

# **Grayson Study Guide**

**Grayson by Lynne Cox**

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## Plot Summary

“Grayson” by Lynne Cox is a beautiful story about the connection between humans and animals. In the book, Cox tells the true story of her encounter during an early morning workout with a baby whale that had been separated from its mother. With the help of several friends, the baby was successfully reunited with its mother. By exercising her positive attitude and refusal to give up Cox stayed in the water with Grayson keeping him calm until the mother returned.

Long-distance swimmer Lynne Cox was in the middle of a three-hour workout off Seal Beach in California when she got the sense there was something very large in the water with her. Waves created by the creature slammed Cox into the beach twice. Cox would not allow herself to give in to her fear even after she encountered a school of sting rays she was afraid would shoot her with their barbs. When she neared the end of her swim, Cox noticed her friend Steve motioning to her from the pier. He told her that a baby gray whale had been following her during the last part of her swim. If she were to return to shore, the baby whale’s lungs would collapse if he tried to follow her and ran aground.

Hoping to find the whale’s mother, Cox swam back to the jetty where she believed he’d first joined her. While there, the baby whale dove deep below the surface of the ocean. Cox followed him and dove as deep as she could into the water several times, before she was able to locate the whale. During her dives she saw a group of old turtles swimming along as well as a school of bat rays. She realized if she had not searched for Grayson she would not have seen these things.

Cox and Grayson returned to the pier area. Steve told her someone thought they had seen a mother whale around the oil rigs. Although she was afraid of making such a long swim with no partner, Cox went ahead. She didn’t find Grayson’s mother near the oil rigs but did get the chance to see a school of dolphins playing during the swim back to the pier. Soon, a fisherman radioed Steve saying he had spotted a lone mother whale around the entrance to Huntington Harbor. After a short while Grayson’s mother made her way to the pier area and was reunited with him.

While the story in itself is touching, a good deal of the beauty in the book comes from the way Cox describes the different life forms found in the ocean. She uses points of reference and comparisons that even those not familiar with the ocean and its creatures can relate. Themes addressed by Cox in the book also include her dedication to swimming, the benefits of keeping a positive attitude and the different forms of communication that can exist between people and animals.



# Chapter One

## Summary

Beginning her swimming workout off Seal Beach, California early because she wanted to spend the day with friends, Lynne Cox was not even able to see her hands pulling in the water in front of her because it was so dark. She suddenly felt the water below her shudder. Cox kept swimming even when she heard a sound that she did not recognize. She felt fish against her face and arms, and realized she was swimming through a school of baby anchovy that had been startled by the strange energy in the sea. When she turned her head to breathe, a grunion leapt into her mouth and she spit it out. She smiled because the return of the grunion was a sign of the returning spring but she worried when she realized the grunion were attracting albacore tuna. When these tuna began jumping out of the water to catch the grunion, Cox was scared because she didn't want to be hit by these huge tuna, but when she did get hit, she couldn't help but laugh as she thought of how it was raining tuna. Afraid these tuna might attract sharks, Cox moved closer to shore. As she relaxed back into her pace, Cox noticed that suddenly all of the fish were gone. The water began shaking again and Cox felt as if she were riding on a bubble. She knew there was something in the water near her that was bigger than anything she had ever encountered.

## Analysis

First, it is important to note that this is a true story. It is being told by Lynne Cox who is both the main character and narrator of the book. Cox was only seventeen at the time she wrote the narrative but was already an accomplished swimmer. She had already suggested that her story would be about an encounter with something unexpected, as she indicated in the first line of her book that she enjoyed swimming in the open ocean because she never knew what she might encounter while swimming. While Cox described several encounters during this opening chapter she had yet to identify the creature that was making the unusual energy forces and movements of the ocean that she wrote about. This creates suspense and triggers curiosity for readers.

Including the encounter with the as yet unidentified creature, Cox described encounters with three different kinds of fish in this section of her story. First, she found herself swimming through a school of anchovy that she believed had been frightened by the same large creature that had startled her. Next, she encountered the grunions. Even though she got one of these fish in her mouth, she couldn't help but find joy when she realized what the fish was as it was a sign that spring had returned. Finally, Cox had an encounter with the tuna. She laughed at the oddity of the experience when the tuna rained down on her as they jumped out of the water to catch the grunion.

In this first chapter, there are two things to notice about Cox. First, she was a person who found joy in life. She was happy even though she got a fish in her mouth and was



being hit by jumping 30-40 pound tuna. Second, she was dedicated to her sport. Notice that at the time Cox had this experience, she was only seventeen. Most teens wouldn't be out at 5 a.m. doing an early morning workout, especially in 55-degree water. Notice also that although Cox was disturbed by what was going on around her, she had the discipline to stick with her workout.

Notice also in this chapter the way that Cox described the ocean and the ocean creatures around her. She appeared to have a good deal of knowledge about the ocean and its inhabitants. As she described swimming off the coast of Seal Beach, she told her story in a way that the reader could feel as if he were there with her. She described what she felt, what she saw, even what she smelled as she worked her way toward her cliffhanging chapter ending when she realized she was in the water with something much bigger that she had ever encountered before.

## Discussion Question 1

What do you think the creature in the ocean with Cox is? Give reasons to support your answer.

## Discussion Question 2

If you were Cox, do you think you'd be able to stay focused on a workout after what she had already experienced? Why or why not? What does it say about her character that she does stick with her workout?

## Discussion Question 3

Discuss the literary techniques that Cox uses to describe her surroundings. How does she give the readers the feeling that they are right there with her as she swims?

## Vocabulary

etching, vast, gravitational, rogue, torrential, transmitted, receding, milt, incubate, berm, turbocharged



# Chapter Two

## Summary

Cox tried to move to shallow water but was unable to do so because she could feel herself falling into the hole created by the huge creature below her. She found herself pulled along in the vortex of the creature. Regardless of how quickly she kicked and pulled with her arms, Cox was unable to break free from this vortex. Then, the water calmed and she hoped whatever the creature was had moved on. She made a sprint for the shore thinking she'd be safer swimming closer to the shore. However, a huge wave crashed into her slamming her into the beach twice. In her fear, she wanted to get out of the water but convinced herself to stay in the water and finish her workout.

She was in the San Gabriel River jetty where she didn't like to walk on the bottom of the ocean because of the many stingrays in the area. Although these stingrays were generally docile, she knew if she accidentally stepped on them, they could shoot a barb and irritant into the skin they touched. These barbs had to be removed surgically. She screamed and jumped when she stepped on something that wiggled. Her jump landed her calf deep in soft sand. Although all sorts of creatures had been stirred up by her actions and were bumping into her, she was not stung. She forced herself to stand still until a wave lifted her out of the sand and carried her out to the ocean.

She shook the sand out of her swimsuit. She knew that she had to push herself to finish her workout even though she felt it had been the worst workout she'd ever had. She began to swim again, knowing that the sun would soon come up. As she swam, she wondered if it had been a shark that had swum under her.

## Analysis

Although one of themes in the novel is Cox's desire to keep a positive attitude, her attitude slipped in this part of the book. She admitted she was scared and that she acted in a panic instead of methodically. She indicated that she lost control and focus when she sprinted toward the shore just after she'd gotten out of the vortex of the strange creature swimming below her. After she moved back into the water of the San Gabriel River jetty, she almost lost her calm again as she found herself in stingray infested water. Even though she was afraid of getting stung, she worked to remain calm until a wave lifted her away from that area.

Cox continued to share with her reader her vast amount of information about the ocean and the creatures that live there. She wrote about the frequency in which sharks were spotted in the area where she did her workouts. She also wrote about the stingrays and their habits.

In this chapter of the novel, Cox also addressed the topic of swimming as it related to her dedication to her sport. Although she admitted in her story that she was having the



worst workout experience she'd ever had while trying to train, she continued to push herself to finish. She knew that if she stopped during a workout just because something had happened that had scared her, she'd be tempted to do the same thing in a competition. Even when she realized her swimsuit was filled with sand, Cox didn't give up on her practice regimen. She continued to push herself because she knew anything could happen in practice or during a competition and she wanted to be prepared for anything.

## Discussion Question 1

Consider how Cox forced herself to stay in the water and finish her workout even after she'd had such a hard time with whatever it was that swam under her. Do you think you could do what she'd done? Why or why not?

## Discussion Question 2

Why was Cox so concerned about the stingrays? What might have happened if she had been stung?

## Discussion Question 3

Consider the way that Cox was pulled along by the vortex of the creature that was swimming underneath her. What does this mean? What happened and why could she not swim away?

## Vocabulary

opaque, vortex, adrenaline, irregularity, erratic, psyching, docile, propel, sheath, inadvertently, platinum, angular, dorsal



# Chapter Three

## Summary

Cox continued to push herself to finish her swim workout even though she was still concerned about the strange creature she thought was somewhere close to her in the water. The sun had still not risen so Cox looked at the blue and yellow lights on the oil rigs located about three miles offshore to keep herself on course. When the sun did finally appear over the horizon Cox described the changes in the ocean from the waking of the gulls and other birds to the changing colors of the water. As the sun began to warm her, Cox relaxed and found her rhythm again. She was ready to be done with her workout though. Cox noted from the clock tower that it had taken her three hours to complete the swim and she chided herself for lengthening her time by three minutes.

As she neared the Seal Beach Pier, she noticed Steve, the man who ran a bait shop there waiting for her. He always kept an eye on her during her workouts so she wasn't surprised to see him. What did surprise her was how far out on the pier he was standing. She recognized by his stance that something was wrong.

## Analysis

In this chapter of the book, the rising of the sun seemed to help calm Cox and help her get over her scare. It also helped to warm her. Remember that she'd been swimming in water at a temperature of about 55 degrees for nearly three hours. Even though she was proud of herself for pushing on through her fear, she also admitted to herself that she was ready to get out of the water, get something to eat and get warm.

In telling her story, Cox had the ability to describe her surrounds so that the reader feels as if he is experiencing what she was experiencing. She used a good deal of simile in her descriptions, comparing the things she encountered in the ocean in terms that even people not familiar with the ocean could understand and relate to. For instance, as she searched the horizon for hints that the sunrise was coming she noted "the horizon was a thick black line where the sea and sky were pressed together like a giant eyelid" (p. 29). Cox actually uses both a simile and a metaphor in this description. She says the "horizon was a thick black line" which is a metaphor while the description of this line being "pressed together like a giant eyelid" is an example of a simile.

Continuing her description of the life found in the ocean, Cox described in her story how Steve could locate where she was swimming in the ocean even if it were dark or the water choppy. She explained in her text how the light-emitting zooplankton and phytoplankton would light up when her hands hit the water. Steve could judge her distance by the size of the sparks he saw. Notice also that Cox again used metaphor to describe the light emitted when she swam through the water. If there was a good deal of plankton in the area the light coming from them was like looking into the Milky Way or a





sky full of shooting stars. With few plankton she described the light as being like the light from Japanese lanterns. Even fewer plankton made a light comparable to the glow of a faraway candle.

## Discussion Question 1

What seemed to help Cox most when she needed to get back on track with her workout?

## Discussion Question 2

Discuss the way that Cox described her surroundings and what was happening around her.

## Discussion Question 3

Discuss Steve's character. What was he like? How did Cox know just by the place he was standing that something was wrong?

## Vocabulary

perpetual, aesthetically, discernible, sanderlings, receding, resonated, converging, perpendicular, nonchalant, jetty, phosphorescence, luminous



# Chapter Four

## Summary

Steve was jumping up and down and shouting something at Cox. She swam closer to see what was wrong. He told her there was a baby whale following her. If she were to swim to shore and the baby were to try to follow her, he would run aground and die because the weight of his body on the beach would cause his lungs to collapse. Steve told her about the migration pattern of the whales from Baja where the females traveled to give birth in the autumn of the year to their feeding grounds in the Bering and Chukchi seas in the spring. He guessed the baby whale must have gotten separated from its mother. For the first eight months of its life, these baby whales were dependent on their mothers' milk for food. If it were to remain separated from its mother long enough, the baby would get dehydrated and die.

The baby whale surfaced about 25 yards from Steve and Cox. Cox estimated the whale was 18 feet long and three to four feet across. He swam under her, then dove and flipped under the water. Cox was amazed at how precisely he swam. She thought he was showing off when he surfaced and then spouted, spraying water four feet into the air. She tried to swim closer to him, wanting to touch him. As she swam close to him she saw he did not appear to be injured in any way and had no fishing lines hanging from him. She wished she could talk to him to reassure him and to find out what had happened.

Steve hoped the baby's mother was somewhere nearby and that the two had just gotten separated in some way. When he suggested she might have been injured, Cox tried not to focus on that possibility. Instead she chose to think positive thoughts and hope these thoughts could be transmitted to the baby. Steve suggested she swim back out to the jetty. She didn't want to, especially since she'd have to swim under the pier, which was filled with hidden dangers, to do so. She watched the baby whale ride a wave through the pier pilings with no problem and followed him, doing the same. She watched him swim and tried to learn from his graceful moves.

## Analysis

Cox finally learned what it was that had been disrupting her morning workout. Even though she couldn't see it in the water, a baby gray whale had been following her as she swam. Luckily, her friend Steve spotted the whale and warned her not to swim to shore. Remember how hard Cox's workout had been and how ready she had been to call it quits. Now she had to stay in the water even longer because the whale's life depended on her staying with it and keeping it from going ashore.

Communication is a theme introduced in this chapter of the novel as Cox wished she were able to talk to the baby whale in a language that he understood and reassure him.



She knew that these animals communicated with one another through sonar and wondered if the baby was trying to use sonar on her to communicate. She wondered if sonar would reveal the feelings in a person's heart.

The benefits of positive thinking and positive energy is another topic that is expanded in this section of the novel. Although Steve suggested to Cox that the baby's mother might have been injured or even killed, Cox chose to remain positive and believe that the baby and its mother had simply gotten separated from one another. She believed that even though she couldn't talk to the baby with words, perhaps he would feel her positive energy.

## **Discussion Question 1**

Why was it so important that the baby whale be reunited with its mother?

## **Discussion Question 2**

Why do you think the baby whale latched onto Cox? Why do you think he thought she was a safe person to follow?

## **Discussion Question 3**

Consider Cox's intent to learn from the motions of the baby whale. Do you think we, as humans, always take the opportunities we are given to learn from other species? Why or why not?

## **Vocabulary**

vigorously, migrate, sonar, lagoons, flabbergasted, sediment, baleen, harpooned, aerial, elongated, pectoral, garbled, improvise



# Chapter Five

## Summary

Steve radioed local boat operators and fisherman to spread the word they were looking for a gray whale that appeared to have been separated from her baby. As Cox swam back toward the jetty, hoping to reconnect with the baby's mother, the whale followed her, but really seemed just to want to play. As she swam, Cox realized that even though she didn't know the answers to the problem she and the baby whale were facing, that those answers could come just because she'd chosen to do something.

As she swam with the whale, she heard and saw a lifeguard boat coming toward them. She knew the lifeguards would do their best to help. She explained to them that she was looking for a mother whale that appeared to have gotten separated from its baby. After talking to the lifeguards, Cox continued her way to the jetty. There was no sign of a mother whale there. Cox started to swim back to the pier but the baby didn't follow. Instead it dove into the ocean and disappeared. Cox dove four times into the ocean looking for the baby whale. On the third trip down, she encountered a school of bat rays. After her fourth dive she saw Carl, an old fisherman who was her friend. He wondered why he hadn't caught any fish but when Cox told him about the baby whale, he understood. He believed the baby whale had scared off all the other fish. He also promised to help look for the mother whale and the missing baby.

On her fifth dive, Cox finally located the baby again. He wanted to play but Cox had to return to the surface for air. When she dove again, she could hear the whale talking to her in a series of grunts, squeaks, chirps and clicks. Cox was frustrated that she couldn't respond to his speech and didn't understand what he was saying to her. It was only years later that Cox realized that her numerous dives into the ocean looking for the baby had been a gift as they had allowed her to see different forms of ocean life she hadn't experienced before. She also was rewarded by getting to hear the baby whale talk.

## Analysis

Cox's positive attitude again shone through in this chapter of her book as she described swimming back out to the jetty with the baby whale, and then losing sight of it when it dove for the bottom of the ocean. Instead of just giving up as some would have done, Cox continued to search for the baby, diving again and again into the water. She wrote in her story that it was several years later before she could see the whole picture of the benefits that she had gained from those dives. She encountered swimming turtles as well as a school of bat rays and also learned just how long she could actually hold her breath under water. Finally, she said the greatest reward of that experience was getting the opportunity to hear the baby whale as he tried to talk to her when she finally located him.



Notice that as in other parts of the book when Cox describes her dives to the bottom of the ocean, she describes her experience completely. She tells of the crushing pressure of the water on her head, the way the lack of oxygen and build up of carbon dioxide affected her, the way she used more oxygen when she moved her arms more quickly and the urgency in her lungs as she swam back up to the surface for air. Note also in this section of the novel that Cox was grateful that her swimming coach had her practice holding her breath and delaying breaths while swimming laps. It was during this experience that she learned the importance of those lessons.

## Discussion Question 1

Why do you think the whale waited at the bottom of the ocean even though Cox was looking for it? What do you think it was waiting for?

## Discussion Question 2

How does Cox's positive attitude allow her to turn what might have been considered by some a frustrating experience into a positive experience?

## Discussion Question 3

What do you think is the best way of handling a problem? Should one wait for the right answer to present itself or do something, even if it is wrong?

## Vocabulary

urgency, exuberance, sustain, migration, thermocline, amplified, hyperventilated, undulating, whorled, vise, sculling, imploding, synchrony, taut, carapaces, mottled, resonant, plaintive, willets, etched, perplexed



# Chapter Six

## Summary

Cox swam back toward the pier. She noticed the baby whale wasn't following her and tried to make sounds to get its attention. Realizing she wasn't able to speak its language, Cox decided just to swim and see what would happen. Soon the baby began following her. Once she reached the pier, Steve told her a fisherman had seen the mother whale near an oil rig. The baby swam in that direction and Cox decided to follow. Although Cox was afraid to swim the mile and a half to the oil rig alone, she pushed herself to take advantage of the opportunity. Before she began to swim she tried to convince Steve that she'd be all right because she would be swimming with the gray's son, a reference that she shortened to Grayson.

As they got further and further away from the shore and closer to the oil rig, Cox noticed that Grayson would slow down occasionally and seem to be agitated. She tried to speak to him using her heart and convince him that everything was going to be all right. She and Grayson swam within two hundred yards of the oil rig. She'd been told by the men who worked on the oil rigs that the energy put off by these machines seemed to attract fish. She noticed what she referred to a fish metropolis around the rig. Grayson dove down deep and Cox wondered where he was going. She tried to warn him mentally to be careful. After she had waited for what she guessed was about 5 minutes he still had not resurfaced. She wondered how much longer she should wait for him.

As she floated on the surface of the water and considered what she should do, she thought about the two kinds of thinkers in the world. One kind thought in terms of possibility and hope while the other focused on impossibility and doubt. When she was only fifteen, she had swum across the English Channel, a feat some deemed impossible. She also remembered a time when she'd gone with her friend, Greg Miller, to watch as he became one of the first people to achieve human powered flight. These two experiences made her believe that even the impossible could become possible.

She called for Grayson in her mind and was surprised when he popped up beside her. She decided to work this project just like she did her major swimming challenges, by breaking it down into smaller pieces. She told the baby they needed to return to the shore. Even though he began swimming with her toward the shore he suddenly turned around.

## Analysis

Developing the theme of swimming and Cox's dedication to her sport, the reader learns in this chapter of the novel that she successfully swam the English Channel at the age of fifteen. In her story, Cox shared with her readers several of the secrets that she used to be a successful swimmer. One of the things she did to help her achieve her goals



was to break her swims into manageable sections. She would concentrate on completing one section, and then the next section until she met her goal. She used this same technique when swimming with Grayson in an attempt to locate his mother.

Another aspect of Cox's personality that had helped her to achieve her goals was her decision to believe that her goals were possible. This idea that it was possible to achieve one's goals just by working hard also adds to the theme of the benefits of positive thinking. She includes an example of a friend who achieved what others had thought was impossible. This friend had attempted and achieved his goal of being one of the first people to fly using only human power. Cox also included her own experience of swimming the English Channel as a 15 year old. Although many people had thought this was an impossible goal, she worked hard to prove that she could achieve even this seemingly impossible goal.

The theme of waiting is also expanded in this section of the novel. As Cox waited for Grayson to surface after he'd dived to the bottom of the ocean, she wondered how long she should wait for him to come back. She posed the rhetorical question to herself how long a person should wait for anyone.

## **Discussion Question 1**

Do you agree with Cox that there were basically two ways of thinking about the world? Why or why not?

## **Discussion Question 2**

What did Cox say about herself when she swam out to the oil rigs with Grayson even though she was afraid to swim out that far alone?

## **Discussion Question 3**

Why do you think Grayson kept diving to the bottom of the ocean where he would stay for long stretches of time before resurfacing?

## **Vocabulary**

pathetic, wake, oblivious, intrusion, ominous, emanating, nematocysts, rupture, emulate, vitality, depleted



# Chapter Seven

## Summary

In Chapter Seven, Cox waited for Grayson as he swam and then jumped into the air. She strained to see him and wondered how long she'd have to wait for him to return. She finally came to the conclusion that she would wait as long as she had to because the waiting was as important as doing. Even though she tried to keep her thoughts positive, she was getting colder, tired and hungry. She thought about all the things she'd like to have to eat but those thoughts only made her even hungrier. It was when she thought about Grayson and how he might be feeling that she became more motivated. Even so, the water was colder closer to the oil rig. Cox was aware that she wasn't creating the heat she needed to keep her body's temperature up and was in danger of hypothermia. Before she gave up on him, she sent out thoughts to Grayson asking him to return.

## Analysis

The theme of communication is continued in this section as Cox tells about Grayson swimming quickly through the water then jumping, an action she believed was a way that whales used to communicate with one another. Again, as Cox was growing more and more cold and tired she tried to send a message through her thoughts to Grayson to hurry and come back.

Cox also addresses the topic of waiting in this chapter. Just as she had before, she wondered how long she should wait for Grayson to come back to her before she gave up and headed back to shore. Just from information given prior in the story it can be deduced that Cox was the kind of person who was highly motivated and liked to be doing something. It was hard for her to wait. As she waited for Grayson, the thought came to her that waiting was just as important as doing in some circumstances. She compared this waiting to her rest periods between training sessions, the empty spaces in a portrait and the pauses in music. Without these breaks, the activity, work of art, or music would not be as powerful, she realized.

In this instance, however, waiting was dangerous for Cox as she was in real danger of hypothermia. As she had noted, the water temperature was in the low 50s. When she had been actively swimming, the activity was enough to keep her core temperature up and the danger of hypothermia at bay. While she floated and waited for Grayson she wasn't using her muscles enough to create heat. Note also that at this point Cox had been in the water for more than three hours without a rest. This speaks to her athletic ability as few would have the stamina to last this long. At this point in her story, she still had the swim back to shore from the oil rig in front of her.





## Discussion Question 1

Discuss the danger of hypothermia that Cox faced. How dangerous might hypothermia be to her?

## Discussion Question 2

Consider Cox's description of the importance of waiting. Do you agree with her new discovery that sometimes waiting was as important as doing something?

## Discussion Question 3

Do you agree with Cox that guilt is a good motivator? Why or why not?

## Vocabulary

fluke, torpedo, breached, intentionally, famished, barnacles



# Chapter Eight

## Summary

In Chapter Eight, Cox began swimming back to shore, fighting against the tide. After she swam just more than 20 minutes, Grayson appeared beside her again. He laid his head in the water as if he were listening to something. Cox followed his example and heard squeaks. She saw a dorsal fin moving toward her, and then counted more than 200 dolphins swimming in their direction. She listened to the dolphins laughing and talking, and then watched as they performed for her, showing off their agility. Grayson watched as well. Some of the dolphins swam up to Grayson and seemed to be trying to communicate with him. Then they swam away and joined their herd.

Grayson began to swim back to the oil rig. Cox wondered why but then the baby whale swam right up to her, letting her touch him. She felt his dimples, then put her hand under him, feeling as if she were holding a baby whale in her hand. She was amazed by the trust he showed in her. After she touched him, she noticed that the whale seemed to swim more easily. She felt more energized. As they headed back to the pier, a Long Beach Lifeguard boat was heading toward them at full speed.

## Analysis

Communication is again a theme that is addressed in this section. As Grayson and Cox were swimming back to the shore, they suddenly found themselves surrounded by more than 200 dolphins. These dolphins demonstrated their abilities for the two, then Cox noticed the dolphins and Grayson squeaking at one another and she wondered if they were trying to communicate.

Also in this chapter Cox continued her theme of describing the different life forms found in the ocean as she described the dolphins that swam up to the area where she and Grayson were. She described the elegant and powerful nature of these friendly animals. She recalled an incident when she'd been swimming with a friend who had realized he was being followed by a fish with a dorsal fin. Believing it was a shark, the friend had panicked trying to get out of the water. Meanwhile, she'd been laughing uncontrollably because she realized he was being followed by a dolphin.

## Discussion Question 1

Why do you think that Cox felt more energized and Grayson seemed more relaxed after Cox was able to put her hands on him? What does this say about the power of touch?



## Discussion Question 2

Do you think Grayson was able to communicate with the dolphins? Why or why not?

## Discussion Question 3

Why do you think Grayson joined Cox as she was on her way back to the shore? Why do you think he waited so long to resurface?

## Vocabulary

skeg, cylindrical, tentative, aria, intimidate, transparent, emanating



# Chapter Nine

## Summary

The lifeguards told Cox with the weather getting bad, it was too dangerous for her to be swimming alone so far from the shore. She could hear Steve's voice on the lifeguards' radio talking to a fisherman who believed he'd seen a mother whale near Huntington Harbor. They decided Cox and Grayson should wait near the pier and hope that Grayson would stay with them. Back at the pier, a group of people had gathered to help look for the whale. Cox heard Steve's voice on the radio saying that a fisherman thought Grayson's mother might be moving in their direction. As Cox watched Grayson swimming back and forth in the water as if he were pacing, she wondered if he was cold or if he was trying to make his breaths heard.

Frustrated with waiting, Cox decided to try to send her thoughts out to Grayson's mother. She hoped the mother whale would pick up on her thoughts and locate her baby. She felt that a person or animal didn't need to hear or understand words to know they were loved, they just knew. She thought this was the case with Grayson and his mother. She felt that Grayson picked up on her thoughts as she tried to convince him to be patient and wait. As she waited, Cox heard a small boy on the pier asking if the whale had lost its mommy. He agreed to help look for it when his older brother suggested they might be able to help find her.

It was at that moment that people on the pier began to shout out that they were seeing something they believed was Grayson's mother. The whale spouted, sending mist ten feet into the air. It then began to swim toward to pier. Cox stuck her head underwater and heard the voice of Grayson's mother as she sang to her baby. Then, she heard a second voice, a voice that belonged to Grayson. He clicked and grunted as he found his mother.

When Cox surfaced and looked up at Steve, he was so emotional he couldn't speak. Grayson and his mother swam over to where Cox was. Cox felt tiny next to the mature whale, which was at least 45 feet long. She swam to within five feet of Cox, and then dove and swam under her. Cox realized from the feeling she got that this whale was the same creature that had swum under her earlier that morning. The whale made another pass by Cox, this time close enough for Cox to reach out and touch the whale's rubbery cheek. She believed the mother whale was thanking her. Grayson spoke again before the two swam away. Cox believed he was saying goodbye.

## Analysis

The story reaches a climax in this chapter. With the ocean getting more and more choppy, it wasn't safe for Cox to remain as far from shore as she had been. The lifeguards suggested that she and Grayson wait near the pier to see if his mother, who it



was believed had been spotted would come up to them. Notice that as Cox waited with the whale she continued to observe him closely. She wished she knew the reasons why he was becoming more agitated. She worried that he was getting cold or hungry but had no way to communicate with him to find out what was going on.

Again, Cox was faced with the chore of waiting. She voiced her desire to do something by asking the lifeguards if they should swim back out to the jetty to see if they would meet up with Grayson's mother. She was discouraged from doing that. She decided to spend her time waiting by trying to send out her positive thoughts to both Grayson and Grayson's mother. She believed it was the yearning of all of the people watching from the pier along with her own thoughts that called the mother whale to where they, and her baby, were waiting.

Imagine how awesome it must have been for Cox. She had not only had the opportunity to touch Grayson, but has also had an up close experience with Grayson's mother. Just as she had described her other encounters with ocean life thus far in her story, Cox described what the mother whale looked like, how she felt when Cox touched her, how expertly she swam as she maneuvered her huge body so close to Cox but never hit or touched her. The reader gets an idea from Cox's text just how awe inspiring this encounter must have been.

## Discussion Question 1

Research gray whales. Had Grayson's mother not appeared, what might have the people been able to do to keep Grayson alive?

## Discussion Question 2

Do you believe, as Cox did, that Grayson's mother and Grayson were grateful for what she'd done for Grayson? Why or why not?

## Discussion Question 3

How do you think you would have felt if you were in Cox's position? Would you have been afraid of the whales or simply awed by them? Do you think you would have been able to push past your own hunger and tiredness to stay with the baby whale?

## Vocabulary

motored, commercial, pod, buffer, denser, lagging



# Chapter Ten

## Summary

As the two whales swam away, they spouted together. The sun caught the water spray creating two rainbows above the whales. As she watched Grayson swim with his mother, Cox was happy things had turned out as she had hoped. She knew she would probably never see him again. As she looked up at Steve, she felt a new respect for her friend who had done so much to see that Grayson's story had a happy ending. Cox caught a ride back to shore on the lifeguard boat. Before she got off the boat the lifeguards radioed to the lifeguards who had escorted Grayson and his mother. They said the pair had reached the outer edge of Los Angeles Harbor. All cargo ships had been warned of the pair and where they were swimming. Grayson and his mother had joined a pod of three other whales and were swimming toward Alaska.

Once she was onshore, Cox called her parents to let them know she was okay. At breakfast, she mentioned Grayson, but didn't really make a big deal out of her encounter. Since that time, Cox said she thought about Grayson each time she swam along the California coast. She wonders how big he is and if he has children of his own. She imagines him out front, leading a group of whales. Each time she watches these huge beasts, she gets the same feeling as she did on the day she met Grayson.

## Analysis

In this chapter Cox finishes up her story of the morning that she met Grayson and helped him be reunited with his mother. After she finished her story, she switched the tense of the story from the past tense to the present tense where she considers thirty years later the way that her morning with the whales has increased her respect for them.

## Discussion Question 1

Why do you think the lifeguards escorted the whales all the way out to the edge of the harbor?

## Discussion Question 2

Notice that when Cox told her parents about her experience with Grayson, she said she really didn't make a big deal out of it. What does this tell you about Cox? How would you have reacted had you been in this same situation?



## Discussion Question 3

How does Cox's inclusion of her thoughts looking back on her experience with Grayson add to the story? What might the reader not have known if these thoughts were not included?

## Vocabulary

spouted, slipstream, expanded, spiraled, surged, escorted



# Characters

## Lynne Cox

Lynne Cox is the main character and narrator of this true story. At the time of her experience, she was a seventeen year old who was training as a long distance swimmer. Since she told the reader in her book that she had already completed a goal of swimming the English Channel when she was fifteen, it is apparent that Cox was very dedicated to her sport and that she had much experience swimming in the open waters. On this particular March morning, this experience paid off, as she was able to spend more than four hours in the water. She not only completed a three-hour workout but also stayed with a baby whale who had been separated from its mother.

Through her work with the whale, it is obvious that even as a teen Cox was a highly motivated person who believed in the power of positive thinking and the benefits of keeping one's attitude positive. She used the belief that with enough hard work and enough help she could make even this impossible situation possible to sustain her through the experience during which she suffered with hunger, cold and fatigue. Despite her own troubles, Cox enjoyed the experience as she got to see several different forms of ocean life she had not seen up close before. Not only did Cox get to experience these different forms of ocean life but she also described what she saw, felt, heard, smelled and tasted during her experience, making the reader feel as if he were right there with her.

## Grayson

Grayson is the name that Cox gave to the baby whale that followed her during a portion of her morning workout after he was separated from his mother. Steve told Cox the name was appropriate not only because the baby whale was the son of a gray whale but also because the whale showed so much grace in the water. This baby followed Cox until he was reunited with his mother. It was crucial that the baby be reunited with his mother because he depended upon his mother's milk for nourishment. Cox was afraid the whole time she was swimming with Grayson that he would soon become weak and dehydrated. He tried to play with her and demonstrated his playful, sweet personality. At one point during their encounter, the baby whale swam close enough to Cox that she was able to touch him and put her hand underneath him, feeling as if she was holding a baby whale in her hand.

## Steve

Steve was a friend of Cox's. He was a man in his sixties who ran a bait shop on Seal Beach. He would often keep an eye out for her during her morning workouts. Steve was the one who noticed the baby whale following Cox during her morning swim and warned her that the whale would die if he followed her onto the shore. He became the unofficial





leader of the search for Grayson's mother. He manned the radio waiting for reports of sightings of a lone mother whale. Steve was so emotionally moved by the reunion between Grayson and his mother that Cox saw him wipe tears from his eyes.

## **Carl**

Carl was an old fisherman who reminded Cox of her grandfather because he used worms to fish. Carl also had his own compost pile where he propagated his own crop of night crawlers. Carl's wife had passed away many years ago and Carl missed her. Even though he was lonely, he preferred to fish alone because he liked to work on his own schedule. Carl would often catch an extra halibut or two, which he would give to Cox when she finished her workout. When Cox told Carl that she was looking for a baby whale, he smiled because he suddenly realized why he had seen no fish that morning. He promised to keep a look out for the mother whale and radio Steve if he saw her.

## **Grayson's Mother**

Cox stayed with Grayson, a baby whale, until his mother could swim find the pier area where Grayson and Cox were waiting for her. After the mother and her baby were reunited the mother whale swam close enough to Cox that she was able to touch her. Cox described the whale as being at least 45 feet long. The people watching the reunion were surprised by the sweet nature the whale exhibited.

## **Two Lifeguards**

These two older lifeguards were among the people who helped Cox track down the mother of the baby whale. Cox indicated the two lifeguards who talked to Cox from the boat were partners in their forties or fifties. They agreed to help by looking for a lone mother whale and radio Steve if they caught any glimpse of her.

## **Greg Miller**

Greg Miller was one of Cox's friends. He was one of the first people to achieve human powered flight. Cox used the example of Miller's belief that his project was one worth doing to help explain why she felt saving the baby whale was a project she was felt was worth doing.

## **Small Boy on the Pier**

As she was waiting with Grayson, Cox heard this small boy ask if the whale had lost his mother. He was one of the first people on the pier to spot the mother whale as she swam closer to them.



## **A Fisherman**

It was an unnamed fisherman who sent a radio message to Steve saying he believed he'd seen Grayson's mother swimming near the mouth of Huntington Harbor. He said she seemed to be heading in their direction.

## **The Dolphins**

Grayson and Cox met up with these dolphins on their way back from the oil rig. As she watched and listened, it appeared that Grayson and the dolphins were trying to communicate with one another.



# Symbols and Symbolism

## An Edison Power Plant

This Edison Power Plant is an important symbol in the book as it represented danger for Cox. Because the plant dumped the warm water that it used to cool its turbines into the ocean, an area near this power plant was a haven for stingrays. Although these stingrays generally didn't bother people, Cox knew that she could get hit with a barb and an irritant if she accidentally stepped on one of these creatures.

## Oil Rig

This oil rig represented a fear to be overcome for Cox. Before she swam to the oil rig with Grayson, she'd never swum to this rig alone. Although she was afraid to swim so far out into the ocean alone — the rig was located nearly a mile and a half offshore — she knew she had to overcome her fear in order to help her new friend.

## Soft Blue and Yellow Lights on the Oil Rigs

The lights on these oil rigs represented safety to Cox as she swam because they helped her to orient herself while swimming. They were also calming as Cox was yearning for light during her disturbing early morning swim but the sun had not yet come up.

## Grayson's Eyes

Cox included in her story descriptions of Grayson's eyes. She likened them to two large brown chestnuts. His eyes seemed to be the outlet through which Cox connected most closely with Grayson. These eyes, and the eye contact between the two, represent the connection that existed between humans and animals.

## Long Beach Lifeguard Boat

This boat, which carried lifeguards to both people and animals that needed help, was important in the novel. Whenever Cox saw this boat she knew it was carrying those who could help her and bring her news of the search for Grayson's mother. For this reason the boat was a symbol of help and information.

## A School of Bat Rays

Cox encountered this school of bat rays during one of her deep dives to try to find Grayson the first time that he disappeared. These bat rays are symbolic of all of things



that Cox realized she would have missed had she been able to find Grayson during her first dive.

## **Two Rainbows**

These two rainbows appeared above Grayson and his mother just after they were reunited. The rainbows symbolize the hope and happiness that all involved in helping Grayson felt when he was back with his mother.

## **The Grunion**

The grunion, one of which wined up in Cox's mouth, was a sign of spring for her.

## **The Plankton**

These plankton which lit up when Cox swam through them were a symbol that showed Steve where Cox was as she swam in the ocean.

## **Tangerine Swim Cap**

When Cox wore this tangerine colored swim cap it would attract garbaldi because the color was the same color as the orange roe balls of sea urchins.



# Settings

## Seal Beach, California

The action of the entire book took place in the ocean just off Seal Beach, California. It was a day in early March with the action beginning at 5 a.m. and lasting four to five hours.

## The North Jetty

This north jetty marked the point at which Cox turned around in her workout to return to the pier. She and Grayson returned to this jetty when they were trying to find his mother. It was during this return trip that Cox encountered the pair of sea turtles and the school of bat rays.

## San Gabriel River Jetty

Cox didn't like touching the bottom of the ocean in this jetty because of the many stingrays that stayed in the area. This part of the ocean was often 10 degrees warmer than the rest of the ocean because a power plant dumped water used to cool the turbines nearby. For this reason, it was a haven for stingrays.

## Seal Beach Pier

Steve was standing on this pier when he warned Cox that she had a baby whale following her. If she had swum to the beach the whale would have followed her and died when it grounded on the beach. It was on this same pier that onlookers gathered to see the baby whale. After swimming out to the oil rig in hopes of finding the baby's mother, Cox went back to this pier where the mother eventually located them. The onlookers watched from the pier as the baby and its mother were reunited.

## The Oil Rig

Even though she was afraid, Cox swam out to this oil rig located about a mile and a half off shore in order to try to find the baby whale's mother.



# Themes and Motifs

## Communication

Communication is one of the major themes in the book, as Cox learned from her experience with Grayson and his mother that there were more ways to communicate than just through the spoken language. Some of these forms of communication that Cox discovered came through eye contact, thought, and touch. As Cox helped Grayson search for his mother she also considered the way that he communicated with the other animals in the ocean.

Although they did not speak the same language, Cox desperately wished that she had some way to reassure the baby whale and let him know that they were doing their best to find his mother. She tried to click and grunt back at him when he spoke to her but realized quickly that because she didn't know his language, these sounds would make no sense to him. She decided instead the best way to try to transfer her thoughts was through her thoughts. She put her energy into thinking and channeling her positive thoughts to him.

Notice that even though the two didn't speak the same language, they did seem to communicate through eye contact and touch. Cox mentioned several times that Grayson would turn his head and look at her. Although it cannot be known what the whale was thinking, it was clear that Cox had temporarily taken the role of his mother. He was looking to her to see what he should do next. Note also that after Grayson swam up to Cox and allowed her to touch him they both seemed more energized and ready to move on. Some believe that positive thoughts can be transferred through touch. This may have been why the two felt better after they'd had physical contact with one another.

Also interesting in this theme was Cox's curiosity about the way that Grayson attempted to communicate with the other creatures in the ocean. She knew that he "talked" by sending out sonar waves. She suspected the reason he was diving down so deep in the ocean and disappearing for such long periods of time was because he was trying to use his sonar to send out messages to his mother. When Cox felt strange vibrations in the water when she was with the whale at the pier, she wondered if he were trying to use his sonar on her. She wondered if he could use this form of communication to sense what was in her heart.

## Ocean Life

As Cox told her story, she added thorough descriptions of the ocean creatures that she encountered during her experience. Among a variety of other ocean life, these included the stingrays, the tuna, the turtles, a school of bat rays and a school of dolphins. Of course her most stunning experience was with Grayson and his mother, the two gray



whales with whom she believed she'd made friends during her unusual morning workout.

One of the fascinating aspects of Cox's writing is that she not only wrote about the creatures that she encountered in the ocean, but also that she wrote about them in terms that even a person not familiar with the ocean could relate to. For instance, she described the stingray city that had developed near the San Gabriel River jetty in terms of American cities. "This wasn't a thinly populated city like Cincinnati where there was plenty of room to spread out, room for spacious homes, porches, and big backyards. It was more like a stingray Manhattan, where the stingrays lived inches apart in the fine soft sand, and others lived right on top of one another in their own form of underwater apartments and condos" (p.19). Even someone who has never been in the ocean can get a visual image of how crowded the area was with stingray as Cox compared it to the densely populated city of Manhattan. She described the stingrays completely from their size and color to the feel of these creatures that she explained was like a wet grape. Cox also explained what could happen if she stepped on one of these usually docile creatures and caused it to strike her with its barbed tail.

Another majestic ocean creature that Cox described was the pair of sea turtles. Again, she gave her reader an approximate size and weight of the turtles along with a description of the mottled color of their shells. She compared their shells to "aquatic RVs" (p. 71) and explained how they had the ability to slow their heart rate, allowing them to stay underwater longer.

Of course, the stars of the story were Grayson and his mother. As Cox observed both the baby and its mother she got a feeling for how gentle the animals were despite their size. She was amazed how easily they moved through the water and how precisely they controlled their swimming. Just as she described the other ocean creatures, Cox described both Grayson and his mother in terms of length comparing Grayson to a sailboat while she wrote that his mother was more the length of a lifeguard boat. She also went into detail about feeling the rubbery skin of each of these animals when she had the opportunity to touch them.

## Swimming

Because it was her love of swimming that caused Cox to be out in the ocean when Grayson was separated from his mother, the sport of swimming is a theme in the book. Not only does Cox mention her swimming only in its role as the activity that caused her path to cross with Grayson but also referred to it in terms of her abilities and challenges. In the same way that she described the ocean life that she encountered during her swim, she described the motions she made while swimming to enable her to follow Grayson and to stay in the ocean for so long.

When Cox included in Chapter Six that she had successfully swum the English Channel as a fifteen year old, that information was really all the reader needed to have to know that she was an accomplished swimmer. Even though she was accomplished, Cox



shared with her reader in her story that she still had things she wanted to learn about swimming. She was in awe of the way that Grayson moved so gracefully through the water despite his size. She tried to mimic his motions. She also noted that her coach's habit of making her practice spacing out her breathing had really come in handy during that day's swim. As she recalled later all of the things she'd learned during her experience with Grayson, she also realized she'd discovered just how far underwater she could dive and how long she could stay underwater without having to resurface for a breath.

Just as she described thoroughly the ocean creatures she encountered during her swim and the ocean as she swam, Cox also described her act of swimming. She described how she would move her arms to push her body out of the water to let the sun warm her back. She described how she had to keep swimming at a steady pace in the water to keep her muscles generating heat while swimming in water that was in the range of 50-55 degrees. When she described how she dove down to the bottom of the ocean to look for Grayson she detailed how she hyperventilated so she'd have extra air in her lungs for her dive. She compared the actions of her dive to a person doing a handstand on the ground describing how she used rounded breaststrokes to try to get down more quickly.

It is also obvious in this story how dedicated Cox was to her sport. Although she was only seventeen at the time of the encounter with Grayson, she was in the water at 5 a.m. for a workout. Not many teens would be that dedicated. Even after the horrible experience she had fearing there was a large creature in the water with her, then being slammed onto the beach by this creature, Cox continued her workout because she knew how important it was for her not to give up. She pushed herself to finish knowing it would make her a stronger swimmer and leave her more prepared for challenges that might crop up during a competition swim.

## **The Benefits of a Positive Attitude**

It was no surprise to learn in the sixth chapter of Cox's book that she'd swum across the English Channel at the young age of fifteen. With her positive attitude, Cox is a prime example of a person who has the motivation and ability to complete the goals that she sat for herself. Notice that Cox made a point to note that her positive attitude didn't necessarily come easy for her. There were times in her novel where she had to make an effort to think positively about the things that were happening to her.

"Sometimes it made no sense to be optimistic, but it sure beat being pessimistic" (p.107). Cox made this statement as she waited for Grayson to resurface after they had swum to the oil rig in hopes of finding his mother. Although she knew in the back of her mind that something might have happened to Grayson's mother, she thought it was better to think positively about a situation until one had no other choice.

In another portion of the book Cox talked about how she believed there were two main ways of thinking among people. One school of thinking included those who thought positively about situations and believed they could accomplish what they set out to do.





The other group of people, she wrote, had their thoughts filled with doubt and believed it was just not possible to reach some goals.

Cox described to her reader two times that she had seen things that had been termed impossible done. One of these feats some people believed impossible was her own act of swimming across the English Channel. Even though some said it was impossible, Cox believed it was her hard work and dedication that had made it possible for her to meet that goal. A second supposedly impossible feat that Cox had seen reached was completed by her friend who was one of the first people to achieve human powered flight.

## Waiting

This theme might more properly be titled the importance of both waiting and doing as Cox notated in her book that both have their place when working toward a goal. Cox did not like waiting, but she learned through her experience with Grayson that sometimes one had to wait. These spaces of waiting, she realized were sometimes just as important as the periods of activity.

Each time that Grayson dove under the water Cox had to wait for him to resurface. Sometimes her wait lasted for nearly as long as thirty minutes. The first time that Grayson disappeared under the water, Cox dove to look for him time and time again. She felt it was better to be doing something as sometimes the answer to her problem would come to her during her activity.

It was not until later in her experience with Grayson that Cox realized that waiting could be just as important as activity. She compared this waiting to the spaces of rest between her periods of training and the periods of rest in music. It was at this point that she realized that she needed to wait for Grayson as long as it took. Prior to this realization, Cox had wondered twice before how long she should wait for Grayson before she gave up or returned to the pier.

Another incident on the same day that she met Grayson should also have helped to teach Cox the importance of waiting. When she wound up in the stingray-infested water, Cox knew it was important not to step on any of the stingrays. She had already believed she stepped on one of these creatures and had screamed and jumped, landing her in deep sand. Even though the stingrays were swirling all around her, she had to force herself to be still and wait until a wave came and lifted her out of the area.



# Styles

## Point of View

This story is told from the first person point of view of seventeen-year-old Lynne Cox. The use of pronouns like “I” and “me” are those that indicate the first person point of view. The point of view works well for this true story as it allows Cox to tell her story in her own words. She is able to describe what she saw, heard, felt and even smelled during her experience with the baby whale. The story would not have the emotional power or believability if it were told from any point of view other than that of the first person.

## Language and Meaning

The significance of the language in this book is that Cox describes her experiences as she interacted with the whales and the other ocean creatures that she encountered in such a way that her reader feels as if they were right there with her. She also describes her entire experience, giving readers not only an idea of what it was like to be the water with such large creatures, but also what her daily swimming workout was like. She uses a good deal of metaphor and simile in her writing to compare what she was feeling and seeing to common items to which most people can relate.

An example of Cox’s thorough descriptions comes when she describes the mother whale in chapter nine. She gave a length of the whale in feet but also gave the reader a tangible reference point when she compared the length of the whale to the length of the lifeguard boat. Another example of Cox’s detailed descriptions comes when she first met the baby whale. He was breathing and spouting water mist four feet into the air. She described even the smell of his breath, which she said was oily and salty. Cox contrasted this description with that of the smell of the breath from a different type of whale, which she said smelled like a cat’s breath after a dinner of fish. Like her description of the mother whale, Cox gives her reader a length comparison when she said that the baby whale was about the length of a sailboat.

## Structure

This 150-page book is divided into ten chapters. Each chapter is noted only with a chapter number. The longest chapter is 23 pages with the shortest being six pages. The story is told in a linear fashion. The action of the story began at about 5 a.m. one day in March with events described in the book lasting only about four or five hours. The story is simple with only one major plot and no subplots.

The majority of the story is told through exposition with Cox describing the different life forms that she encountered during her morning swim. Very little of the story is told through dialogue. Cox interacted with few people during her swim. Most of her



interaction was limited to her dealing with the baby whale and its mother. This cast of few characters allows the reader to focus on Cox and her story without being distracted by other people. Cox describes how she swam in the ocean, what the ocean looked like at the different stages of sunrise and the creatures she encountered during her swim.

The bulk of the story is told in the past tense with only a small portion of the tenth chapter switching to present tense. All of Cox's story about her morning with Grayson is told in the past tense as it happened when she was seventeen, nearly thirty years ago at the time the story was published. In the end of the final chapter, however, Cox switches to the present tense as she took time to look back on her experience from the viewpoint of a forty-seven year old.



## Quotes

There's something frightening, and magical, about being on the ocean, moving between the heavens and the earth, knowing that you can encounter anything on your journey.

-- Narrator (chapter 1 paragraph 1)

**Importance:** This quote opens the book. It foreshadows that Cox will encounter something unusual during her early morning workout.

I had to roll on my side and catch my breath. It was raining tuna. What a weird, wild, and wonderful thing.

-- Narrator (chapter 1 paragraph 45)

**Importance:** Although some swimmers might have abandoned their workout routine with the interruption first by the anchovy, then the grunion and finally the falling tuna, Cox did not. She considered the experience to be a thing of wonder.

The water shifted, and I was riding on the top of a massive bubble. It was moving directly up from below, putting out a high-energy vibration. I felt like there was a spaceship moving right below me. I had never felt anything this big in the water before.

-- Narrator (chapter 1 paragraph 53)

**Importance:** This ending sentence of the first chapter leaves the reader in a cliff hanger, wanting to know exactly what was happening under the surface of the water and if Cox will be harmed by the creature.

Usually I loved swimming in the open ocean, but I was having a tough morning. And I couldn't shake the feeling that something really big was swimming nearby.

-- Narrator (chapter 3 paragraph 3)

**Importance:** After her encounter with the large wave that threw her onto the beach twice, and then her scare with the jellyfish, Cox was ready to get out of the water but pushed herself to finish her routine. She continued swimming even though she still felt there was a large creature somewhere nearby her.

That's a baby whale following you. He's been swimming with you for the last mile. If you swim into shore, he'll follow you. He'll run aground. The weight of his body on the beach will collapse his lungs and he will die."

-- Steve (chapter 4 paragraph 9)

**Importance:** Steve frantically tried to get Cox's attention to keep her away from the shoreline. All the time she had sensed there was a large creature swimming with her, she was right. Steve had spotted the whale swimming behind Cox as she finished her workout. He knew that if it were to follow Cox onto the shore, it would die.



Most of all, I wanted to be able to tell him not to worry, that I would try to help. Two hearts in pursuit of the same thing were far stronger than one alone.

-- Narrator (chapter 4 paragraph 39)

**Importance:** Even though she and the baby whale didn't speak the same language, Cox wished there was a way she could communicate with the baby and reassure him.

I felt something like a tingle, like the sound waves emitted by a wind instrument but without any music. I wondered if he was using his sonar on me. Could he use his sonar for something more than figuring out where he was? Could he use it to read what was in someone's heart?

-- Narrator (chapter 4 paragraph 53)

**Importance:** Also dealing with the book's theme of communication, Cox wondered in this quote if a whale could use its sonar to determine what thoughts and feelings were in a person's heart.

If I thought negatively, then I would put out negative energy, but if I thought positively, I would put out positive energy, expanding the possibilities of what could happen. It was very much like actors improvising: If they work together, stay in the moment, respond to one another in a positive way, they keep their skit going, moving forward, but as soon as someone puts forth something negative, the improvisation shuts down.

-- Narrator (chapter 4 paragraph 57)

**Importance:** Even though she can't physically talk to the whale, Cox knew she had to keep her thoughts and energy positive as even an animal could pick up on the energy she put out. The whale's attitude might depend on the positive or negative nature of her own attitude.

Sometimes it's the process of doing that makes things clear. If we don't start, we never know what could have been. Sometimes the answers we find while searching are better or more creative than anything we could ever have imagined before.

-- Narrator (chapter 5 paragraph 11)

**Importance:** This quote represented Cox's thoughts as she swam back toward the jetty with the baby whale in hopes of finding his mother in that area. It is significant because it shows her willingness to do something, even if it was wrong, in the belief that it was sometimes in doing something that one got the answers for which they were looking.

For the first time in my life, I heard a baby whale speak. I heard the voice of the whale. I was thrilled. The baby whale had spoken to me.

-- Narrator (chapter 5 paragraph 76)

**Importance:** Cox expressed her surprise and joy when the baby whale with whom she was swimming communicated with her.



Years later, I realized that if I had found the baby whale on my first dive, I might never have heard him speak underwater, I might never have seen the graceful bat rays or the swimming sea turtles, and I never would have known how far I could go down into the ocean depths on a single breath.

-- Narrator (chapter 5 paragraph 82)

**Importance:** Even though she didn't realize until years later what wonderful things she would have missed had she been lucky and found the gray whale during her first dive.

I was afraid. But I knew I had to. Sometimes I just did things because I thought I could and because if I didn't an opportunity to learn something, grow, and reach farther would be lost.

-- Narrator (chapter 6 paragraph 14)

**Importance:** Cox displayed her unusual and highly motivated personality when she swam out to the oil rig, a place she'd only swum before with another person, despite her fear. She believed that if she missed the opportunity to do something that frightened her, she also missed the opportunity to grow.

There are all sorts of ways to think about the world, and so many people who think differently. Still, I believe there are two basic ways of thinking: one of possibility and hope, the other of doubt and impossibility.

-- Narrator (chapter 6 paragraph 85)

**Importance:** Cox described her own world view, that of possibility and hope, as well as her belief that that even things that some people believe were impossible could be made possible with enough hard work and help.

Wait as long as you need to. The waiting is as important as the doing: it's the time you spend training and the rest in between; it's painting the subject and the space in between; it's the reading and the thinking about what you've read; it's the written words, what is said, what is left unsaid, the space between the thoughts on the page, that makes the story, and it's the space between the notes, the intervals between fast and slow, that makes the music.

-- Narrator (chapter 7 paragraph 18)

**Importance:** Although Cox was one who liked to be doing something, she realized as she waited for Grayson that there were times in life that waiting was just as important as doing.

Grayson swam right up to me, within an inch, and he let me touch him. His skin felt rubbery, like a mushroom, and not at all slimy. It gave a little when I touched it. I reached on top and felt his dimples and then I slid my hand under him and smiled. I held the baby whale in my hand.

-- Narrator (chapter 8 paragraph 67)



**Importance:** Cox describes the awesome moment when Grayson came close enough to her that she could touch him.

She dove deep under me, and I felt the water quickening. I realized she had been swimming under me when we were at the jetty earlier that morning. That's where she'd lost Grayson.

-- Narrator (chapter 9 paragraph 69)

**Importance:** As Cox felt the changes in the water as the mother whale swam underneath her, she realized that it was Grayson's mother who had been swimming under her during her experience earlier that morning when she felt there was something huge swimming with her.

In a very short time you have shown me things I would never have discovered on my own. You have taught me how to listen and feel and understand without using words. Even if words could reach to eternity there would not be enough to express the way I feel about you.

-- Narrator (chapter 9 paragraph 77)

**Importance:** Cox credited Grayson with all the things she had learned and discovered during their time together that she might never have known had their paths not crossed. She had learned that she had the ability to communicate, and develop love and friendship, even without words.