't see that's the most dangerous.
  - True friends are the best treasure.

***Research: Science and History***

1. The authors weave some real history and science into this book. Research and write a report about one of these:
  - Sullivan Island, SC: the enslaved people who were quarantined there
  - Bioluminescence
  - Blackbeard's blockade of Charleston, SC, in 1718
  - Sea level rise: causes, examples, how to prepare
  - Geocaching

*Guide written by Bobbie Combs, a consultant at We Love Children's Books.*

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*For additional science and history curriculum activities, discussion, and videos visit [www.NatureWalkswithJudy.com](http://www.NatureWalkswithJudy.com) to connect with master naturalist and Dewees Island resident Judy Fairchild.*