Shark Fever

In 1975, the film *Jaws* came out and, at that time, it was the most successful film that had ever been made. It was based on a novel about a giant shark which terrorised the beaches of a fictional American resort town in the New England area. *Jaws* T-shirts are still a popular souvenir in these areas and the film is shown regularly during the summer season. Now, however, the film’s storyline is dangerously becoming a reality.

In 2017, shark expert George Burgess forecast that a fatal shark attack would take place in New England within five years. Some people were surprised, as there hadn’t been a fatal shark attack in the area since 1936 and there had only been five deaths since a fisherman was killed in 1771. However, Burgess explained that a number of factors meant that the risk of an attack was increasing.

The first reason was the local seal population. Seals are the sharks’ main source of food and have always been native to the area but, until 1972, their numbers were decreasing due to people hunting them. The Marine Mammal Protection Act of that year banned the hunting of seals. Now, their growing population is attracting sharks back to the area and global warming is also warming the cold waters of the North Atlantic, making it more attractive for swimmers.

Researchers have also noticed more and more young sharks in the area, a sure sign that sharks are returning in *schools*, and not just on their own. Adult sharks are very aggressive while looking for food and can even attack younger sharks if they get too close. As a result, the younger sharks often end up searching for prey in other areas, including the shallow waters off the main tourist beaches. Sharks don’t naturally eat humans but they may attack them by accident, thinking they are seals.

George Burgess was proved correct very quickly. In August 2018, a man was attacked while swimming off one of the beaches in New England. He survived but, a month later, a surfer a few miles to the south was not so lucky and he became the first fatality in the area for 82 years.

After the attack, calls to kill both seals and sharks were swiftly rejected because of the laws protecting them. Some called for shark nets, which are an effective way to stop sharks coming too close to the shore. They are used on some beaches in Australia but work best in bays with fairly narrow entrances and would be difficult to maintain along New England’s more open shoreline.

Instead, emergency *landline phones* were put up and first-aid kits made available on beaches. All lifeguards have already been given training in how to prevent blood loss, because of the possibility of gunshot wounds, but courses are now offered to visitors as well. Drones patrol the shores, *spotting* and filming sharks, and the information is used by an app with which beachgoers can check if there are any sharks in their particular area.

How will the attacks affect tourism? The number of visitors had already been falling for two years before the attack. Would the shark attacks reduce numbers even further, or would they attract people eager to spot a ‘monster of the deep’ in real life and to take a selfie in front of one of the ‘Danger’ signs now found on every beach?

**to forecast:** preveure / prever  
**school:** grup / grupo  
**shallow:** poc profund / poco profundo  
**call:** crida / llamamiento  
**landline phone:** telèfon fix / teléfono fijo  
**to spot:** albirar, veure / divisar, ver
PART 1: Reading comprehension
Choose the best answer according to the text. Only ONE answer is correct.
[3 points: 0.375 points for each correct answer. Wrong answers will be penalized by deducting 0.125 points. There is no penalty for unanswered questions.]

1. The film *Jaws* …
   a) was made into a book.
   b) can be seen at certain times of the year in New England.
   c) is still the most successful film ever made.
   d) is set in a real town in New England.

2. Which of these statements is true about the New England area?
   a) Between 1936 and 2017, there hadn’t been shark attacks.
   b) Only fishermen had been killed by sharks before 1936.
   c) George Burgess was convinced that someone would soon be killed by a shark.
   d) Some people were surprised that so few people had been killed by sharks.

3. Shark numbers are increasing because …
   a) their diet has changed.
   b) the number of swimmers has increased.
   c) it became illegal to hunt them after 1972.
   d) there is more food for them now.

4. Younger sharks are a danger because …
   a) they are more likely to swim where humans are.
   b) they can’t eat seals.
   c) they hunt in groups.
   d) they are more aggressive.

5. In 2018, …
   a) two swimmers were killed by sharks.
   b) a man was killed while surfing.
   c) two attacks took place off the same beach.
   d) two attacks took place in the same month.

6. The idea of shark nets was rejected because …
   a) they don’t always work.
   b) the beaches are too narrow.
   c) New England’s coast is different to Australia’s.
   d) they aren’t allowed under American law.

7. Which of these was NOT introduced due to the shark attacks?
   a) Courses for lifeguards on how to prevent blood loss.
   b) Drones to spot sharks in the area.
   c) Phones on beaches for use in emergencies.
   d) Apps to enable people to see where sharks are.

8. What do we definitely know about tourism in the area?
   a) It has increased due to ‘selfie’ tourism.
   b) More people have come hoping to spot a shark.
   c) It had dropped before anyone was killed.
   d) It has fallen because of the shark attacks.
PART 2: Writing

Choose ONE topic. Your answer should be 125-150 words in length. There is no specific penalty for exceeding 150 words in length. Extra points are not given for exceeding 150 words. [4 points]

1. Imagine that you are on summer holiday in the New England area. Write to a friend in an English-speaking country about the shark problem, what you have seen when on the beaches and how you feel.

2. In your opinion, should swimmers and surfers be banned from using beaches that aren’t patrolled by lifeguards and where there is a risk of a shark attack? Give reasons for your answer.
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Answers
1. b
2. c
3. d
4. a
5. b
6. c
7. a
8. c