

Swimming with Dolphins by Suzanne Purvis | Reading Guide

General Questions:

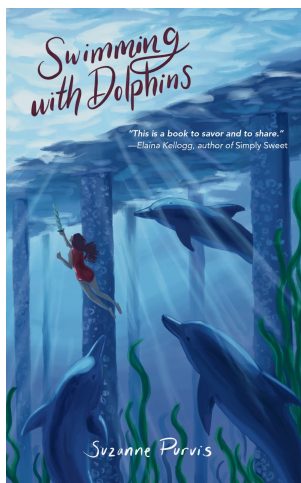
1. Have you ever read a novel-in-verse before reading *Swimming with Dolphins*? What did you like (or dislike) about this style of novel?
2. Concrete poems use the placement of the text on the page to show a picture or illustrate movement or feelings. What kinds of concrete poems did you notice in *Swimming with Dolphins*? (For the leader: more obvious examples include the canoe poem or the shark-and-dolphin-fin poem, but also the use of spaces to show something slow or dragging, words that go up or down on the page like waves, and even text that fades in color to show the shark swimming away.)
3. Haiku poetry also features prominently in this story! Which haiku was your favorite? What did you like about it?
4. What is Grace like? Is she someone you would like to be friends with? Talk about her relationships with Abby, Gigi, Mrs. Rosado, and Lucky.
5. What happens on "The Night that Changed Everything"?
6. When the social worker, FSU Lady, asks Grace what she is looking for in a foster family, Grace replies, "I need a home for Lucky." What does her answer reveal about her concept of family? Why is Lucky so important to her? Think back to your answers in Question 4 about Grace's early relationships.
7. Who is Aquamarina Girl? How does Grace use her imagination and creativity to "dive into" Aquamarina Girl's world? When does she do this and why?
8. On the surface, living with her biological father, Mike, on a boat at a marina sounds like an ideal home for Grace because she loves the water and aquatic life so much. Why is Grace *not* immediately enthusiastic about Mike? What things does Mike do that are meaningful for Grace and help to bridge the gaps in their new family relationship?
9. What did you enjoy most about Barefoot Cove Marina? Would you want to live on a boat? Would you rather live on a powerboat and sleep in a V-berth or on a houseboat and sleep in a normal-shaped bed?
10. When did you realize that Mike was hiding something serious from Grace?
11. Who is your favorite of the new people in Grace's life: Sandy, Donna and Duncan, Charmaine and Austin, or Megan? How do each of these characters help Grace? How are her new relationships the same and different from her earlier relationships?
12. Did you think that Mike had taken Grace's money to gamble? Were you surprised that he went to get help for his gambling addiction?



13. What surprised you most about how Grace ultimately swam with dolphins? Were you disappointed that she never went to Gulf Coast Marina World?
14. At the end of the story, how has Grace's concept of family changed and/or remained the same? What do you think will happen next for Grace, Mike, and Sandy?

Thematic Questions:

1. *Swimming with Dolphins* shows the many ways that people need community in their lives. Grace's community changes drastically in this story, from living in Bagdad with Abby and Gigi to life with Mike in Apalachicola. How does Grace's new community support her and help her grow? Think about your own community. How do family, friends, teachers, coaches, etc. support you and help you grow?
2. Grace dives into her imagination with Aquamarina Girl throughout the story, especially when her circumstances are extra challenging. Have you ever used an imaginary character or world to comfort or encourage yourself when going through something hard? (For the leader: this is a very personal question and might be a better prompt for a personal reflection instead of verbal discussion.)
3. What does it mean when Grace says at the end, "we're gonna be okay."? Does "being okay" mean that everything is good or all your problems are gone?
4. Try writing some poetry yourself! If writing a whole poem that rhymes sounds intimidating, try writing a concrete poem or a haiku. You could write about your favorite marine animal, your favorite sport, or even pretend to be Grace and write a poem from her perspective.



Swimming with Dolphins is a contemporary novel-in-verse written by Suzanne Purvis and published by Owl's Nest Publishers. Check out *Hertz Gets Fused*, a laugh-out-loud novel-in-verse also by Suzanne Purvis and published by Owl's Nest Publishers.

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