



# A WHALE OF THE WILD

By Rosanne Parry • Illustrated by Lindsay Moore

Grades 3–7 • 9780062995926 • \$17.99

## Booktalk

For Vega and her family, salmon is life. And Vega is learning to be a salmon finder, preparing for the day when she will be her family's matriarch. But then she and her brother Deneb are separated from their pod when a devastating earthquake and tsunami render the seascape unrecognizable. Vega must use every skill she has to lead her brother back to their family. The young orcas face a shark attack, hunger, the deep ocean, and threats from human activity on their journey. Will Vega become the leader she's destined to be?

## Discussion Questions

1. Describe each member of the kinship. Why do you think they are named after stars or constellations in the night sky? What do their names indicate about their personalities? Which of the younger ones would you want to have for a brother or sister? What role do each of the adults play in the daily life of the whales?
2. Discuss the meaning of the term "wayfinder." Is there more than one meaning to the word? What does Greatmother mean when she says to Vega, "Eat a little beauty every day...It will give you strength" (p. 3)? What is Vega's reaction?
3. How does Vega feel when she takes the family too close to a human boat during her first attempt at being the leader? Why do you think her mother asked her to be the wayfinder at this particular time? Why does she swim away from the family after their close call?
4. Describe Vega's feelings about her cousin Aquila. How has their relationship changed from when they were younger? How do Vega's feelings toward Aquila change over the course of the events described in this story? How do their roles change after the difficulties they encounter?
5. Discuss Greatmother's saying, "Always remember, together is better than apart" (p. 63). What is the importance of the stories and memories that Greatmother relates to Vega and Aquila? Can you compare them to personal or historical stories that humans pass on through their generations?
6. Describe Vega's emotions when her baby sister dies. Why does she take Capella's body away? Why does she want to take the baby's body to rest in Blood Cove? Compare Deneb's experiences to Vega's as he tries to follow her. Why does he leave the family to find Vega?
7. Describe how Vega and Deneb survive the earthquake and tsunami. Discuss the importance of the family legends that help them understand what is happening and how the different types of sea creatures support one another in a crisis.
8. Discuss the relationship between the orcas and the humans. Why does Greatmother say, "The wayfinders do not agree about whether humans make families" (p. 93)? How do Vega's feelings about humans change as she observes them? Why does Deneb help humans back to their boats? How do they assist the humans to help the salmon?
9. Describe the way Vega and Deneb's environment changes when they go into the Blue Wilderness. Why does the sight of the enormous whale fill Vega with hope and wonder rather than fear? How does she use her knowledge of the sea and sky to find her way homeward?
10. How does Vega know where the salmon need to go? What does she do to help the salmon get back to the river? In how many ways does she save her family? What does Deneb mean when he says, "Vega knows more than she thinks she does!" (p. 285)?



## Extension Activities

**Dangers in the Salish Sea.** Study the map in the back of the book. Find the location of the Salish Sea on a map of the United States. Make your own map of this region and identify the sources of danger to the wildlife that live in these waters. Create graphic images on your map to indicate how life-threatening each of these dangers are to the orcas in particular.

**Writing from a Different Perspective.** The orcas in this story describe other inhabitants of the area in terms they understand; for example, they talk about a human's "flippers" and "grabbers." Choose one of the other creatures listed at the back of the book, or humans who live in this area, and write a short story from their perspective. Describe the orcas the way that creature or person might see them.

**Be a Friend to the Orcas.** Choose one of the suggestions listed under "How Can I Help the Orcas?" Write up a plan for what you can do individually to help the environment, and then expand that plan into what you can do with other people to make an impact. Ask your friends and family for help with your plan. Make a timeline and set deadlines to put your plan into action.

**A Special Kind of Navigation.** You can get a sense of how echolocation works for the orcas by reading this story. Now do some research on what scientists have learned about the ways different animals use this unique skill. Make a list of these animals and the various ways they get around in their own environment using echolocation.

<https://www.discoverwildlife.com/animal-facts/mammals/what-is-echolocation/>



Photo by Veranda Studios

### About the Illustrator

**Lindsay Moore** is an artist and writer with roots in Northern Michigan. Her first book, *Sea Bear*, received three starred reviews. She studied marine biology and fine art at Southampton College on Long Island and figure drawing at the Art Students League in New York City. She earned her master of science in medical and scientific illustration from Medical College of Georgia (now part of Augusta University) and has received recognition for her work from both the Association of Medical Illustrators and the Australian Institute of Medical and Biological Illustration. She lives in Bowling Green, Ohio.