

Learning by Ear – General Knowledge, episode 7
“Who has the sharpest teeth in the animal kingdom?”

Text: Leona Frommelt
Redaktion: Maja Dreyer
Translation: Anne Thomas

Directing infos

People:

Announcer

Jenny ca. 14-year-old girl

Jack ca. 15-year-old boy

Marine biologist (*Telephone voice*)

Dentist

Locations:

Before school/ on the street Vor der Schule / auf der Straße

At Jack's home Bei Jack zu Hause

At the dentist Beim Zahnarzt

Atmos / Sounds:

Schoolyard sounds /noise Schulhofgeräusche/Lärm

Street sounds

Telephone sounds -- dialing, dialtone and putting down phone

elefongeräusche: Erst wählen, dann Freizeichen und Auflegen

Leafing through pages Seitenblättern

Drilling sounds at the dentist Bohrergeräusche beim Zahnarzt

Intro (Announcer)

Hello and welcome to a new episode of our “Learning by Ear” “General Knowledge” series. This time we're talking about teeth – well, about Jack who has terrible toothache. But the pain hasn't kept him and his friend Jenny from setting off to find the answers to interesting questions. Curious as they both are, they want to find out which animal has the sharpest fangs. And they also want to know if animals also have to brush

their teeth. The questions aren't easy but the two detectives get their teeth into the matter and find out the answers with a bit of help from Jack's dentist.

1. Scene: Jenny and Jack meet on the street after school

Atmo in the background -- schoolchildren and street sounds

Jenny: Hello Jack.

Jack: Ow!

Jenny: Hey, what's wrong with you?

Jack : *(complaining)* I've got toothache.

Jenny: Poor you! Maybe you've got a cavity -- a hole in your tooth?

Jack: I think I definitely have!

Jenny: Then you should get to a dentist as fast as possible!

Jack: Stop that! I'm not going to any dentist -- I'll just wait for the pain to go away on its own.

Jenny: That's not going to happen. The faster you go to the dentist the faster your pain will disappear.

Jack: But I don't like going to the dentist. It makes me jitter just to think about the needle!

Jenny: Nonsense! Injections don't hurt a bit. Shall I pull out your tooth instead?

- Jack: No way!!!! But I wouldn't be surprised knowing you if you wanted to!
- Jenny: Which tooth is it then?
- Jack: One of the front ones -- at the top.
- Jenny: You know what, Jack? It's a shame you're not a goat!
- Jack: A goat? What are you talking about?
- Jenny: Goats! If you were a goat your front upper tooth couldn't hurt you.
- Jack: And why not, if I may ask?
- Jenny: Cos goats have no upper front teeth -- instead they have a thick dental pad at the top. They only have normal lower teeth.
- Jack: But why do goats need a dental pad?
- Jenny: Cos goats are herbivores -- they eat plants. They chew the whole day and have to grind the hay, grass and twigs they eat into a mush. A dental pad works brilliantly.
- Jack: If I were a goat, my whole dental pad would probably hurt right now!
- Jenny: Oh man, -- don't succumb to self pity Jack!
- Jack: You know what, Jenny? I'd rather have shark teeth.
- Jenny: Why? Cos they're so sharp and dangerous and you'd like to be able to bite someone with them?
- Jack: No, not because of that. There's another reason. Try to figure it out! I have to go home and put something on my tooth to cool it down.

Jenny: OK, I'll check up on you later. In the meantime, I'll try to figure out the secret of shark teeth. And remember to find out which animal has the most dangerous teeth!

Jack: OK, I will!

Music

2. Scene: At Jack's home

Jenny: How are you, Jack?

Jack. *(whining)* Not much better than before! Did you find out why I would rather have shark teeth in my current state?

Jenny: I think so yes! I've got a friend who knows a marine biologist and I called him up.

Jack: And? What did he tell you?

Jenny: Well, it was like this ...

Fade in music under the flashback scene (*Telephone sounds -- dialing, dial-tone*)

Marine biologist: Peter Didamwe speaking.

Jenny: Hello, my name is Jenny. I hope you don't mind my calling -- I got your phone number from a friend.

Marine biologist: Hello Jenny, what can I do for you?

Jenny: I would love to know what's so special about shark teeth.

Marine biologist: Good question! Well, do you know what a shark's set of teeth is called?

Jenny: No idea!

Marine biologist: It's called a revolver dentition. Can you figure out why?

Jenny: No, still no idea!

Marine biologist: Because sharks have several rows of teeth. If one of their teeth breaks off, it's replaced within a matter of hours. Some sharks use up a hundred teeth a year. Basically the dentition is loaded up with teeth -- that's why it's named after a revolver!

Jenny: Wow! That's convenient. If we had a revolver dentition a dud tooth would just fall out and be replaced by a brand new healthy tooth.

Marine biologist: Exactly!

Jenny: That would be great! Then we wouldn't have to think about our teeth any more. Now I know why Jack would like to be a shark.

Marine biologist: Sorry? Who's Jack?

Jenny: Oh, it doesn't matter. Thank you very much for all the information.

Marine biologist. Glad to be of help. Take care and send my best to the mysterious Jack!

(End of telephone conversation) **Fade out music**

Jack: Did he really send me his best?

Jenny: Yes, really! He was really very nice. But Jack, you're not a shark you know and that's why you don't have any other teeth to replace your aching one. So you should really go to the dentist.

Jack: I will I will. I just wanted to tell you which animal has the most dangerous teeth in the world.

Jenny: I 'm all ears!

Jack: It's the elephant of course! Guess how long its tusks can get?

Jenny: No idea! One meter long?

Jack: Yeah right! They can be up to three and a half meters long!! I heard that once. That's almost as long as a car. And the tusks are also really heavy. Sometimes they can weigh up to a hundred kilograms. Imagine if you had to carry one?

Jenny: I'll pass, thank you!

Jack: Not only do elephants have massive tusks but they also have teeth that are as big as bricks!

Jenny: At least you have smaller teeth! Otherwise, they would be aching even more!

Jack: Too right! By the way, there's another animal which has teeth which are smaller than an elephant's but just as dangerous. Bet you can't guess which animal I'm thinking of!

Jenny: OK, you're on! If I win the bet you have to go to the dentist immediately! Promise?

Jack: I promise. You'll never guess anyway!

Jenny: We'll see! See you later!

Music

3. Scene: after school again

Atmo in the background: Schoolchildren and street sounds (like before)

Jack: Hi Jenny!

Jenny: Jack, how are you? How are your teeth?

Jack: Um, still not much better. But tell me about your findings. Did you manage to discover which animal has the most dangerous teeth? I bet you didn't!

Jenny: Well at first, I thought you were thinking of the lion.

Jack: Why?

Jenny: Because lions have extremely sharp teeth. They have to because they're carnivores -- meat eaters. They have particularly long canines so they can catch and keep their prey, and they've got really sharp incisors for tearing their prey to pieces.

Jack: Correct! I wouldn't want to come across an angry lion on a lonely night. But I was actually thinking of another animal which has very dangerous teeth, so you haven't won the bet!

Jenny: Wait a minute. I think I know which animal you mean.

Jack: Which one then?

Jenny: Venomous snakes with their venomous teeth. For example, black mambas, cobras or vipers. The canine teeth in the upper jaw of these snakes are like sophisticated syringes. The poison they produce in their glands shoots through their hollow teeth when they bite a victim. So they either immobilize or kill their prey that way. So, have I won the bet now?

Jack: You certainly have! I never thought you would!

Jenny: I asked my biology teacher. But you know what? If you were a venomous snake your tooth still wouldn't be hurting now.

Jack: How come?

Jenny: Because venomous snakes only have teeth which come out to poison their prey and get swallowed back again -- they don't have teeth for grinding plants or tearing their prey to pieces. These snakes can also dislocate their jaw so they can take in more prey into their mouths.

Jack: Eeak! I don't want to think of that!

Jenny: But it's so interesting! The snake swallows the prey whole and then it uses its muscles to simultaneously crush the food and push it deeper into the digestive tract, where it is broken down. The whole process can last a good few days!

Jack: That's why snakes don't have to eat so often...

Jenny: Exactly! And now Jack, we're both going to the dentist.

Jack: "We're?" re you coming too?

Jenny: Of course! I'm going to hold your hand. Come on, let's go!

Music

4. Scene: Jenny and Jack at the dentist

Atmo in the background: drilling noises getting quieter

Jenny: You see, it wasn't so bad after all!

Jack: You're right! I'm glad she didn't have to pull the tooth out.

Female dentist: You see, Jack? If you'd come earlier, you would have saved yourself all that pain.

Jenny: In the future, you will have to clean your teeth better.

Dentist: Your friend is right.

Jack: Ms Dentist, do you know if animals also clean their teeth?

Dentist: Most of them don't have to. For example, when rodents -- rats and mice -- use up their teeth, other teeth replace them immediately.

Jack: And what about other animals?

Dentist: Well, crocodiles let the little birds, which fly into their mouths, clean their teeth. But generally, predators look after their teeth when they chew on their prey. They chew everything down to the bones and fur, which cleans their teeth. If predators are just given bits of meat to eat, their teeth will eventually fall out.

Jack: Well I personally can't imagine chewing something down to its bones. I would rather slurp up a soup at this moment in time!

Jenny: OK so let's go home and I'll make you a soup. And afterwards you'll do the same as the monkeys!

Jack: Monkeys?

Jenny: Monkeys clean their teeth with sticks but you'll just have to use a toothbrush instead.

Jack: At your command; Mrs. Dentist!

Jenny und Jack: Good bye, Mrs Dentist!

Dentist: *(laughing)* Good bye you two!

Music -- End

Outro (Announcer)

All's well that ends well! Jack will soon be able to bite his teeth into things and then there'll be nothing in the way of another knowledge competition between him and Jenny. But that's all for today from our "Learning by Ear" "General Knowledge" series by Leona Frommelt. You can listen to the program again as well as other programs in the series on our website <http://www.dw-world.de/lbe>. Thanks for listening and don't forget to tune in next time!