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Age: 12

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### Everything Eats Shrimp

Every time the weather is nice, my Dad and I always go fishing. He usually wakes me up at 4:30am and we leave about 5am. He says the fish seem to bite better in the early morning hours. On the drive down to Mandeville Harbor, I see all the houses where the lights are off and people are still asleep. I have been known to fall asleep on the drive to Lake Ponchartrain.

Most of the time the ramps at Mandeville Harbor are available, but this time there were people waiting in line. There were trucks and boat trailers everywhere. We waited about ten minutes and finally it was our turn. I guided Dad with my hands as he backed the boat down the ramp. He quickly unhooked the boat, gave me the rope, and gently pulled the trailer out from underneath. I waited with the boat at the pier and Dad came back a few minutes later and said he got the last parking spot available.

Dad turned the key and the boat's engine came to life. We idled out of the harbor and were on our way to the Causeway. Dad said, "I bet I'll catch more fish than you!"

I replied, "No way. You never do."

The lake was smooth as glass that morning. I looked to the east and thought I was looking at a picture. The sun was a big orange ball setting on top of the water. The orange light was glistening across the top of the water. It looked like an orange mirror. I thought that it was worth getting up early just to see this beautiful sunrise.

After a 10 minute boat ride, it was time to fish. Dad pulled in between the two spans of the Causeway. The cars passing overhead were making a lot of noise, but you get use to it after a while. I baited my hook with a shrimp and Dad put on a light blue plastic lure. We started slowly trolling from one pylon to another. On the first cast, I threw out my bait, tightened my line, and waited. A few seconds passed and I had a nibble. I set the hook and reeled him in. Whatever it was, it was pulling hard. My pole was bent in half. I could barely hang on. I hollered to my Dad, "Get the net!" I cranked hard on the reel.

Dad said, "Hey look, it's a good size Black Drum."

"Cool!" I shouted. "That's one to nothing."

"I wish I could catch one like that."

"Fish with some shrimp and you probably could," I explained.

Time went on and I continued to catch fish. I caught a Croaker, a Catfish, and another Black Drum. Dad caught one Speckled Trout. It was obvious I was catching more fish than Dad. About the time I was thinking about this and reminding him, I felt a huge jerk on my fishing pole. I thought I was about to fall out of the boat. It was pulling so hard I shouted, "I think I caught a whale." Finally, after a good long fight, I pulled in a huge Redfish. It measured 23 inches.

Dad said, "I'm jealous. What a nice fish. I think you are having a lot more luck with those shrimp than I'm having with these plastics."

It was getting late in the morning and the air was heating up. Dad felt that it was time to go back home. The boat ramps were not crowded and we got loaded up pretty quick. At home, Dad took pictures of me and my fish. I cleaned the boat while Dad cleaned the fish.

That evening, Dad fried up all my fish and his one Speckled Trout. They sure were tasty. At the dinner table, I made the statement, "If it wasn't for me using the shrimp for bait, we would have one fish to share amongst three people. We would still be hungry."

Dad rolled his eyes. Mom laughed.

Shrimp is the best bait in the world. Everything eats shrimp. Even a kid knows that.