

Book Reviews

A Sandy Grave

by Donna M. McDine

Title: *A Sandy Grave*

Written by: Donna McDine

Illustrated by: Julie Hammond

Ages: 8-12

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Donna M. McDine takes us on a holiday to the seaside with her book, *A Sandy Grave*. Leah, Nicole and Haley are excited about their summer break. This time they have planned it to be a seaside break. Apart from being a breezy holiday story, the book also exposes the harm caused by poaching and what it does to marine life. A healthy marine life is a necessity to save the Earth's crippled environment. The story reveals how certain men steal a whale's teeth and the courage of the girls who try to help the authorities catch the poachers. It is a relevant theme and something that is happening around us all the time.

This is a well-written book with a clear message. Poaching is illegal and it is dangerous for anyone to be caught by the poachers. This story shows the fearlessness of the girls who see the poachers dig and hide a bag in the sand, and in helping the officials find the whale's teeth. The story is simple, but the message conveyed is powerful. The elegant illustrations not only capture the essence of the story, but also breathe life into the characters and the scenes. The story is also an example of doing the right thing at the right time.

The book is an enjoyable read and makes children aware of poaching and illegalities associated with it. During times of dwindling marine life and plants, it is important to save them. This book teaches children to protect marine life and endangered animals.

~ Reviewed by Mamta Madhavan for Readers' Favorite Five Star Review ~

<http://www.readersfavorite.com/book-review/27283>

A Sandy Grave, by award-winning author, Donna McDine, is an inspiring story that chronicles the truth about poaching. Leah, Nicole, and Haley are ready to start their beach summer vacation; they sprint to the beach only to come across a crowd of people buzzing like bees near a dead whale that has washed ashore.

The girls watched in horror as scientists from the Marine Biology Institute examine the whale, then make a startling discovery. Someone has removed teeth from the whale.

Leah had noticed two men, who dug into the sand with their feet, dropped a bag into the hole, and covered it up. Her instincts tell her that the men are up to no good. Will Leah report what she saw?

Unfortunately, poaching goes on all the time and many people get away with it. There are many lessons young people can learn from reading *A Sandy Grave*. Here are two lessons that come to mind.

Doing the right thing: Leah and her friends help the authorities capture the two poachers. The girls do not allow fear to stop them even though it is a potentially dangerous situation. Below is my favorite section in the book:

They dropped down to their hands and knees and started to dig. They dug down about a foot, exposing a rope. Leah pulled on it, finding a burlap bag on the end of the rope. Curious, they opened it up, peered in, and saw huge teeth!

Teaching adult and kids about poaching: I love the way Ms. McDine related the truth about what can happen to poachers. The passage below is clear and concise.

It's also against the law to tamper with a dead marine mammal. "What happens to people who try and steal the teeth," Leah asked. "If caught, they're arrested and can be charged with jail time and thousands of dollars in fines if found guilty."

I love this well-written story. The illustrations by Julie Hammond capture the true essence of the story and pull the reader into the story.

~ Reviewed by Nicole Weaver, Award-winning Children's Author ~

<http://mysisterismybestfriend.blogspot.com/2014/02/book-review-sandy-grave-by-donna-mcdine.html>

A Sandy Grave by Donna McDine is an interesting, unique mystery with brave characters who find themselves in a situation that doesn't happen everyday: A whale washes ashore. Readers will enjoy the breezy artwork and the wonderful story.

~ Reviewed by Linda Derkez, author of *Manny the TV Watching Dog*

<http://www.angelfire.com/stars4/kswiesner/linda.html>

Award-winning children's author Donna McDine tackles the issue of poaching in this entertaining tween chapter book. *A Sandy Grave* finds a group of friends meeting up at the beach for the summer, but their fun is interrupted by a dead whale washing up on shore and some mysterious men hanging around. The girls then learn about the illegal practice of poaching and Leah is concerned those men hanging around the beach are up to no good. There must be something the girls can do to help out.

A book like this empowers children to make a difference while educating them about their world in a fun way. The delightful illustrations by Julie Hammond are the perfect complement to McDine's story. This is a quick read that will leave a lasting impression.

~ Reviewed by Cheryl Malandrinos, author of *Little Shepherd*

<http://childrensandteensbookconnection.wordpress.com/2014/03/07/a-sandy-grave-by-donna-mc-dine-giveaway>

A Sandy Grave is about three tween girlfriends, Leah, Nicole and Hayley, having fun at the beach, when they spot a whale that has washed up on shore. A typical day of fun in the sand and the sun begins an experience that the friends will never forget, especially when they become the heroines of the story and are rewarded for their bravery. In a little under twenty-five pages, McDine explores a number of issues; poaching, stealing, relying on your instincts, doing the right things, trusting adults and learning how whales are disposed of when they wash up on the beach. She makes the reader aware of the role that Marine Biologists play in taking care of sea creatures and environmental laws that are usually unheard of, The Endangered Species Act and the Mammal Protection Act. She hides all these issues and more under the disguise of a mystery, finding the secret hiding place.

Children and young adult stories are very engaging when there's something to be found. In this case, the girls are sure that they believe that the bad men have buried something in the sand. They believe that the men they see on the beach are up to no good and to them something doesn't feel right. "She felt in her bones that those guys were up to no good." Being curious as all kids are they set out to find the treasure (what the men have buried) and it turns out to be bag of teeth stolen from the washed up whale. Rather than ignoring her feelings, Leah used them to confide in her parents, ask advice and involve the police when the men return and chase the girls. Paying attention to your initial feelings is something that McDine stresses in the story. The girls feelings and actions are not ignored by the adults. In fact those feelings and their actions of doing the right thing and turning the bag of teeth into the police has them being rewarded for their bravery.

McDine weaves into the story the complex issue of poaching and the reason why it is a lucrative business. She also introduces environmental laws, the Endangered Species Act and the Mammal Protection Act and how poaching and stealing violate these laws. The story also explores death in the animal world and shows how whales are buried in the sand.

A Sandy Grave is a good fast read for the individual reader or for parents to read to their younger children. It engages the reader and opens up a dialogue between parents and children on the

many different issues in the book. Most of all, McDine shows that children can respect authority without fearing it and parents and those in roles of responsibility can respect the contribution that children can make to society.

~ **Reviewed by Rebecca's Writing Services**

<http://rebeccaswritingsvcs.com/2014/03/13/a-sandy-grave-book-review-and-giveaway>

Leah and her friends are looking forward to a fun-filled vacation at the beach. A whale isn't in their plans, but there he is mysteriously beached, dead, and missing teeth!

Donna McDine has written a wonderfully suspenseful book colorfully illustrated by the equally talented Julie Hammond, that will be fun reading for any child who loves a bit of mystery. Her descriptive language is easy enough for a tween to understand yet interesting for an older child as well. Just in time for summer reading, the story follows Leah as she unravels a mystery Nancy Drew herself would have loved. But, the story is not just a good beach tale. There's a subtle lesson here too: Doing the right thing can be scary, but it doesn't change the fact that right is right. I love this book. It's well written, timely, edgy enough to keep a tween on the edge of his/her seat, (me too!) and fun to read.

~ **Reviewed by Sharon Stanley, children's author**

<http://farmandfrufu.blogspot.com/2014/03/its-book-review.html>

A Sandy Grave by Donna M. McDine introduces us to Leah, Nicole and Hayley, three friends who are spending a fun day at the beach when they notice a whale that has washed up on shore. Plenty of people show up but it is two strange acting men that capture the girls attention and when those guys bury something in the sand Leah can't help but wonder what it might be.

Interesting as well as educational, *A Sandy Grave* is a story about three friends who spend the day at the beach and wind up leading officials to poachers. A fast moving chapter story that captures the imagination with a bit of mystery and suspense while the three girls decide to get involved and do the right thing. I think the author does a great job of portraying the friendship between the trio, but also allows the reader to see the characters as individuals as well, making them so easy to relate to. The author certainly brings the setting to life and the illustrations further enhance those descriptions allowing me to not only envision the setting but the characters as well. Mystery, suspense, and friendships make this a great read, the information about poachers and what they do was like an educational bonus.

~ **Reviewed by Brenda Casto, Amazon top reviewer**

A Sandy Grave is an adventurous tale that takes place during summer vacation. The story begins with Leah joining her friends Hayley and Nicole. They stumbled upon something unsettling as they walked onto the beach. As a result, their time at the beach turns out to be more mysterious,

daring, and educational than they could anticipate.

I enjoyed reading *A Sandy Grave*. Donna added to the allure of the story with each page as she pulled me deeper into the storyline. As with any children's book, illustrations can create an atmosphere that allows the story to leap from the page. Julie Hammond's illustrations were a perfect collaboration.

To this day, many of the books that I have read during my childhood are my favorite stories. I am happy to say that *A Sandy Grave* is now a part of those cherished stories. I highly recommend this book to readers 8-12.

~ Reviewed by La Isla Bonita, Amazon reviewer

A Sandy Grave is a great story book that will be enjoyed by boys and girls. The book is easy to read, although I love the fact that the author uses the correct terminology to pique the reader's curiosity to do more research on specific topics and include explanation of words directly relevant to the story. Donna McDine has written a great story, which at the same time provides opportunities to integrate many concepts such as dictionary work, research and idioms which add value to the book.

~ Reviewed by Jeanette Vuuren – Clever Mind Series