

The Tail of Emily Windsnap Study Guide

The Tail of Emily Windsnap by Liz Kessler

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Plot Summary

The Tail of Emily Windsnap by Liz Kessler is a story about a 12-year-old girl who lives with her mother on a boat called the King of the Sea. Emily's life is fairly normal until she finally convinces her mother to allow her to take swimming lessons when she begins secondary school. Until now, her mother's fear of the water had prevented Emily from learning to swim, despite repeated requests. Emily's first lesson changes her life, beginning with the appearance of a tail where her legs should be when she first immerses herself in the pool. Shocked, and afraid, the swimming teacher helps her out of the water, but no one notices her legs joined and scaled. The first Wednesday of Year Seven will be one she remembers forever.

Although no one sees her tail appear, or thankfully disappear when she gets out of the water again, Emily is still too afraid to attend another class, especially after sneaking out that night and repeating the performance off the pier where King is docked. Despite wanting out of the swimming classes, Emily loves the water. As soon as she enters the water and her tail appears, she becomes graceful and feels tremendous power and control.

Emily begins sneaking out whenever she can, enjoying every minute in the water. She ventures further from home each time, and on her second time out she meets another mermaid who introduces herself as Shona once she is over the shock of seeing her. Shona is the first one to tell Emily about her father and correct the lie she'd been told her whole life. Emily's father hadn't deserted them. He'd been arrested and incarcerated for falling in love with a human - something strictly forbidden by Neptune.

Emily decides to find her father, and with Shona's help she manages to break her way through the Great Mermer Reef to the other side where the prison is located. Although she manages to find him, freeing her father is not as easy as she'd hoped it would be. Instead, she and Shona along with her mother and babysitter Millie are arrested and brought before Neptune to answer charges. Neptune holds court, in complete control and after deliberating decides that Emily is right. Love should not be punished by incarceration. Instead, Neptune offers them the opportunity to live like a family, although they have to do it on an island in a secure location for the rest of their lives.

Shona is given a choice of having her memories erased like Millie or joining Emily and her family provided her parents approve. Emily goes back to school one more time and with Mr. Beeston's help, she is able to reveal herself for one shining moment before he erases those memories, and Emily joins her family again to live happily ever after.



Chapter One

Summary

Emily Windsnap is beginning high school and finally convinces her mother that she should join the swimming classes being offered. The water is a wonderful surprise, surrounding her and feeling as normal as though she'd been submersed in it her entire life – not for the first time today. She dips under the surface, and pushing off from the shallow end, she swims to the other side. One minute she is swimming like a fish and the next she feels her legs seize up. Unable to move she begins to panic, and Bob dives in to help. Emily tells him she can't feel her legs and he tows her back to the steps. As soon as Emily is halfway out of the water, the feeling goes away and Bob checks her over before deciding that it was just a case of cramps, telling her to get back in when she is ready. One thing was certain. Emily was not getting back in.

A plank of wood spans the distance from their boat to the jetty, and for the first time since Emily was young, she is too afraid to cross. She calls until her mother comes and reaches out to her, calling her a dingbat affectionately before going back in to finish readying for her book club.

Millie arrives and sits in front of one of her two favorite shows, Emmerdale, leaving Emily to amuse herself after they'd eaten. Later, Emily pretends to be asleep when her mother returns, but she lies awake for hours, thinking about how she felt in the water and wondering if it would happen again. She wouldn't be able to rest unless she knew. When she hears her mother snoring, Emily gets up and puts on her bathing suit. She goes out to the jetty and finds her way to the rope ladder. She climbs down, jumping the last of the distance before she could talk herself out of it. After a minute, the cold recedes and suddenly she is as relaxed as though she lived in the water. As soon as she feels the change again, she swims for the ladder gasping. After a moment, Emily stops struggling and simply accepts the fusion of her legs. She slips under the water and becomes as graceful as a dolphin, loving the water as much as any fish. Emily is a mermaid, and she exacts her promise from the reader that they never tell.

Analysis

Emily is a confident young lady making the transition from grade school to high school. Transitions are definitely a theme as Emily tries to fit in with her peers in school and Emily uses this theme of transitions to convince her mother that it is time for her to learn how to swim.

Water is a strong opening theme, combined with both love and fear in this first segment. While Emily's mother is afraid of the water, Emily discovers an affinity and love for the watery depths. As mother and daughter who live on a boat, it is clear that they are both facing their feelings about water. Of course Emily's mother is not the only one who has



a fear of the water. When Emily first learns about her unique ability, she is afraid to even go near water again, unsure what would trigger the change.

Self-image is also a theme that is explored by Emily as she imagines what would happen if someone found out, or saw her altered. Her first reaction is to hide, and to hide her change certain that if someone found out, she would be paraded around in a cage and studied. When she got into the water however, and gave herself over to the change, she felt alive, graceful and lithe in the water, acrobatic and most important of all, Emily was in her element.

Emily's changing experience in the water foreshadows her continuing desire to experience and explore this new environment.

Discussion Question 1

What causes Emily's legs to change for the first time and why did this change take so long to occur?

Discussion Question 2

What changes does Emily feel both physically and emotionally when she exchanges her legs for a tail?

Discussion Question 3

How does Emily feel after the first time she changes, and what happens as a direct result of this experience when she goes home?

Vocabulary

immersed, laboratory, pollution, promenade, confident, accuracy



Chapter Two

Summary

Emily is so captivated by the experience of having a tail that before she knows it, dawn is on the horizon. Promising herself that she'll return soon, she changes back noting that all it seems to take to do so is her own desire.

Emily only naps briefly before her mother is waking her to get ready for school. Emily had dreamed that her secret had been discovered and wakes up fearful and ready to run. She joins her mother at the table just as she discovers the note Emily tried to write so that she could get out of the swimming lessons before her secret was revealed. She reads the note and to Emily's surprise isn't angry with her.

Emily asks her mother why they live in a seaside town, and why particularly on a boat since her mother is so afraid of the water. She wonders why they don't live closer to her Grandad and Nan who live on the opposite end of the country but her mother insists that they had a falling out years earlier. Her mother admits that she simply can't imagine living anywhere else, or giving up life on King.

Suddenly her mother looks at her and announces that she has the answer. She is determined not to let Emily suffer with her lifelong fear of water, deciding that she'll take Emily to a hypnotist first. Later, Emily sits in Mystic Millie's armchair, and tries not to follow her directions to relax, breathe deeply and ride an escalator down to deeper sleep. She pictures herself going up the elevator instead and almost laughs out loud when she hears her mother snoring in the other chair. When Millie finally counts up to seven to wake her, Emily hugs her impulsively, relieved that she hadn't given her secret away somehow.

After her mother slips a twenty pound note into Millie's purse, she and Emily walk to a bench that looks out to the sea. They sit, and Emily asks if she is okay. Her mother begins to tell her about a dream she'd had while at Millie's, claiming it had seemed so real to her. She dreamed of a shipwreck, she says pointing out to sea, with a marble mast and pavement made of pearl with ceilings made of amber. The rocks used to glisten with a myriad of colors, she continues and Emily asks what she means by 'used to'. Her mother corrects herself, but then notices Mr. Beeston walking towards the pier for their daily cup of tea together. She whistles once and waves when he turns. Emily's mother stands, the moment broken, and heads back to the boat to put on the kettle.

Analysis

A mother's love for her daughter is evident in this segment as Emily's mother discovers the note that Emily wrote in an effort to escape another swimming lesson, and wrongfully assumes that Emily is afraid of the water just like she is. Rather than indulge



her daughter and cater to the fear of water she thinks Emily has, she instead enlists the aid of a hypnotist for Emily.

Guilt is also a theme as Emily's mother feels guilty for not having helped Emily where water was concerned years ago, catering instead to her own fears instead by keeping Emily from the water.

Family is an ongoing theme as Emily prods her mother for information as she tries to understand the reasons that her mother and her Grandad and Nan aren't closer. Emily longs for the familial connection that her mother seems reluctant to re-establish, despite being unable to remember why they drifted apart to begin with.

Water continues to be a strong theme in this segment as Emily's mother takes her to a hypnotist to help her cure her of her fear of water, which of course Emily doesn't have.

Fear is a theme in this segment, but it is not fear of the water. The fear that pervades this segment is the fear of discovery. Emily is so afraid that she will be found out, or seen that she is even having nightmares about it. Emily's mother refuses to leave the boat they live on or the town they live in, despite her fear of water, and Emily wonders about her mother's motives.

Dreams are also a theme connected to the fear theme. Emily dreams of capture and of people discovering her secret while her mother dreams of shipwrecks of unnatural beauty beneath the sea although the idea of that much water terrifies her.

Emily compares Mr. Beeston's visit with a lingering darkness that remains after he is gone, a possible foreshadowing of evil in the man.

Discussion Question 1

What assumption does Emily's mother make and what is the truth about Emily's real fear?

Discussion Question 2

What contradiction in circumstances does Emily confront her mother about, and how does her mother explain it if at all?

Discussion Question 3

When does Emily test her body's reaction to water a second time and how are her feelings beginning to change?

Vocabulary

gradually, escalator, visualize, awkwardly, hypnotist



Chapter Three

Summary

Emily can't help but go out again that night and this time she swims out into deeper water, wanting to explore. She leaves the bay and swims through cold and warm patches, noting the sandy or sea urchin bottom. Tired, she finally pulls herself up onto a rock to rest. She watches her legs return, still feeling weird about the transformation.

Sitting there, Emily hears what sounds like singing. Emily climbs up a jagged rock and looking over it, she is stunned to see a mermaid sitting there. Her tail is longer and sleeker than Emily's and it is a silvery green color. The mermaid continues to sing the same song again and again until finally Emily clears her throat politely.

She takes one look at Emily and is gone in a splash. Emily calls out to her and explains that she is just like her – a mermaid. To prove it, she jumps into the water and after her tail manifests, she does a handstand, pushing her tail up out of the water. When she turns around again, the other mermaid dives under and mimics Emily's handstand. After she comes up laughing, they talk and Emily learns that her name is Shona and that she, like Emily, is twelve years old. They talk about school; Shona describing the classes she takes and Emily stunned that a mermaid school actually exists. Shona tells Emily about her classes, and Emily confesses that she's only been a mermaid for a short time. When Shona learns Emily's last name is Windsnap, she seems surprised but then changes the subject. Shona is as curious about life out of the water as Emily is about life as a mermaid.

After talking for a while, Emily and Shona agree to meet on Wednesday, and after Emily wishes her luck on her upcoming test, Shona dives and is gone. Emily swims around the bay in the dark, mesmerized by the lighthouse flashing as a big ship goes by quietly. Then she sees someone standing on the lighthouse rocks. She recognizes Mr. Beeston, wondering what he is doing out there, and worrying that perhaps he'd seen her. She ducks under the surface, and when she comes up again he is gone. The light of the lighthouse goes off and stays off this time. She wonders why the light didn't come back on again, and thinks about Mr. Beeston's life as a keeper. It is almost morning when she finally pulls herself up onto the pier. She sneaks back into her room glad that her secret is still safe.

Analysis

Water as the ongoing theme continues and gains strength as Emily not only returns to the water as soon as she can do so in private, but also meets someone who is her age, and is a mermaid. At this stage, a water theme is foreshadowed to grow.

Emily's unique ability, namely her ability to become two legged at will, foreshadows a future where she may act as intermediary between a water world and dry landers.



Perspective is also a theme as Emily leaves the safety of her little bay, swimming far enough away that the bay is small and quaint to her eyes. Up until this point in her life, Brightport had always seemed large to her. Emily's perspective widens as she leaves her home of Brightport Bay and once clear of the waters in the bay discovers that the ocean is alive; the water is softer, and clearer. Perspective is also what helps Emily to see the advantages and grace of a mermaid tail rather than continuing to view herself as a freak because she has one.

Self-image is a theme in most twelve year old lives and Emily's is no exception. Emily struggles to feel accepted by her peers and though panicked when she first gains her tail in the water, Emily is beginning to appreciate the grace and confidence with which she can swim and is beginning to see the tail as a plus rather than a minus.

Friendship is also a theme in this segment as Shona is introduced as the first mermaid that Emily has ever encountered. Their conversation reveals countless similarities in personality and education concerns.

Hypnotism is also a repeating theme as Shona admits to having lured five fishermen with her siren's song, wiping their memories afterward of course. Shona tells Emily how they convince them to change their ways, and stop stealing fish. It is ironic that Emily's mother had tried to have Emily hypnotized to rid herself of the fear of water her mother thought she had.

Secrecy is still a theme as Emily worries for a moment on the way back that Mr. Beeston may have seen her. When she gets home, she is grateful that she has escaped notice once again and her secret is safe.

Discussion Question 1

What things does Emily notice about the water and the seabed?

Discussion Question 2

What do Shona and Emily have in common and what differences separate them?

Discussion Question 3

Why is Emily so afraid that her secret will come out?

Vocabulary

purposefully, pirouette, hypnotic, posture, silhouette



Chapter Four

Summary

The next morning, Emily tries to get out of going to school, not wanting to attend another swimming lesson. Her mother isn't fooled, asking her instead if she is having trouble in her new school. Emily lies; telling her everything is fine and gets on the bus. At school, Mrs. Partington teaches long division in her first class, and Emily struggles, usually much better with mathematics, but unable to concentrate. When the bell rings, everyone leaves the class but Emily lags behind, still trying to think of a way out of the swimming lessons that came next.

Standing outside the coach, Philip Northwood calls her a teacher's pet and Mandy calls her a show-off. Mr. Bird tells everyone to get on the bus. Julie sits across the aisle from Emily, and tells her that Philip is just jealous, but Mandy sits beside her quickly calling Emily 'fish girl'.

When they get to the pool and park, Emily dawdles on the bus, putting off the inevitable. Then Julie climbs back on the bus and tells her that because of council cuts and striking staff, swimming is off, and instead they were going on a nature trail. Mr. Bird soon announces they are headed to Macefin Wood.

That night, Emily goes to sleep early, and gets to the rocks before Shona. She waves Emily into the water and tells her to follow. Shona dives and Emily follows. They swim for a mile and a quarter underwater and Emily is astonished that she is able to do so although Shona doesn't consider it to be anything special.

Shona takes Emily to an underwater park to a mermaid's playground located on a patch of sand in the middle of a carpet of seaweed. The park is full of things that have been thrown away, or fell into the sea and have been put to use. Shona perches on a bike sideways and swings back and forth, telling Emily how happy she is to have a best friend now. When Emily mentions wistfully that she'd like to meet more mermaids, Shona invites her to come to her school on Saturday morning.

Emily agrees but Shona is worried about Emily's parents and how they would feel, but Emily assures her it is okay. She tells Shona that her father left them when she was a baby and though Emily is angry with him for leaving them, Shona suggests that perhaps something happened to cause him to leave. Perhaps he'd been taken or couldn't return for some reason. Angry, Emily tries to change the subject, and Shona apologizes. They swim back to Rainbow Rocks and Emily can't help thinking about her father and why he hadn't stayed with them. She wonders if it was all her fault and wonders if she'll ever see him again.



Analysis

Fear is a theme that opens this chapter as Emily desperately searches for a way to avoid swim class again. She tries to convince her mother that she is sick simply so that she can avoid the entire issue, but her mother can tell she is not ill.

Jealousy is a theme that reveals itself as Emily lines up with the others for their swimming lessons at the pool. Some of the students are still upset about her performance the previous time at the pool saying she had been showing off and calling her the teacher's pet. Julie tells Emily that Philip's jealousy comes from his inability to swim. Mandy sits down beside Julie, and warns her not to be too social with 'fish girl'.

Fate intervenes on Emily's behalf as their swimming lessons are cancelled. Instead, Mr. Bird takes them for a nature walk in Macefin Wood.

Cultural differences are examined in this segment as Emily and Shona learn a little bit about each other. While similarities exist, such as the desire for friendship, the visit to the park to play and their home lives, including school and parental issues; Emily learns there are a great many differences between them as well such as language idioms, subjects studied in school and dangers faced.

Secrecy is a theme of some importance, with Shona taking great care not to be seen by anyone, and Emily sneaking out to see her new friend while keeping her newly discovered abilities a secret from everyone.

Education is a theme in this segment also as Shona invites Emily to come to her school and meet other mermaids.

Genetics are briefly discussed, but not expanded on in this section, giving the reader a hint that Emily's father is likely a mermaid. According to Shona, one of Emily's parents would have to be a mermaid in order for Emily to have gained that ability. Emily is too preoccupied at the time to register what Shona says, but it is clear that this is a matter that will come up again based on Shona's reaction to Emily's information about her father and how he left them.

Family is also an ongoing theme in this section as Shona learns that Emily's father had left them when Emily was just a baby. Shona assumes that he was taken by sharks – one of the most common reasons to lose a parent in her world. Shona suggests that perhaps he was taken and couldn't return for some reason, foreshadowing a likely reunion between them in the future.

Discussion about her father with Shona makes Emily consider the reasons her father hadn't stayed with them, and she wonders if he ever loved her or whether she'd done something wrong and caused him to leave them. She also wonders if she'll see her father again, which continues to foreshadow a likely reunion. This insecurity is a theme that will likely repeat unless Emily learns the truth.



Discussion Question 1

Why are some of the students in Emily's swim class jealous of her and what behavior on their part proves this?

Discussion Question 2

Where does Shona take Emily, and what surprises do the journey and the destination reveal?

Discussion Question 3

How does Emily feel about her father, and why?

Vocabulary

promenade, reluctantly, formation, apologetic, shoal



Chapter Five

Summary

Emily's mother waves goodbye to her and as soon as she turns away, Emily runs down to the beach and under the pier. She swims out to Rainbow Rocks to meet Shona and then head out across Shiprock Bay. At its farthest tip, Shona begins to swim down and then vanishes through a large gap in the rock. She swims back out, grabbing Emily by the hand and guiding her through the tunnel that finally opens in a huge hole in the rock. Caves are everywhere and tunnels head off in all directions like a huge rabbit warren underwater.

Emily is surprised to discover hundreds of merpeople including all ages from merelders to merbabies. Mrs. Tailspin warns Shona that the bell is in five minutes and Shona explains that she teaches history – Shona's first class. A sound like a foghorn calls them to class.

Mrs. Tailspin educates the class on nineteenth century shipwrecks, passing around remnants of The Voyager – one of their 'proudest sinkings'. The ship was sunk after the Siren Sisters carefully manipulated and then lured the crew for long enough that the ship was eventually lost. One of the problems that occurred however was that instead of dispersing the ship's crew, some of the sisters involved ran away with them, never to be seen again.

Shona decides that they should go and look for the wreck of the Voyager, and Emily is stunned when she reaches into her scales and pulls something out. Shona assures her that she has pockets as well, and Emily gropes around, finally finding one.

After class, they swim out to sea, Shona guiding them with her splishometer. When they get close, she leads them down to where the sea life becomes strange. Fish resembling cartoon aliens swim around until they finally reach the wreck. It shines as though made of gold and remembering her mother's dream, Emily looks for a mast. The mast appears to be made of marble and Emily fights a feeling of panic.

They swim in through a porthole and go down the corridor trying doors until one finally opens. Inside is a room with a floor made of pearl and the ceiling made of amber, just like the dream her mother had. It is the most magnificent room Emily has ever seen, but she can't ignore the fact that this is the ship that her mother had dreamed of.

Analysis

Secrecy is the first theme introduced in this chapter as Emily waves goodbye to her mother, waiting for her to go inside before she leaves the promenade and hides under the pier where she strips off her shoes and jeans and slips into the water. She takes



great care to ensure no one sees her tail, swimming underwater the entire way to Rainbow Rocks.

Water and Emily's growing comfort and confidence in it are also prominent themes in this section. Emily has transitioned from a reluctance to enter the water to swimming under water the entire way to Rainbow Rocks in order to hide her tail. With little reluctance, she follows Shona down and into a tunnel through the rocks.

The author uses similes in this segment to bring the mermaid school to life, comparing it to an extensive rabbit warren underwater with caves and tunnels that go off in every direction and also to describe the variety of unusual sea life at great depths, comparing them to alien cartoons. Emily continues her efforts to categorize what she sees, trying to compare them to experiences she can relate to. Even the school itself reminds Emily of the dome at the fair where downhill skiing and daredevil flights were shown.

Variety is also a theme as Emily discovers that there are as many types and selections of merpeople as there is in the human population. She can hardly believe the variety of tails she can see.

Education is also a theme, and Emily loves the alternate curriculum as Mrs. Tailspin teaches them about nineteenth century shipwrecks instead of a class like long division or something equally boring that Emily would have had in her school.

Shipwrecks are discussed in this section as Mrs. Tailspin educates her students regarding the sinking of The Voyager. Considered to be one of the greatest sinking, the only negative aspect attached to the Voyager is the desertion of some of the Sirens who ran away with some of the crew. Shona and Emily decide to explore the Voyager.

Romance and love are also touched on as Mrs. Tailspin teaches her class and educates her students on incidents where merfolk and humans had been caught together. Merfolk see this kind of fraternization as traitorous and a danger to the entire merfolk population. As such, love between humankind and merfolk is discouraged and punishable by time in prison.

Pockets are a surprising theme as Shona reaches into her tail to pull out her splishometer. Emily is stunned to discover that her tail contains similar hidden pockets.

Changing sea life is discussed as Shona and Emily dive deep to find The Voyager. The variety of fish and other swimming creatures are so unusual that Emily can't help thinking of them as cartoon aliens.

Opulence is the final theme as Emily and Shona explore The Voyager, swimming into a broken portal to explore the gold ship with its mast made of marble. Inside, they discover the floor is made of pearl and the ceiling is made of amber. This kind of extravagance is also used when describing Neptune's palace.



Discussion Question 1

What fears does Emily have where discovery of her secret is concerned and what incidents in her experience support her fears?

Discussion Question 2

Which similarities are noticeable between merpeople and humankind and what differences are most evident at first to Emily?

Discussion Question 3

What sets The Voyager apart from other shipwrecks according to Mrs. Tailspin, and what consequences resulted?

Vocabulary

collages, dispersing, inevitable, endanger, labyrinth, plankton



Chapter Six

Summary

Panicking, Emily tells Shona they have to leave. Shona follows as Emily races ahead, so intent on getting out that she passes the broken portal and has to turn back. Shona stops her and points out a manhole sized door in the floor. She manages to convince Emily to wait long enough to take a quick look inside, and help her pull the handle up.

They swim down a dark corridor until a large fish swims out towards Emily's face, surprising her so much that she screams and, forgetting everything else, heads for the exit. Back on Rainbow Rocks they sit, Shona still registering surprise as Emily's legs return. She asks her what happened in the ship, but Emily isn't sure herself.

After a bit of encouragement, Emily finds herself confiding in Shona, and when she finishes Shona looks away. Then she tells Emily that she knew her last name the first time she heard it, having learned about illegal marriages in school. Shona hopes they'll find out more at the school, and leads Emily to the reading room.

Stored on scrolls, the information is stored under different headings, and Shona selects the one that is titled 'Sirens'. They search the entire scroll, but find nothing of import. Mrs. Tailspin notices them, and Emily claims that Shona is helping her with her homework.

Mrs. Tailspin relates the story as she remembers it, telling Emily and Shona how a yacht race resulted in humans and merfolk socializing together. Neptune was so displeased that he created storms that lasted for weeks, and threatened to imprison anyone he caught socializing with humankind for life. Neptune was so agitated by the whole situation that he visited each merfolk area personally to voice his displeasure.

Mrs. Tailspin describes Neptune as loud and angry; covered in gold and bearing a definite charisma and tells the girls how they prepared for his visit, collecting as many of the finest jewels and crystals as their menfolk could find. They presented him with a scepter and he gave them a dolphin in return.

The meetings between humans and merpeople continued and one merman named Jake even married a woman at Rainbow Rocks. A portion of her story registers in Emily's subconscious as Shona confirms the merman's last name was Windsnap. They were caught thirteen years later when their daughter was born. Emily is stunned, and can hardly speak as Mrs. Tailspin continues, telling them that he was made an example of – jailed for life by Neptune.

After she leaves, Shona suggests they return to the shipwreck and Emily asks for a few days to consider it. Then she swims home, her thoughts jumbled.



Analysis

Fear is the first theme in this chapter as Emily becomes so scared that she insists they leave *The Voyager* immediately. She relents only briefly when Shona finds a door in the floor that resembles a manhole. The darkness and different marine life inside soon has Emily swimming for the exit. While Emily had seen the different marine life as alien cartoons at first, confinement in the dark with them changes her opinion of them quickly.

Friendship is a growing theme as well when Shona asks Emily to trust her and tell her why she is so frightened. Emily does so, admitting that Shona is the most normal person she's met in some time. After she shares her fears with Shona, Shona tells her what she suspects about her parents.

Illegal marriages are a theme in this chapter as Emily's family history is investigated. Shona and Emily look for information to support their suspicions, but find nothing. Mrs. Tailspin sees them and is able to provide a great deal more information that finishes with her announcement that Neptune had imprisoned the only remaining merman to continue to defy him.

Family is an ongoing theme as Emily struggles to understand what she suspects is her family history. Realizing that her father may have been a merman and was imprisoned for the crime of falling in love with her mother and having a child together changes Emily's perspective of who her father was. Having thought he'd abandoned them, she'd always harbored a bit of resentment towards the man she'd never met, but this new information confuses her and tangles her emotions.

Education is also an ongoing theme as Emily and Shona visit the library in an effort to learn more about her history. Though the methods of storing information and retrieval are different, the need to document and remember history is one commonality between the species.

Identity and self-image are themes also as Emily tries to process the information she's been given. Having always believed her father had deserted her and her mother, Emily had seen herself as unworthy of her father's love, seeing his departure as abandonment of her and her mother. Now, she's learned that her father may be alive, and may have loved her enough to want to abandon his own species, but was taken before he could.

Discussion Question 1

Why does Emily become so fearful as they explore *The Voyager*, and how does that differ from her initial impressions?



Discussion Question 2

What does Emily learn about her family history, and how does that affect how she feels about herself and her father?

Discussion Question 3

What events occurred that Neptune believed would endanger the merpeople and how did he respond?

Vocabulary

luminous, transformation, crevices, charisma, scepter, unfathomable



Chapter Seven

Summary

At breakfast the following morning, Emily asks her mother why she never speaks of her father. For a time, she doesn't answer, and then finally admits that she doesn't know what to say. She admits that she wants to tell Emily about him, but the embarrassing truth is that she can't remember, claiming her memories disappeared just as he had.

Emily backs down immediately, but her mother insists that she truly wants to remember, but she has only vague memories of the man she married and they disappear as well. She feels like a terrible mother but Emily reassures her that isn't the truth. She tells her mother again that it doesn't matter and then distracts her by asking her for pocket money.

Emily rides her bike to the end of the pier and is approached by Mr. Beeston who asks how her mother is. Emily tells Mr. Beeston that she'd asked her mother about her father, and his attitude changes. He questions her about her mother's memories, and when Emily tells him she has none, he relaxes again. Emily asks him if he can help her and he grabs her by the elbow saying it's time they had a chat. Emily tries to shake him off, but his grip is strong.

He marches Emily to the end of the promenade before letting her sit. Then he tells her what he knows. He and Emily's father had been like brothers, he tells her, but meeting her mother had changed him. From then on her father spent all of his time with her mother, he tells Emily, but of course his gentlemanly behavior didn't last. Embarrassed, Mr. Beeston admits that her father got her mother pregnant and then left her.

Mr. Beeston goes on to add his personal opinion that Emily's father was a 'good for nothing layabout' and describes him as someone who was 'never willing to grow up and take responsibility'. Telling Emily that he'll never forgive her father for what he did, he tells her that her father's actions were despicable. He does, however, admit to travelling the countryside for weeks searching for him, all to no avail. Then Mr. Beeston asks her not to push her mother for any more information as her state is fragile and pressing her could bring more trouble than Emily wants. When Emily agrees, his demeanor changes again, back to the keeper who is coming for his regular Sunday tea with her mother.

For some reason, Emily has a flash of him locking her in the lighthouse, but she shakes it off to deal with the disappointment that Jake couldn't possibly have been her father. Mr. Beeston turns to lock up and realizes a key is missing. He slips back into the lighthouse and closes the door. Emily turns to leave, and sees a key glinting at her. She picks it up and sees two keys one the ring and the key ring is a brass plate with crystals around it that has a something that looks like a pitchfork engraved on it. She knocks on his door to return them, but Mr. Beeston ignores her so she pockets the key and goes home.



Analysis

The family theme continues as Emily asks her mother for information about her father, trying to determine if he was the fabled merman, Jake, who was imprisoned because of his love for a human – her mother. Emily's love for her mother is evident and reinforced as Emily continues to tell her mother that the information doesn't matter to save her mother's feelings.

Hypnosis seems to be a theme that returns here as Emily's mother seems unable to remember anything about her father. The memories are not just vague, but often simply missing. The lack of information she is able to remember seems to support the actions that may have been taken by merfolk.

Friendship is a theme in this chapter also as Mr. Beeston admits to having more than just a passing relationship with Emily's father. He not only tells Emily that they were like brothers, but also admits to being hurt beyond repair by his disappearance. While Mr. Beeston seems sure at this stage that Emily's father left willingly, fearing the responsibility of fatherhood and a wife, the reader is aware that this could easily again be explained by her father's incarceration by Neptune.

Conspiracy seems to be a prominent theme in this section as Emily confronts Mr. Beeston. At first he is anxious and insistent that Emily reveal everything and only begins to relax when Emily tells him her mother remembered nothing.

Mr. Beeston displays agitation when Emily tells him that she asked her mother for information about her father. His reaction is a combination of suspicion and nervousness, and his suggestion that Emily let the matter drop is nothing short of threatening which indicates a deeper knowledge and understanding of the situation, foreshadowing his continued involvement in Emily's life.

Mr. Beeston's unusual behavior doesn't end there helping to create a theme of suspicion. The conversation he has with Emily reveals that he has a much deeper interest in Emily and her mother than Emily previously thought, particularly where Emily's father is concerned.

The key ring Emily finds outside the lighthouse is made of brass and has two keys. The engraving on one side has what Emily describes as a pitchfork, but most readers will make a connection to Neptune, furthering the conspiracy and suspicion the reader will have where Mr. Beeston is concerned.

Discussion Question 1

What does Emily discover about her father from talking to her mother, and what other facts does Mr. Beeston add?



Discussion Question 2

Why is Emily so intent on discovering who her father was and why he left?

Discussion Question 3

What does Emily discover after Mr. Beeston closes the door, and what is unique about it?

Vocabulary

despicable, lighthouse, scientific, engraved, pitchfork



Chapter Eight

Summary

Emily is filled with dread as she walks toward the pool, praying that her secret wouldn't be revealed. Mandy sneers at her, calling her fish girl and trying to intimidate her further. Bob sees Emily and remembering the last episode, he tells her to take her time, but before she can do anything, Mandy pushes her hard enough that she trips and goes into the pool.

Emily swims to the surface, and trying to fight the feeling of her legs joining she struggles to the edge. She manages to drag herself out of the pool just in time and Bob comes to her side immediately. Seizing on an idea, Emily grabs her ankle saying it might be sprained.

Bob asks Emily how she hurt herself, and she almost tells him that she just fell, but decides at the last minute not to let Mandy off the hook. When she tells Bob that Mandy pushed her, Bob announces that neither of them will be back in the pool for the following week. Mandy is sent to sit in a corner while Emily is sent to have her ankle looked at while the rest of the class gets into the pool. As Emily heads for the changing room, Mandy threatens to repay her for telling, saying it just quietly enough that no one else heard.

Emily hangs back as Shona swims ahead to the shipwrecked Voyager and before they get there Emily stops her. She tells her about her conversation with Mr. Beeston, concluding that Jake couldn't possibly be her father. Shona suggests they go anyway, insisting there was something she wanted to show Emily, so Emily relents.

They swim down a dark corridor and Shona shows Emily the symbol she saw on the door last time they were there. She tells Emily it is a trident – Neptune's symbol – and he always carried it with him.

Shona tells Emily about Neptune and the feats he is capable of and Emily immediately recognizes the symbol as being the same one that was on Mr. Beeston's key ring. She pulls it out; shocked and even Shona has no idea what to think now. They decide to try the key, and when they do, the door opens.

They swim inside and discover an office and begin looking for something that the other key would unlock. Emily begins to think everything they are doing is a mistake, and turns to tell Shona, knocking the stool backwards with her tail. Behind it is a wooden chest that reminds Emily of Treasure Island. The key goes into the lock and opens the chest. Emily isn't surprised. The chest is filled with files and she grabs a handful. The colors change, going from blue to green as she picks them up, but she hardly notices when she comes to a larger and newer folder that has her name on it.



Analysis

Fear is the first theme in this chapter as Emily once again returns to the pool for swimming lessons. She is terrified that someone will discover her secret and that she won't be able to control her legs or stop them from becoming a tail when she gets into the water. The fear theme continues as Emily and Shona head for the shipwrecked Voyager later on. Emily is terrified, for reasons she can't really explain, but since Mr. Beeston had convinced her that her father had simply run away from responsibility, she sees no reason to examine the wreck further.

Bullying is also a theme as Mandy continues to do whatever she can to agitate Emily or to get her into trouble. This time she pushes Emily so hard that she loses her footing and falls into the water. The bullying continues even after Emily tells Bob that Mandy was responsible as Emily heads to the changing room and Mandy can't help but threaten her on the way by.

Symbols, particularly the trident, are a strong theme in this chapter as Shona shows Emily the symbol she'd seen on the door down the dark corridor they'd gone down the last time they'd come. The trident symbol on the door matches the symbol that Emily had thought was a pitchfork on the key ring that Mr. Beeston had lost.

Legends are a theme as well in this segment as Shona tells Emily some of the ones she's heard surrounding Neptune himself. She claims that he carries a trident with him everywhere; and that Neptune can create islands or as easily, thunderstorms. It is also said that he can turn a person or animal to stone and had done so, now enjoying their statues in his palace, Shona adds.

Engraving is a theme that comes into play where the key ring Emily found is concerned as it seems to match the symbol on the door down the dark corridor in the Voyager. The fact that the engravings match is one that Emily struggles to understand.

The final theme presented in this section is a continuation of the conspiracy theme. Emily discovers a thick folder in a locked wooden chest that is not only newer than the others in the trunk, but also has her name on it.

Discussion Question 1

How does Mandy inadvertently help Emily to keep her secret hidden for a while longer, and what was her real intention?

Discussion Question 2

Why is Emily so afraid of returning to the Voyager and why is Shona determined to go back inside?



Discussion Question 3

What do Emily and Shona discover about the keys and key ring Emily found outside of the lighthouse and why is Emily so unnerved by their discovery?

Vocabulary

ridiculous, verruca, propelled, trident, laminated, slithered



Chapter Nine

Summary

Emily notices another file with her mother's name on it and below that yet another with Jake Windsnap's name on it. Jake is her father. Emily has to know the truth. She begins with her file. Inside is a handwritten note with her initials and the comment 'All clear'. It continues 'no mer-gene identified' and a few other comments that neither Shona nor Emily has any idea what to make of. Continuing, she finds information that confirms Mr. Beeston has been watching her for her entire life.

Emily opens her mother's file next. Inside, there is a notation that claims she is the 'greatest risk to mer-world detection'. It also gives Emily proof that her mother's mind had been wiped. Shona figures that Mr. Beeston must be employed by Neptune and adds that in science they'd learned about memory wipes and how a series of memories require topping up now and then. It dawns on Emily that Mr. Beeston's Sunday visits were for exactly that reason. Emily feels sick.

On the front of Jake's file a note is stuck that says, 'East Wing: E 930', and inside there are what looks like periodic evaluations. The last one includes the notation 'Operation Desert Island' and Shona can hardly believe the confirmation that there really is a place where humans and merfolk can live together.

Emily struggles to make sense of what she is reading as Shona continues to scan through the files. One of them discusses 'Project Lighthouse' and 'siren support available' followed by a note that the previous keeper was drugged and relocated.

Shona looks on the bright side, reminding Emily that now at least she's found her dad, but Emily hasn't found him. All she's found is a file, and since there is no denying that Jake is her father, Emily sees no choice but to go to him. It takes a few minutes to convince Shona who worries that since Emily is only half mermaid, she will struggle with the distance they will have to swim.

Emily manages to convince her but before they reach the half way mark, Emily feels like she is swimming with lead weights on. Shona suggests they rest at a small island nearby and soon they are sitting on an island the size of Rainbow Rock. Next thing Emily knows Shona is shaking her gently, telling her the sun is coming up.

Emily realizes the distance is too far for her to swim. Shona points to a place on the horizon and tells Emily it is the Great Mermer Reef and that the prison is a mile past it. Emily feels helpless. Shona picks up two stones and hands one to Emily, calling it a friendship pebble to signify they are best friends. She promises to always be there for her and to help her find her dad.

They agree to meet Monday after the Diving and Dance display. Exhausted, Emily makes her way home feeling like she's lost her father all over again. Emily remembers



Shona saying that the memory wipes didn't always work if you went near the merfolk areas and all at once she knows exactly what she is going to do.

Analysis

Confusion is the opening theme in this chapter as Emily tries to understand everything she is seeing. In the wooden chest were files with her mother's name, and underneath them, Jake Windsnap. Emily almost can't bring herself to look at them.

Family is an ongoing and growing theme as Emily finally learns without a doubt that Jake is her father. She also learns that he was jailed and the likelihood of reuniting her family is slim.

Lineage is also a theme as Emily begins to understand hers more fully. Her father is one of the merfolk who fell in love with a human, her mother. The merfolk had been trying to control the situation ever since, insisting that merfolk and humankind cannot safely interact.

Spying and intelligence are themes used frequently throughout this chapter as Emily learns just how involved Mr. Beeston was in controlling their lives. The files clearly indicate his involvement for years and confirm that he used the memory drug on Emily's mother to make her forget her husband.

Water continues to be a theme in this segment, but rather than as a source of joy, or grace, it becomes a barrier that exists between Emily and her father. The distance is too great for Emily to swim across, and is even more than Shona thinks she can do.

Friendship is also ongoing as a theme in this segment as Emily uses her friendship with Shona as leverage to get her to agree to go with her to try to rescue Jake, or see him at the very least.

When their efforts to swim to the prison end in disappointment, Shona finds two small pebbles in the water that look very similar and gives one to Emily. Calling them friendship pebbles, she tells Emily that it means they are best friends.

Distance is a theme and a detriment as Emily and Shona try to swim to the prison. They stop almost at the halfway mark, needing to rest and unable to swim the remainder of the way.

Discussion Question 1

What does Emily discover that changes how she feels about her father?



Discussion Question 2

How does Emily respond to information that reveals where her father might be and what happens as a result?

Discussion Question 3

What do the reports about Jake reveal, and what does the last entry foreshadow if anything?

Vocabulary

stalking, administered, supervision, isolation, unreliable, completion



Chapter Ten

Summary

Though Emily knew her mother had only one rule on Sunday mornings and that was to let her decide when they should start, Emily still ignored the rule so that she could escape with her mother before Mr. Beeston came. She wanted to talk to her mother before he did. Emily sits on the bed and calls to her mother. It takes several attempts including promises of tea and toast before her mother actually agrees and gets up. When they are at the breakfast table, Emily's mother asks her what they should do about Mr. Beeston and Emily almost chokes.

Her mother is determined to be back in time and Emily has no choice but to agree, hoping she can stall later. Emily's mother seems to enjoy the ride down the coast road and Emily pays close attention to where they are, trying to get off as close to Rainbow Rock as she can. When they get off the bus, Emily convinces her mother to go down the cliff to the beach and they manage to get down without injury.

Sitting there, looking out at the sea, Emily asks her mother if she believes in mermaids. At first her mother laughs, but then she stops and her face changes. She asks Emily where they are, and insists she's been there before. Her expression is painful as she begins to panic about making it home in time for Mr. Beeston and insisting she has a bad feeling about being there.

They get to the top just as a bus goes by, and they sit and eat lunch while they're waiting for the next one. On the way home Emily tries to talk to her about the way she felt at the water's edge but she can't seem to pull the memory out. She remembers nothing beyond a feeling of overwhelming love followed by a feeling of incredible sadness.

At home Emily's mother puts the kettle on to prepare tea and is about to call Mr. Beeston when he knocks on the door. Angry that they weren't there when he'd arrived at three, he berates them both, concentrating mainly on Emily. Then, suddenly diffused, he gossips with her mother, shares the doughnuts he brought with her and leaves. Emily is surprised because she was sure that he would try to drug her, but she hadn't seen him try anything.

Emily brings up their outing again and her mother's responses are vague and insubstantial. Emily can tell her mother's been drugged but has no idea how it happened. She helps her mother clear up and notices her mother's initials on one of the doughnut bags. She asks why, but of course her mother ignores her observations that separating their doughnuts made no sense. It finally hits her sometime later that the drugs were in the doughnuts.



Analysis

The first theme is family as Emily describes a Golden Rule she was raised on. Every family has a set of standards of sorts that are simply rules of the family. Allowing her mother to sleep until she didn't want to anymore on Sundays was one of the few Emily was raised with and abandons in order to get her mother off the boat before Mr. Beeston arrives for their weekly tea.

The theme continues as Emily tries to talk to her mother again after Mr. Beeston leaves and rather than finding her receptive or reflective like she was during their earlier conversation, Emily's mother is dismissive, unresponsive and disinterested in the entire subject.

Danger is the next theme as Emily struggles to convince her mother to climb down to sea level with her in the hopes that seeing Rainbow Rocks will jog her memory. A moment after Emily's mother begins to remember things, a panic of a sort sets in and her sense that they were in danger has her scurrying for the top of the trail.

Memories and memory wipes are an important theme in this section as Emily's mother struggles to recall anything beyond her impressions and vague to sometimes strong emotional ties. When Emily takes her mother to Rainbow Rocks, her mother is overwhelmed with feelings of love and then with sorrow so deep followed by discomfort and feelings so bad that she leaves, walking quickly back up to the headland. Emily's mother seems to recall bits and pieces until Mr. Beeston comes around and her memory is reduced to ashes again. Emily soon realizes that the drugs Mr. Beeston administered to her mother were hidden in the pastries he brought with him each week and that he had been drugging her for many years.

Insecurities play a minor theme with major implications as Emily asks her mother several times whether or not she is mad at her. Emily's attempts to jog her mother's memory result in reflective silence from her mother that lasts so long that Emily fears she has crossed a line and upset her mother. The subject of Emily's father is one that Emily had always approached with a certain amount of caution and she worries about the impact her questions have. At the same time, her mother has feelings caused by her memory loss that make her feel as though she should have and could have been a better parent, and that her lack of memories where Emily's father are concerned.

Discussion Question 1

What is the Golden Rule that Emily decides to break and why is it so important that she do so?

Discussion Question 2

Where does Emily take her mother and what is the purpose of their visit there?



Discussion Question 3

How does Emily realize that her mother has been drugged again, and what does she realize has been the source of her ongoing drug regiment?

Vocabulary

headland, drivel, eavesdropped, indulge, imagination



Chapter Eleven

Summary

Emily is surprised when Millie arrives on Monday afternoon, and her mother reminds her that she is attending the Bay Residents' AGM and needs to arrive early to set up. Mr. Beeston arrives to pick her mother up, and Emily pulls her to one side and asks her not to go, but without a good reason, her mother won't listen to her.

They leave and Millie settles in to watch Coronation Street and is fast asleep before it is over. Emily surfs channels for a while and one of the programs sticks with her, running around and around in her brain until only a fragment remains. Undo the ropes and go for it. She realizes that while the Great Mermer Reef is too far to swim to, it is certainly within range of a boat.

Emily quietly unties King and as she begins to drift from the pier, she notices Mandy's mother. After she leaves, Mandy herself begins calling her 'fish girl', and asking if Emily's mother knew what she was doing. Holding up her phone, she threatens to call and Emily begs her not to, but then realizes it just doesn't matter. She has to take a chance. She edges the boat out, aiming for the section of horizon that Shona had pointed out to her. King bounces along slowly, and Emily envisions the rest of the journey, seeing in her mind how she'd find Jake in prison, help him escape and they'd be back at the pier before anyone knew better.

Before she can reach the Great Mermer Reef, her mother and Mr. Beeston catch up with King in a motor boat. Mandy had called the bookstore worried sick about her, her mother says. Mr. Beeston insists she stop immediately and Emily reminds him that he is not her father. She accuses him of lying for years, and he defends himself calling Emily's ideas foolish.

The engine dies just as Emily tells her mother that Mr. Beeston isn't who she thinks he is. Her mother reminds her that King is likely out of fuel, since they seldom keep much diesel on board in case of fire. Of course it was Mr. Beeston who told her that it was a fire hazard to begin with. Her mother says she knows Emily is jealous – Mr. Beeston told her all about it, and time freezes as she stares at her mother. Mr. Beeston is just pulling himself aboard King when the boom swings back and sends him flying to the deck where he remains unconscious.

Emily calls to her mother, telling her to climb aboard King, and her mother tells her how sorry she is, saying she understands why they are there. Emily reminds her that it isn't her fault. Mr. Beeston isn't who he seems to be, she adds.

In a shaky voice, she tells Emily that Jake had brought her to this place on their first anniversary, and told her they would take him when they found out, but they loved each other so much that they couldn't stay apart. She can't believe that she's forgotten and



Emily reminds her that it isn't her fault, but she doesn't believe Emily. Her mother checks Mr. Beeston, and unable to find a heartbeat, tells Emily that she thinks they killed him.

Analysis

Frustration is the opening theme in this segment as Emily tries to find a way to expose Mr. Beeston to her mother. She had to find a way to show her mother what Mr. Beeston was up to. Adding to her frustration is the fact that she hadn't found Jake for sure either.

Fear is the next theme as Emily realizes that Mr. Beeston is accompanying her mother to the Bay Residents' AGM. Emily is afraid of him, and can't convince her mother that he is dangerous to them and that he's been drugging her to make her forget about Jake. Emily tries to convince her mother to stay home, but she firmly refuses. Watching television later, Emily sees a program on which a mother overcomes her fears to help her daughter face an operation. The program and subject matter stay with her until she realizes that she has to do the same thing. She has to overcome her fear of failure and of capture, and use King to get to the Great Mermer Reef. When Mandy threatens to expose her plan, Emily is fearful once more, but realizing that she only has one chance to accomplish this task, she continues.

Jealousy is also a theme as it becomes clear that Mandy is more than just a bully. Mandy is so jealous of Emily that she can hardly wait for a chance to tell on "Little miss goody-goody two shoes....," and accusing her of pretending to be innocent, sweet and a show-off. Mandy will do anything to wreck Emily's plans.

Mandy's threat to expose Emily as she takes King out foreshadows an interruption of Emily's plan. Mandy's behavior is predictable based on earlier events and Mandy's eagerness to cause Emily problems at every turn.

Courage is the next theme as Emily unties King and pulls away from the pier, despite her fear and insecurity. She faces her fear, and heads towards the Great Mermer Reef imagining how the rest of the excursion will go.

Family is also an ongoing theme in this segment as well. Emily is consumed with the idea of getting Jake free from jail and bringing him to her mother. She desperately wants to free her mother from Mr. Beeston's clutches and is willing to risk life and limb to bring her family back together.

Anger is also a strong theme throughout this chapter. Emily is angry, convinced that her family has suffered unnecessarily at Mr. Beeston's hands, and rather than continue to be afraid of him, she confronts him, accusing him of lying to her mother for all of Emily's life. She shouts at him, telling him he isn't her father, and has no right to tell her what to do. She asks him what kind of friend lies to his best friend's wife for years and tries to tell her mother that he isn't who he claims to be and is not there to help her.



Control is also a large theme in this segment. Mr. Beeston has done his best to maintain control of Emily and her mother ever since Jake was incarcerated. He drugged, and then lied to Emily's mother for years, controlling what she did and where she went. Mr. Beeston convinced her mother that a few gallons of diesel on King at a time was enough, and more would only cause a fire hazard, but Emily immediately understands that it isn't a fire hazard that he is worried about. Mr. Beeston simply wants to ensure that Emily and her mother don't stray too far from his watchful eyes. Mr. Beeston also tells Emily's mother that Emily is jealous and that is the reason that she is behaving the way that she is. He even adds that Emily may try to turn her mother against him. By doing so, he minimizes Emily's accusations in her mother's eyes, and makes Emily out as a spoiled and self-absorbed girl who needs a father figure in her life.

Discussion Question 1

Why is Mandy so determined to cause Emily problems, and what, if anything did Emily do to incite this behavior?

Discussion Question 2

Why is Emily unable to get to the Great Mermer Reef and in what way is Mr. Beeston also responsible for this shortfall?

Discussion Question 3

What does Emily's mother remember as she is standing on King with Emily, and what does that foreshadow for the future?

Vocabulary

depleted, democratic, navigating, silhouette, contorted



Chapter Twelve

Summary

Emily's mother is stunned by Mr. Beeston's lack of heartbeat. Before anything else can happen, Millie comes out of the side door and goes over to look at him. Opening his coat, she finds an armored vest and wonders aloud why he would need such a thing, realizing that it is the reason that Emily's mother hadn't heard a heartbeat.

The boat lists to one side and Millie orders Emily to take the tiller but the boat continues to sway and dip. After another moment or two, she announces that Mr. Beeston is fine, but needs his chakras realigned. She pulls off his shoes and begins working on his feet, only stopping when he is laughing so hard he is begging her to stop.

Mr. Beeston sits up and tells Mary no harm was done, but Emily doesn't agree. Mary asks Emily what she has against him, and Emily hardly knows where to start. He'd drugged Mary and lied to her for years and he'd been spying on them forever. At first Mary tries to disagree, but Mr. Beeston surprisingly agrees with her, saying there is no point in lying any more.

Telling Mary that it was for her own good, Mr. Beeston tries to explain that the two worlds don't belong together. He tells them it just doesn't work, and he should know, having grown up without a father himself. He confesses that his own father disappeared as soon as he was born and wanted nothing to do with a son that sprouted a tail.

Finally, he tells them that he was trying to save them from the inevitable pain that he knew would come. He adds that loyalty to Neptune and the protection of their species is the only thing that matters. Mary can hardly believe it, beginning to put the pieces together in her mind. She'd wondered what happened to Bernard, she says and then realizes that in all the years Mr. Beeston had been in the lighthouse, they'd never been invited in.

Mary tells Emily that Jake saw her once at Rainbow Rocks and held her at the water's edge, but Mary hadn't let him take her into the water. Perhaps if he had, she says, trailing off and realizing that she'd lost twelve years. Anger boils to the surface and she turns on Mr. Beeston, yelling at him that he had no right and that he was a beast and a despicable worm.

The boat continues to lurch and Emily suggests they forget about Mr. Beeston and concentrate on their situation. He tells them he'll fix it and heads down the boat. Mary isn't convinced that they can find Jake, but Emily encourages her, telling her how close they are. The boat lurches again and Emily notices a fin nearby in the water. Emily begins to pray.



Analysis

Alternative medicines are an opening theme in this chapter as Millie uses reflexology to restore Mr. Beeston's consciousness after examining his chakras and determining that they required realignment. Millie works on Mr. Beeston until he begins to laugh and finally leaps to his feet in order to stop her from continuing.

Honesty is the next theme as Emily confronts Mr. Beeston, accusing him of wiping her mother's memories since she was born, and for spying on them for years as well. In an uncharacteristic moment, Mr. Beeston admits that Emily's accusations are legitimate. He admits to all of it, but claims to have done everything for their own good.

Segregation is an ongoing theme throughout this story, but only comes to light officially in this chapter as Mr. Beeston finally reveals the truth behind his friendship. Telling Emily and her mother that what he'd done was for their own good, he insists that humans and merfolk cannot be allowed to mingle. He justifies erasing memories, claiming that he is only trying to save them from the pain he experienced.

Self-image is also a theme as Mr. Beeston describes what could only have been a traumatic experience in his childhood when he sprouted his tail for the first time and his father left. It is clear that he resents his father's disappearance, and that by leaving him, his father instilled in him a prejudice against relationships between the two groups.

Loyalty is the next theme introduced, and is the reason that Mr. Beeston claims he's done what he has. His loyalty to Neptune and the protection of his species are the only thing that matters in his opinion.

Anger and a sense of loss are prevalent as Mary finally realizes that Mr. Beeston was never a friend, despite his weekly visits. She finally understands why the old lighthouse keeper left in such a hurry, and why Mr. Beeston had never invited her in, although Bernard had regularly. She accuses Mr. Beeston of stealing her life, telling him he had no right to keep her from her husband. When he insists that he was her friend for years, she counters by calling him a despicable worm and a beast.

Family continues to be an ongoing theme as Mary remembers more and more. She tells Emily that Jake had seen her once, and held her to him at Rainbow Rocks. Emily recognizes the danger they are in, and shuts Mr. Beeston out as she asks her mother what they will do.

Overall, this segment deals with revelations and honesty. First, the truth about Mr. Beeston is examined. Mr. Beeston admits his part in keeping Emily and her mother from Jake, all in the name of service to Neptune and merfolk. Then Emily tells her mother that they are close to Jake and that she knows where he is, and when she does, her mother finally realizes that she is a mermaid.



Regret is clear as Mary realizes the full implications of what she had lost over the years since Emily's birth. Clearly, she is only beginning to grasp the ramifications of Mr. Beeston's actions.

Fear is the final theme as they find themselves dead in the water, fins circling. Emily is terrified that they will capsize and be eaten by sharks. Without thinking, Emily prays, although she's never done that before.

Discussion Question 1

How does Millie treat Mr. Beeston, and how does he respond to her approach?

Discussion Question 2

Why does Mr. Beeston finally tell the truth, and what does Mary learn as a result?

Discussion Question 3

Why are Emily, Mary, Mr. Beeston and Millie in danger, and what options do they have?

Vocabulary

beckoning, disorientation, reflexology, realigning, despicable



Chapter Thirteen

Summary

Emily is praying sincerely when her mother interrupts her, and she hears a familiar voice. Shona reminds Emily that it is Monday, and when Emily hadn't shown up at Rainbow Rocks, Shona had gone looking for her. She tells Emily to throw her a rope so she can tow them. Then Emily realizes that she'd been watching Shona's tail earlier, not a shark fin. Emily's mother asks her if Shona is a friend of hers, and then tells Emily they have a lot to catch up with.

Emily worries that her mother will see her as a freak now, but when she asks her, Mary tells her she couldn't be more proud of her. Realizing that Mr. Beeston is gone, they begin looking for him and finally see him near the window in the saloon. He has a large conch shell in his hand, and puts it up to his mouth.

Mary tells her to stay quietly and she slips away, returning a few minutes later with a large fishing net. She motions to Emily and they creep inside to where Mr. Beeston still talks into the shell. Passing her one end of the net, she mouths a countdown and together they manage to wrap him up with it. Emily runs around him, slipping the net under his legs as well, and they tie their ends together securely.

Mr. Beeston struggles and threatens, but Millie warns him that he might hurt himself before she wanders into the galley to make tea. The sea calms and they drink it on the deck, watching the colors sparkle in the sky. Mary remembers all of it, including Jake, and tells Emily a bit about how they met at the yearly regatta. After that, Mary went to the area on shore closest to Rainbow Rocks every night, hoping to see Jake again, and disappointed when she didn't. When she decided to go one last time, just to thank him for saving her life, he revealed himself, having been there every night. Mary didn't know Jake was a merman, but tells Emily that the first time she saw his tail; she fell in love with him, and has loved him since.

After that, Mary left her parents who thought she was losing her mind, and tried to take her to a psychiatrist. They told her that they were moving, and she could come or stay behind. Mary chose to stay behind on the boat and sailed out to meet Jake regularly. She was sure that everything would work out, especially after Emily was born. She admits that Jake had only seen Emily once.

Shortly after, Shona tells them they are almost there, and after asking permission, Emily slips into the water with her, displaying her tail for Mary and Millie to see. Shona and Emily swim to the reef, but can't find a way through the tightly grown coral. Then Shona finds a place that seems weak, and pushing at it she manages to make a hole. Together, they clear enough room for Emily to get through, but Shona is afraid she'll get stuck. She promises to wait for Emily at the end of the tunnel, and Emily thanks her for



being the best friend she could have hoped for. Shona returns the sentiment and Emily swims away, heading to see her father.

Analysis

Fear is the theme carried over from the previous chapter as Emily prays that somehow they will survive the night. She tries to remember the prayers they'd said as children in school but none of them come to her readily.

Friendship takes the place of fear as the next theme when Shona shows up to help. She'd waited for Emily at the rocks, and when she didn't show up for their scheduled meeting, Shona began to look for her. Knowing how badly Emily wanted to see her dad, she figured her friend would be headed in the direction of the prison. Shona offers to tow the boat and Emily confirms their friendship when her mother asks. Shona goes above and beyond the call of friendship when she not only tows them to the reef, but also helps Emily to find a way through the coral and waits for her until she returns.

Communication is a theme on two fronts in this segment as Mary and Millie discover Mr. Beeston talking on a conch shell. His communication foreshadows problems for Emily and for those aboard King as he likely has a direct line to Neptune or his guards. The only other form of communication is the boat's radio, but it had been broken for some time, and Mary kept forgetting to have it fixed.

Consequences are also a theme as Mr. Beeston soon discovers how little friendship exists between him and Mary now that he had revealed himself as Neptune's lackey. At her first opportunity, Mary grabs a net and with Millie, uses it to restrain Mr. Beeston and end his communications.

Teamwork is an obvious theme overall beginning with Shona's help to get King close to the reef, and continuing when she helps Emily to break through the coral wall. Teamwork is also evident when Mary and Millie join forces to tie Mr. Beeston to a chair and end his interference.

Water is an ongoing theme, both threatening and comfortingly familiar. While fearing that King may capsize on the rocks, Millie and Mary hope for the best as Emily gets into the water with Shona. Her experience with water changes immediately from a fearful one to one of warmth and security.

Memory wipes are a consistent undercurrent of this segment as Mary remembers her life and love for Jake. She recalls how they met, Emily's birth, and the true depth of her feelings for him, and resents Mr. Beeston all the more for his interference in her memories and her life.

Love is a prominent theme as Mary remembers her time with Jake; her daughter's birth; and the depth of her feelings for them both. Overwhelmed, she remembers it all now and shares it with Emily.



Coral is a theme of some importance as Emily and Shona search for a way to get through the layers upon layers of coral.

Family is the final theme as Emily finally gets through the coral and heads to the prison to see her dad. She is still somewhat overwhelmed by the idea that she has a dad who loved her and would have been with her but for his confinement in prison. To learn that he was imprisoned for loving her mother is a much more pleasant family history than her former thoughts that he'd simply left, unwilling to deal with a child in his life. Learning that he wanted her, loved her, and still lived are all thoughts that are at once unfamiliar and fill her with hope.

Discussion Question 1

Why does Emily begin to pray, and what happens to save them from the fate they face?

Discussion Question 2

How does Mr. Beeston continue to betray Mary and Emily, and what do Mary and Millie do about it?

Discussion Question 3

Why do Shona and Emily have such a difficult time getting to the prison, and what changes that?

Vocabulary

assemblies, momentum, majestically, regatta, ultimatum



Chapter Fourteen

Summary

Emily swims toward the prison and reaching the front entrance, she sees two hammerhead sharks on guard. She remembers the note saying her dad was in the East wing, and heads that way, searching for another entrance. At first it seems that there are none, but hiding from patrolling sharks she sees an entrance she can squeeze through if she turns on her side.

She gets used to the darkness before moving, and notices a plaque that tells her she is in the north wing. A large merman asks if he can help her and she apologizes and swims away, finally finding the east wing. Hammerheads approaching force her to duck into another door and a voice behind her comments how lucky she was to escape.

She turns to see a merman on a seaweed bed, making a necklace with thread that looks like gold. At first, Emily is afraid of him, but then notices similarities and it isn't long before they realize they've found each other. Jake is amazed to see her, and thinks he is dreaming, but Emily assures him that isn't the case. She tells him about Mr. Beeston's interference in her mother's memories and Jake can hardly believe Mary is still alone and still loves him.

Emily tells him that her mother can't swim so she can't come down to the prison with her. Jake laughs, knowing that Mary not only swam like a fish, but also took sub aqua lessons so she could go underwater with him. He remembers proposing to her on the shipwreck, and Emily again tells him that Mary still loves him. Jake shows Emily a poem called the Forsaken Merman, claiming it is about him, but Emily corrects him. The last line says 'She left lonely forever the kings of the sea' and Emily corrects him, telling Jake that Mary never left the King of the Sea which is the name of their boat, and in that moment she understands why her mother fought so hard to stay there.

Jake hugs her again and warns her that she'll have to leave soon, before the dinner bell rings and the sharks find her. Calling her his little gem, he tells her they'll find a way to see each other again, and opens the door to check the hallway. Emily can't understand why he stays if the door is unlocked, but he shows her the tag on his tail that keeps him confined.

Emily remembers some of the things Mr. Beeston told her, and shyly asks Jake if he wanted her and Jake is stunned. He swims to the bed and hands her a pile of plastic papers, each one containing a poem he'd written for her. A loud bell clangs like a fire alarm, and he gives her the poem, promising he'll find her one day. Before she leaves, he turns around quickly and grabs the bracelet he'd made, asking Emily to give it to her mother and to tell her that he's never stopped loving her. He gives her the poem about the forsaken mermaid asking that she tell her mother not to forsake him. Emily knows she won't, and tells him so.



Emily finds Shona at the tunnel entrance as she'd promised and together they go back to the boat. Mary twists the bracelet on her wrist, asking Emily to tell her everything again. She relates the visit for the fourth time and a loud splash gets their attention as Mr. Beeston, having freed himself, had gone back into the water. He tells them he'd warned them, and vanishes under the surface after telling Mary he was sorry and that he'd remember the good times.

Millie apologizes for loosening the ropes that set him free. Shona returns asking if she can help, but there is no way that she can tow them to shore. A loud voice announces they are surrounded, and before they know it, they are being taken and shoved into a tube leading to a white rubber-like bubble where two masks hang from the ceiling. Emily helps Millie and her mother put them on and puts her arm around her mother, telling her they'll be fine.

Analysis

Self-doubt is the first theme as Emily carefully swims toward the prison where she believes her father may be. She doubts her ability to find him; she doubts his love for her or his desire to see her and filled with this doubt she goes ahead anyway, hoping to make things right between her, her mother and her father.

Water life is also a theme as the author creates a world underwater that is both creative and vast with manta rays, moody-looking fish, and a group of fish that swim together is a group the shape of barrel. Hammerhead sharks are used as guards in this underwater prison. Whale bones are used as bars and all of this is set in a backdrop of multicolored coral reef that stretches for miles.

Self-image is briefly touched on as a theme but important because it reveals Emily's insecurity where her peers are concerned – the incident stemming from her self-consciousness about her small frame. This same small frame is what enables her to swim both through the coral reef and later to fit through the bars that cover the opening into the prison itself. Emily's self-image isn't entirely restored by these two events as is evident when she sees her father and asks him if he really wanted her. It is likely that the story Mr. Beeston told Emily about her father leaving because he didn't want her had long reaching effects in her life.

Family is an important theme in this segment as Emily meets her father for the first time that she remembers, and learns about how her parents met and were then separated. Emily desperately wants to have a relationship with her father and in this segment she is given the opportunity to heal the damage done by Mr. Beeston. It is also important to acknowledge that Emily is able to tell her father that her mother is still waiting for him, and still loves him despite having had her memory wiped for most of the last twelve years.



Jake calls Emily his little gem, symbolizing her precious value to him and his nickname for Mary was Penny, for the luck she brought him, although he admits it wasn't too accurate after all.

Fear is also an ongoing theme as Emily is forced to go forward from the reef on her own when Shona fears she will get stuck in the opening they managed to make. Emily is fearful of being caught, and at the same time she is fearful that she will either not be able to find her dad, or that when she does, her father will reject her. Emily also realizes that she should be more fearful of the other prisoners when she inadvertently makes contact with one before running into her father. The fact that she ends up hiding in his cell is a stroke of good fortune for them both.

Artistic expression is a theme throughout Emily's meeting with her father. When she first meets him, he is passing time by making jewelry, threading colorful beads of some kind onto a golden thread. He also reveals a poetic soul when he shows Emily the stack of poems he'd written during his incarceration – primarily containing prose that reveals the depths of his love for her and for her mother, and the loss he still feels without them.

Family traits are also a sub theme as Emily realizes the similarities that exist between her and her father, beginning with the same deep brown eyes as hers, and the dimple they both have. He also habitually runs his hands through his hair when he is under stress just like Emily twirls her hair when she is anxious.

Love is an important theme in this chapter, Emily finally finding her father and realizing that he loves her and her mother. That love is returned by both her mother and Emily, despite Emily's early shyness where her dad is concerned. That love is apparent on Mary's face and in her demeanor as she prompts Emily to tell her about her visit with Jake over and over again.

Gifts are a small theme with large ramifications. Jake gives Emily the poem he wrote for Mary, asking her to give it to her mother along with the bracelet he was making so that she would know that he still loved her and would find a way to return to her. He also gives Emily a poem that he wrote for her – something she treasures as it provides tangible proof once and for all that Mr. Beeston had been lying to her for her entire life.

Confinement is a theme that connects Jake to Mary and Emily. Jake desperately wants to be left alone to be with his wife and daughter, but is confined because of that love and the fact that it is forbidden. His confinement is harsh when compared to Mary's living conditions, but she is as confined as he is, unable to leave either the boat or the area they live in, although she couldn't remember the reason that it was so important that she stay.

Friendship continues to be a theme in this segment as Shona waits at the coral opening for Emily to return to the reef from the prison, despite the dangers of doing so. Her genuine happiness for Emily when she learns that she actually found her father is just one continuing example of her true friendship.



Treachery is also a theme throughout as Mr. Beeston continues to search for a way to keep Jake and Mary apart in his efforts to be loyal to Neptune at any cost, his desire to help save their species overwhelming his good judgement. Mr. Beeston draws on his own experiences in life using them as a yardstick to measure all others by. He was cast aside as a young man when his tail first appeared and is convinced as such that the human and merman species should never come in contact, let alone mingle. He manages to escape the boat and his restraints by lying to Millie and telling her his bonds were too tight. She loosened them, and he was able to get himself free. His primary concern is to turn them in to the proper authorities.

Incarceration continues to be a theme as well as this segment ends with the capture and incarceration of Emily, Millie, Mary and Shona by Neptune's guards. They are dragged under water and put into a tube where Mary and Millie are given masks to enable continued breathing.

Discussion Question 1

How does Emily get past the hammerhead shark guards at the front entrance to the prison and what self-image issue does Emily see from a different perspective as a result?

Discussion Question 2

What are the surprises Emily encounters when she meets her dad for the first time she can remember, and what is likely the most important information she takes back with her?

Discussion Question 3

How does Mr. Beeston manage to get free, and what happens as a direct result of his freedom?

Vocabulary

calculations, submarine, instinctively, treacle, recoiled, forsaken



Chapter Fifteen

Summary

Emily, Mary, Shona and Millie are separated and put in small cages with little room for more than a bed. Emily passes time counting weeds, limpets and anything else she can find. A guard brings food but Emily isn't brave enough to even try it. She lies on the bed and counts the minutes until a guard wakes her. She is handcuffed and refuses to answer any of her questions as he drags her into a smaller cell.

It isn't long this time before the guard returns and takes her down the long tunnel-like hallways to a big house with marble pillars out front. As the gates open, Emily is taken into the lobby which boasts chandeliers of crystal; trails of shells dangling from silver threads; an underwater fountain and a volcano that shoots out green clouds of light.

The guard informs her that they are in Neptune's palace. He pulls her up through a tube until they reach a trap door which he opens with a push and shoves her inside. Emily enters a room that has glass walls showing a giant fish tank that is filled with a myriad of colorful fish. Another guard shows her where to sit, taking her to the row where Accused is printed.

Merpeople dressed in suits are sitting in front of her, one sporting a trident on his chest. At the front of the room is a golden throne with a back that rises up into three prongs that are filled with coral and pearls. A marble seat and two golden seahorses complete the throne with diamonds covering their tails. Even empty, the throne is intimidating.

Emily hears a commotion and sees her mother brought in and watches as they give her a mask suspended from the ceiling so that she can breathe. Another commotion precedes a chariot of gold towed by a fleet of dolphins. Neptune climbs out, holding a golden trident. The chariot leaves and Neptune takes his place on the throne.

The prosecuting merman is obviously prejudiced against humans as he introduces Mary and Emily as defendants and begins to extol their criminal behavior but Neptune isn't patient or impressed, wanting only the facts. After Mr. Slipreed announces the charges against them both, which includes forced entry into the prison; assaulting Neptune's advisor Mr. Beeston; and damaged a section of the reef, he mentions that Millie and Shona were captured as well. Emily is horrified and the situation doesn't improve when Mr. Beeston is called to testify.

When Mr. Beeston is finished with his testimony, Mr. Thinscale is asked to call his first witness. A guard next to Emily tells her she's on, and Emily copies the protocols she's seen so far and is asked if she understands the charges. She does, and in her defense she begins by telling Neptune and the other merpeople in the courtroom that it is nice to be there. She follows by questioning the laws that forbid people from feeling the way that they do. Love shouldn't be punishable, she insists, and goes on to add that she



didn't deserve to grow up without a father. Finally, admitting she just wanted to see her father, she stops talking and slumps back on her rock to wait for Neptune's decision.

Analysis

Boredom could be considered to be the first theme revealed in this chapter as Emily counts anything and everything she can think of to pass the time in the small cell she is confined to. When she runs out of actual items to count, she counts seconds, wondering how many will pass in the time she is there.

Opulence is the next theme as Emily and the other defendants are taken to Neptune's palace where he holds court. Neptune's palace is huge and has two marble pillars with a golden seahorse on a plinth located on either side of an arched gateway. Crystals and jewels can be seen all the way along the arch and the inside is no less extravagant. Chandeliers hang from the ceiling made of crystals that create small rainbows on the walls around the room and in the center of the room is a volcano that shoots out clouds of light that flow like an underwater fountain over a rocky cauldron. Another room has glass walls that make it appear as though they are in a huge fish tank. Neptune's throne is made of gold, the seat tapering into a trident filled with coral and pearls and the seat itself made of marble. Again, a golden seahorse is located on each side of the throne. Even Neptune's tail is diamond studded.

Power is the theme generated by Neptune's presence in court as it is clear that his Majesty is the ruler under the sea and he has little patience as he sits to hear the case against Emily and her mother as well as Millie and Shona. Neptune himself is an imposing presence, commanding respect and decorum in his courtroom as the mermen who come before him. Each is expected to bend low to the floor and kiss Neptune's tail, similar to the way a king or queen might be greeted or a religious figure of some reputation acknowledged.

Love is the overall theme as Emily and the others battle for their freedom in Neptune's court. The case against them is simple – the broke the law that forbids merpeople and human kind to mix, and had a child. Emily is given a chance to explain herself, and tells Neptune and the court that their law is wrong and that love is something to be cherished and nurtured. She insists that they had no right or reason to keep them apart or to force her to grow up without a father.

Prejudice is also a theme in this segment, and while it was hinted at earlier in the story, there is no way to avoid the prejudice against humans that is displayed by the merman who is acting as prosecutor, Mr. Slipreed when he is even forced to say the word 'human'.

Family continues as a theme throughout this chapter as well as Emily takes the stand on her own behalf, telling Neptune to begin with how nice it is to be with them all where she feels like she belongs, despite the reasons that brought them together. Emily had always felt the lack of family in her life, having lived without her father, her grandparents



and as a result of the constant memory wipes, without her mother for the most part as well. It left her feeling disconnected and separate whereas being in the courtroom with them all gave her a feeling of family and of belonging.

Discussion Question 1

What kind of throne does Neptune have and what is Emily's first impression of it?

Discussion Question 2

What does Mr. Beeston do that angers Neptune and why?

Discussion Question 3

How does Emily plead her case to Neptune and what examples are there of reactions of the rest of the courtroom as she does?

Vocabulary

cauldron, colluded, connived, apprehending, sarcastic



Chapter Sixteen

Summary

The courtroom is silent as Emily and the others wait for a response. When Neptune returns, he calls to Emily and her mother who stand up for the verdict. He announces that they've defied his laws and him and tells them that they have a lot of nerve suggesting that a law he created was wrong. Emily wonders how much time she'll have to serve as Neptune leans forward, but when he speaks again, his voice is softer. He admits that despite everything, they've touched on a situation that is beyond law and therefore beyond punishment as well.

He tells them that although they defied his laws, they will both be released; adding that he won't pretend that he doesn't understand or that he'd never felt that way himself. As such, he turns to Mary and tells her that Jake will be released as well. He adds only one condition and that is that they are to join an island community at a secret location that will be their home from here on and that if they break this condition, they will face a most severe punishment. Neptune asks if they understand his ruling and they are all stunned, all Emily can do is nod.

Another merman stands and asks about the other merchild, Shona, and Neptune announces that she can join them there if she wants, or face a memory wipe. After that, things happened quickly. The guard takes off Emily's handcuffs and a mermaid tells her that her mother will be escorted separately, leading her out to a boat that seems to be something between a submarine and a limousine. A crowd is waiting, and Emily is happy to discover Shona is waiting inside.

The boat shoots forward and soon after heads for the surface. The mermaid shakes Emily's hand and Shona promises to see her soon. Blinking in the bright light on the surface, Emily tries to understand what she is seeing. King is moored just ahead, and her mother is leaning over the side holding Jake's hands. He turns and sees her, letting Mary go and swimming to her. She jumps into his arms, and he calls her his little gem.

Soon reporters cluster around them, asking questions and scribbling furiously. Emily sees Mr. Beeston nearby and asks him for one small favor – a mass memory wipe. She explains what she wants to do and reluctantly he agrees.

Emily waits by the side of the pool at her next swimming class for Bob to arrive, and when he does, she steps up and asks to show him something she'd been practicing. Mandy calls her fish girl again and Emily knows she has five minutes to be herself, to be free. She dives straight down and flicks her tail into the air, spinning faster and faster. Then she swims for the surface and sees thirty stunned faces. Mandy sputters and Emily faces her for the first time, telling her she isn't afraid of her anymore. She is about to tell her a great deal more when Mr. Beeston raps on the door. He comes in and tells



the class that he is there to teach them about lighthouses, but first, he hands iced buns out to everyone in the class.

Emily slips out quietly as Mr. Beeston holds their attention. She mouths a thank you to him on the way by and he nods solemnly in response. That night, Mary, Jake and Emily left for their new life.

Analysis

Crime and punishment are the most immediate themes in this chapter as Emily and her mother quietly wait for Neptune's judgement. Emily is convinced that she will spend years in jail when he first returns and addresses the courtroom.

Compassion is also an obvious theme as Neptune deliberates on Emily's testimony. He begins by addressing their lawlessness, asserting his dominion over them and the laws that govern them, but then Neptune softens and adds that Emily had touched on something that he would be hard pressed to ignore. He couldn't pretend that he didn't understand and as such, he grants them their freedom providing that they are willing to live their lives out together on an island in a secret location.

Love is an overall theme as Neptune addresses the court, suggesting that they can share his decision with their families, telling them that their king is not only firm, but also compassionate. He looks at Emily when he announces that he will no longer punish folk because of who they love.

Friendship is also an ongoing theme as Shona is given the choice of either joining Emily with her family on an undisclosed island, or return to her parents with a memory wipe. It is clear from her attitude that she will choose to join Emily, their friendship too important to let go.

Memory and memory wipes are again a theme as Emily asks a favor of Mr. Beeston. This time, she wants to orchestrate a wipe so that she can regain her sense of self control over Mandy. Emily asks Mr. Beeston to give her five minutes with her swim class before wiping the memory of her truly showing off her tail and putting Mandy in her place, however temporarily.

The press of reporters when Emily and her family are granted their freedom is another simile of the lives of those above and below the water, the author suggesting that paparazzi are as much a part of life below as above. It is one of many similarities between the two worlds which also include courtrooms; prisons; and schools.

Redemption is one of the final themes as Emily has Mr. Beeston perform one more time for her. She wants the opportunity to put Mandy in her place, and to stand up to her, even if it isn't possible to allow her to remember it. As a nod to her forgiveness, he agrees and after she's had five minutes to astound her classmates, he enters to remove the memories.



Family continues to be the overall theme as Mary, Jake and Emily are finally reunited and able to live their lives in freedom together. Emily is overwhelmed to see her mother aboard King, holding Jake's hands and finally manages to put her family back together the way she'd always dreamed. Jake, his lucky Penny and his little gem are able to begin a new life together.

Discussion Question 1

What is Neptune's judgement for Emily and her family, and what affected his decision?

Discussion Question 2

What does Emily do that allows her to put her former life behind her without regret?

Discussion Question 3

What similarities does the author suggest exist between human kind and merpeople and what are the biggest differences?

Vocabulary

poised, ridiculous, confidence, solemnly, mechanical



Characters

Emily Windsnap

Emily is just beginning high school at Brightport. She has just longer than shoulder length brown hair that she usually wears loose. Emily has a secret that she fears sharing with anyone but her readers. Emily is a mermaid, or at least part mermaid. Her mother is human but her father was a merman who fell in love with her, and was eventually arrested for doing so. Emily is a product of their love, but her memories of him vanish when he does, and she lives the first twelve years of her life unaware of the special gift she has. When she discovers her tail during her first swimming lesson, she is terrified that someone will discover her secret and ostracize her.

The first time her tail appears in the pool, Emily is terrified. Afraid to stay in, and equally afraid to get out of the water, she is towed to the shallows by the swimming teacher Bob, who thinks she has cramps in her legs. Her tail disappears and her legs return when she leaves the water, and no one else seems to have noticed. That night, she experiments in the water herself, and discovers a joy in the water that she'd never known before. She hardly wants to return to sleep before school. In the brief time she has before school starts the next day, Emily sleeps and dreams of Bob and another man trying to catch her, calling her a freak and telling her to stop pretending because they know. Finally her mother's voice trickles through, telling her she is going to be late for school.

Once Emily learns the truth about herself, she spends as much time in the water as she can. She meets a real mermaid as she is out swimming who introduces herself as Shona. Emily and Shona become fast friends. Shona takes her to class with her, and when she learns who Emily is, she remembers a story about a merman. Eventually, Emily learns that her father is alive and incarcerated on the other side of the Great Mermer Reef. Emily manages to find Jake, and in an effort to save him manages to get them all arrested with him. She appeals to Neptune himself, and by speaking her mind, she manages to get through to him. Neptune frees her father and decides that they can all live together on a secret island as a family.

Mary Penelope Windsnap

Mary is Emily's mother and works at a second hand bookstore on the promenade. As far as Emily knows, her mother is terrified of the water, and unable to swim. As the story progresses, Emily learns that this is far from the truth, and more a product of the constant memory wipes that Mr. Beeston does weekly on her. Mary eventually remembers Emily's father Jake, and their lives up until the point at which Jake was arrested. She remembers Rainbow Rocks, and how Jake proposed to her on the shipwreck. She even remembers that she took lessons to learn how to swim underwater so that she could spend more time with Jake.



Mary spends most of the next twelve years after Jake is arrested in a fog of lost memories. She develops a fear of the water that keeps her from entering it at all, despite the fact that they live on a boat in the water. Even though she is convinced that she will never enter the water, Mary refuses to move off of the boat or away from the area. Despite Mr. Beeston's constant memory wipes, he is unable to separate her mind from the area where Jake continues to be held.

Jake Windsnap

Jake is Emily's father. A merman, he has short, wavy black hair and wears a sleeper in one ear. Jake is in jail when Emily meets him for the first time that she can remember. He is wearing a white vest under a blue jacket issued by the prison. Jake had seen Emily once when she was just a baby, and held her in his arms, but his arrest soon after ensures that it is the last time he is able to before she comes to him again as a young adult.

Jake is more than a little surprised when Emily shows up and takes refuge in his cell to hide from the hammerhead shark guards as they passed. At first, he thinks he is hallucinating, having wanted to know her for so long that he figured his mind had finally snapped, but at his request, Emily pinches him and proves she is real.

Jake has deep brown eyes like Emily's and his tail is a sparkling purple. Emily notices a dimple appear below his left eye, and realizes that he is her father. Although afraid of him at first, Jake manages to break through her fear by showing her the bracelet he was making, and the poems that he'd written with her and her mother in mind. Calling Emily his little gem, he promises that they'll be together again one day, never considering the possibility that his daughter would manage to free him.

Emily manages to convince Neptune that Jake's continued confinement is a mistake, and after a brief court appearance, Neptune agrees to let Jake return to his family providing that they are willing to live on an island in an undisclosed location.

Charles Finright Beeston

Charles Beeston is an adviser to Neptune and is the lighthouse keeper who comes around the 'King' more frequently than Emily is comfortable with. He has one blue eye and one green eye, and when he speaks to you, he tends to look at you out of the corner of his eyes. He is missing a tooth, and that only matches the missing button on his shirt and his crooked tie.

Mr. Beeston is an adviser to Neptune, loyal and dependable to him for all time. He is a merman himself, although Emily doesn't learn that until he orchestrates their arrest. Mr. Beeston has been responsible for wiping Mary's memory weekly and ensuring that she remembers nothing of Jake and that her daughter shows no signs of becoming a mermaid herself, despite being a cross between human and merfolk just like Emily is.



Rather than tell her the truth and help her through it, he lies to her, telling her that her father couldn't be bothered with her and that he ran out on her.

Mr. Beeston stays close enough to Emily's mother that when she learns Emily has taken King out on her own, he accompanies her to bring Emily and the boat back. His motives are not so pure however as his only interest is in protecting Neptune and the merfolk species at any cost. As such, when they manage to catch up to Emily, he does his best to diffuse the situation, but Emily knows too much. She accuses him of lying and drugging her mother, and finally he simply agrees admitting to his treachery. He can't help but have personal motives in this as he is also a product of a mixed relationship whose father couldn't accept his sprouted tail and left, so now he feels that any mixed relationship is a mistake as a result.

They tie him up in the galley for a time, but he manages to get free and tell Neptune's guards where to find them. Though all are arrested, Neptune frees them after hearing Emily's testimony, but despite their reunion and freedom, Emily hasn't forgiven Mr. Beeston. She gives him a single chance to redeem himself by performing a mass memory wipe for her, and while unorthodox, he agrees.

Shona Silkfin

Shona is the mermaid that Emily meets on the rock a day after she learns she is a mermaid. She is twelve years old and goes to Shiprock School – a mermaid school. She is excited about an upcoming competition, and nervous about the test she has to perform the following day, but Shona loves the subject Beauty and Department. Her teacher has even hinted that she may make a very good siren one day – a dream Shona aspires to.

Shona meets Emily at Rainbow Rocks one day when she is practicing, and they become swift friends. She takes Emily to her school for a day, telling the teacher they are cousins, and they meet regularly at that rocks afterward. Shona gives Emily confidence to accept her tail and herself.

Shona and Emily become such good friends that not only does she risk her freedom by helping Emily to find Jake, but she also participates in his rescue, getting herself arrested in the process. Her involvement is such that Neptune offers to let her join Emily and her family and live with them in an undisclosed location.

Neptune

Neptune is the king of the mermaids, said to be temperamental and powerful. Neptune, Shona tells Emily, makes thunderstorms, and even unleashes sea monsters when angry, but able to calm seas or create new land as easily. He lives in a palace made of gems, coral and gold. Neptune does not allow relationships between humans and mermaids, calling those who are caught traitors and jailing them for endangering their population.



Neptune arrives in the courtroom in a golden chariot filled with crystals and jewels, and pulled by a fleet of dolphins. Neptune has a white beard and stands at least seven feet high. He carries a trident of gold and tolerates little in the way of wasting his time or self aggrandizing, wanting to hear only the facts of the case in front of him.

Neptune has a temper, but is a fair and generous ruler. After listening to Emily's testimony, he deliberates and returns to tell her and her family that they are free to go, and to live together on an island in an undisclosed location with others of their kind.

Mystic Millie

Mystic Millie runs the 'Palms on the Pier' practicing reiki or shiatsu on Emily now and then. Millie often sits with Emily when her mother has to go out. When Emily tells her mother that she is afraid of the water to get out of the next embarrassing swimming lesson, her mother takes her to Millie for hypnosis in an effort to cure her of her fear.

On one occasion that Millie is sitting with Emily on King, she dozes off while watching television and Emily uses the opportunity to take King out to the Great Mermer Reef to look for her father. Millie wakes near the reef to a commotion which includes the arrival of Mary and Mr. Beeston. When Mr. Beeston is confined to the galley, it is Millie who inadvertently frees him, loosening his bonds when he tells her that they are too tight.

Although she is arrested with the others, Millie's memory of the event is wiped so that she can return to her life.

Mandy Rushton

Mandy is another of the young ladies who is attending Brightport High with Emily. She usually sits with Julie during breaks. Mandy, like Emily, lives on the pier with her parents who have a flat above the amusement arcade that they run.

Mandy is jealous of Emily, and uses every opportunity that she can to upstage her, calling her fish girl and other names, trying to embarrass her at every turn. Mandy is a large part of why Emily struggles with peer pressure, and Emily manages to turn the tables on her in the end.

Mandy is one of the students in Emily's swim class who Emily sprouts a tail and performs for before Mr. Beeston does a mass memory wipe to help them forget what they'd seen.

Julie Crossens

Julie and Emily sit next to each other on occasion, although they do not consider each other to be best friends. Julie is the only person Emily would consider a best friendship



with but Julie seems more interested in cultivating a friendship like that with Mandy Rushton.

Bob

Bob is the teacher who was teaching Emily and her class how to swim.

Mrs. Partington

Mrs. Partington is the teacher that Emily writes to pretending to be her mother and hoping to get herself out of the swimming lessons she'd been so eager to have. She is Emily's mathematics teacher, and often jokes about turning a blind eye to a student's infractions getting a laugh for her self-deprecation regarding the glass eye she has.

Cynthia Smoothflick

Cynthia is one of the mermaids Shona tells Emily about, informing her that Cynthia had been named hairbrush monitor instead of Shona.

Mrs. Sharptail

Mrs. Sharptail is one of the teachers at Shiprock School.

Mrs. Tailspin

Mrs. Tailspin is a history teacher at Shiprock School. She wears her hair in a tall bun and her tail is green.

Siren Sisters

The Siren Sisters were a group of mermaids who were responsible for sinking The Voyager. Some of these sisters chose to leave with the crew and were never seen again.



Symbols and Symbolism

The King of the Sea (King)

The King of the Sea is the sail boat that Emily and her family own. It has peeling paint and beds too small to be comfortable in, but it was home for Emily and her mother. The galley or kitchen is in the middle and has a small fridge, a sink and a cooking surface.

Speedo Cozzy

Emily wears a brand new speedo cozzy in the water when she begins her swimming lessons.

Year Seven

The first Wednesday of Year Seven is when Emily takes her first swimming lesson and learns something new about herself.

Jetties

Jetties are located all along the pier and Emily's family's boat "The King of the Sea" is on one side with three others including a white speed-boat and two larger yachts that are not being lived on.

Diving and Dance

Diving and Dance is one of the courses offered at mermaid high school.

Beauty and Deportment

Beauty and Deportment is another course offered at Shiprock School. Shona reveals that she has a test the following day, and that everything from posture to head tilt to brushing her hair the right number of times has to be done just so.

Inter-Bay Competition

The Inter-Bay competition is one that Shona tells Emily about – a competition that Shona will be part of this year.



Siren

A siren is what Shona aspires to be when she is an adult, able to lure fishermen with nothing but the sound of her voice.

Memory Wipe

A memory wipe is something sirens do to fishermen who have been lured by their song so that they won't remember them, steal their fish or learn where they live and is the method by which Mr. Beeston manages to keep Mary from remembering her past.

Splishometer

Shona's father bought her a splishometer for her for her eleventh birthday which accurately measures the distance underwater that Shona swims.

The Voyager

The Voyager is a ship that wrecked in the nineteenth century and is known as one of the merpeople's proudest sinkings. Mrs. Tailspin educates her class as to how the 'Siren Sisters' managed to lure and manipulate the crew for enough time that the ship was lost.

Mermer Prison

The Mermer prison is a labyrinth of caves located near Neptune's palace out beyond the Great Mermer Reef.

Wooden Chest

Emily and Shona discover a wooden chest in the office in the shipwrecked Voyager.

Files

The wooden chest on the Voyager is filled with files – one of them with Emily's name on it.



Key Ring

Emily finds a key ring just outside of the door of the lighthouse after her conversation with Mr. Beeston. She discovers the keys fit a door to an office on the Voyager, and the other key opens the wooden chest inside.

Trident

A trident is the symbol that is both on the door of the office on the Voyager and on the brass key ring that Emily found just outside of the lighthouse. It is also what Neptune carries with him.

Bay Residents' AGM

The Bay Residents' Annual General Meeting is held on Monday evening at the bookshop Emily's mother runs.

Regatta

The yearly regatta is where Mary met Jake after a little two man yacht she was in ran into trouble on the rocks.



Settings

Brightport High School

Brightport is the high school that Emily attends.

Brightport Bay

Brightport Bay is where Emily lives in a boat with her mother, docked on the pier.

World of Water

The World of Water is a place that Emily went to on a school outing and when she changed and swam through the water for a while it reminded her of that experience somehow.

Shallowpool

Shallowpool is one of the mermaid schools that Shona knows of and claims Emily is from so that she can attend classes with her for the day at Shiprock School.

Shiprock School

Shiprock School is the school that Shona attends and is a school for mermaids.

Macefin Wood

Mr. Bird takes his swimming class to Macefin Wood when politics prevent them from swimming on their allotted day.

Rainbow Rocks

Emily first meets Shona on a cluster of rocks that she is sitting on, practicing for an upcoming test. Called Rainbow Rocks by Shona, it becomes the place where the two girls meet up regularly.

Shiprock Bay

Shiprock Bay is the bay next to the one in which the town Emily lives in is located.



The Voyager

The Voyager is a ship that was sunk by the Siren Sisters in the nineteenth century. Some of the sirens chose to run away with crew members rather than disperse them as was the usual course of action.

Great Mermer Reef

Where Neptune's palace is located, the Great Mermer Reef is where the mermer prison is located.

Southpool Harbour

Southpool Harbour is where Emily and her mother took the boat every two years or so in order to have the hull examined.



Themes and Motifs

Merfolk and Humankind

The Tail of Emily Windsnap is a fanciful tale of a young adolescent girl who learns that she is different from everyone else in her class, and in her world. Emily's mother Mary has a fear of water that keeps her daughter out of it as well until she begins high school. She finally convinces her mother to allow her to attend swimming lessons, and during the first one, she sprouts a mermaid's tail. Horrified at first, she is grateful to discover that the tail disappears again when she leaves the water, and that no one in her class had noticed. Claiming her behavior was due to leg cramps, she is excused for the remainder of the lesson, and begins looking for a way out of the next one immediately. Despite her fear of discovery, and the idea that if found out, she would be considered a freak of nature, Emily still wants to know if it will happen again, so late at night, she sneaks out to swim in the bay.

While Emily is socially awkward on land, in the water with her tail, she discovers that she is graceful and adept. The water caresses her, feeling warm and comfortable almost the moment she enters it, and the more time she spends in the water, the more she enjoys it. Having a tail makes it impossible to interact with her peers when water is involved, but Emily doesn't have time to be lonely. She discovers another mermaid singing on a group of rocks, and at first the other girl swims away, but when Emily shows her that she also has a tail, Shona returns and they become fast friends. Shona shows Emily a world she had no idea existed, and is largely responsible for Emily's search for her father and their eventual reunion.

While some believed that merfolk and humankind should never meet, occasional sightings and even relationships between the species occurred, as was the case with Emily. Her mother Mary met her father Jake - a merman - when her boat ran into trouble on the rocks, and their relationship culminates in Emily's arrival, but soon after Jake is arrested for consorting with a human. He spends twelve years in jail before Emily finds him and is instrumental in his release.

Emily manages to convince Neptune that while different, love is eternal and that her parents should be allowed that love. She also insists that she should be allowed to have a father as well. Neptune finally agrees, segregating them to an undisclosed island where other mixed relationships lived in peace.

The Value of Memories

In this story, Emily and her mother live alone on a boat named King of the Sea. Despite a fear of the water, Mary refuses to move them off the boat or leave the bay that is their home. Mary is a victim of discrimination by merfolk who believe that humankind and



merfolk should never meet. Her brief relationship with Jake produces a daughter named Emily and soon afterward, Jake is arrested for his involvement with Mary and jailed.

Emily's mother Mary isn't allowed to remember the love of her life, her memory wiped by Mr. Beeston - adviser to Neptune himself. She isn't aware of this intrusion; this invasion of her mind. All Mary knows is that Mr. Beeston is a nice lighthouse keeper who is lonely, and she has tea with him once a week to keep him company. Mr. Beeston is such a nice man that he always brings pastries of some kind with him. Much later, Mary learns that the pastries he brought were drugged and stealing her memories from her.

As a result of the drugs, Mary can't remember her husband Jake; or the love that they shared and the future they'd hoped for. She can't remember who Emily's father is, or where he's gone, believing the stories told by Mr. Beeston that he'd run out on Mary when he discovered she was expecting. All of Emily's childhood, she believed that her father didn't want her and had run out on her.

Mary's memories are so vague and fragmented that she often forgets even the important things in life that had nothing to do with Jake. Issues such as having the ship's radio repaired occur to her, but are lost again in the next visit by Mr. Beeston. When Mary is taken to the shoreline near Rainbow Rocks where she and Jake spent time together, her memories cloud and she panics, knowing only that she has to leave the area, especially when Emily begins to pry about her father. Mary has begun to remember however, and once she is at the Great Mermer Reef with Emily, it all comes back to her.

Mary remembers Jake and their love, hating Mr. Beeston for his interference, despite his reasons or excuses. It is clear that while the memories may have been painful for her to have, they would have been less so had she never lost them to begin with. Thankfully, Jake's memory was never wiped and his love for Mary never dulled. When she remembers it all, the only regret she has is the time they've lost.

Love Conquers All

In this story, Emily is a young girl being raised by her mother on a boat called King of the Sea. Emily knows very little of her father, and whenever she questions her mother about it, she is told that there is nothing to say and simply that he left them. Each conversation Emily starts about her father is met with frustration, and vague answers that really answer nothing. Emily loves her mother, but wants to know about her father.

When Emily sprouts a tail in swim class the first time she goes, she is horrified and sees herself as a freak of nature. Terrified that someone will discover her secret, she hides and avoids water, but a part of her is curious as well, so she waits for dark and when her mother is asleep she sneaks out to experiment. As soon as she enters the water and her tail forms, everything changes. She no longer feels like a scrawny preteen, instead swimming with grace, speed and strength that she had no idea she was capable of. Before too long, she swims out of the harbor entirely. That is when she meets Shona,



a mermaid who is practicing on the rocks for a coming exam. Shona tells Emily that her father is imprisoned and has been since she was a baby. All Emily can think of is finding a way to get to him after that, and Shona is instrumental there too. At first, they try to swim to the Great Mermer Reef, but the distance is too great so at the first opportunity, Emily unties King and heads for the reef, her babysitter Millie asleep inside.

Despite all of the obstacles, including Mr. Beeston who not only wiped her mother's memories for years but also stayed to ensure their ignorance of the merfolk community, Emily manages to get to the reef, and with Shona's help, find a way through. Still, the odds are against her as hammerhead sharks guard the prison entrance, but Emily finds a grate she is small enough to get through. Finding her father inside is a happy accident as she ducks into his cell to escape patrolling guards.

Finding her father is only part of the challenge Emily faces, wanting only to put her family together again. When Mr. Beeston has them all arrested and brought before Neptune, he seems to have little empathy at first, but Emily summons her courage and tells him that his law is wrong. She insists that love should be all that matters and shouldn't be punishable by a lifetime of imprisonment. To her surprise, Neptune agrees and frees them all, including her father. They are released and taken to an island where more of their integrated kind live proving that even under the sea, love conquers all.

Truth Shall Set You Free

This story is aimed at young adolescents and deals with difficult subjects on a level that they can understand. One of those subjects dealt with is the concept that truth equals justice. In this story, Emily has been lied to her entire life by a man who is the lighthouse keeper in their town, Mr. Beeston. A friend of her mother's, he shows up once a week like clockwork, and always brings doughnuts or pastries of some kind. As the story develops, the reader learns that Mr. Beeston is not what he seems. In fact, he is part of a large cover up that began soon after Emily's birth and continued right up until Emily discovered the truth for herself.

Mr. Beeston drugged Emily's mother for almost twelve years, hoping to keep her from remembering the man she fell in love with or the father of her child. Mary is frustrated by her lack of memory but has no idea that Mr. Beeston is responsible.

Emily continues to dig for the truth, wanting to know about her father and unwilling to accept the lies she'd been told. She learns that he is being held in prison for disobeying Neptune's laws, and sneaks in to see him. Her intention is to rescue him, but Jake tells her that is impossible and sends her away before she is caught, promising he will see her again.

When Emily returns to King, Mr. Beeston crosses them again, calling in their location and intentions. They are quickly arrested, but when Neptune stands in judgement of them, Emily is truthful. Despite her fear and intimidation, she tells Neptune that she



disagrees with a law that punishes love and keeps family's apart. Her impassioned speech touches Neptune and he decides to free them all.

This is a clear message that the truth shall set you free!

Blood Is Thicker Than Water

In a bid to find out the truth about her father, Emily uses every opportunity she has to dig deeper. Her desire to know him had always been there, but she'd always been told that he hadn't wanted her - a fact that bit deep in her psyche. Emily struggled to understand why her father wouldn't want her, questioning the man who claimed to be her father's best friend, Mr. Beeston. He confirms once again the standard story he's always told. Her father didn't want her; didn't love her; ran out on her and her mother and was a louse. Mr. Beeston claims to have searched for Jake in neighboring towns, but found no trace of him, reinforcing that he wanted to get as far away from her and her mother as possible.

Despite learning these 'facts' all of her life, when Emily sprouts a tail for the first time, she learns that not only does she not know everything, but that her father may not have wanted to leave her after all. A mermaid she meets at Rainbow Rocks tells her that her name is familiar and that she believes her father to be imprisoned on the other side of the Great Mermer Reef.

Emily does whatever she has to in order to get close to her father, even taking King out to sea by herself while Millie is sleeping in the galley. Mr. Beeston learns of her intentions and not only follows her out to sea, but finds a way to have her arrested along with her mother, Millie and Shona. While he believes that he is simply doing his job, and protecting his species, Emily is determined to be with her father, and after an impassioned speech to Neptune, she manages to regain his freedom as well as theirs. Her love for her father and her need to bring her family together again gives her the strength and confidence she needs to accomplish her goal.



Styles

Point of View

The Tail of Emily Windsnap is a young adults fiction that is told entirely from the perspective of the main character - a twelve year old girl named Emily. Using a first person perspective, author Liz Kessler weaves a whale of a tale about a young girl who has just discovered that she is half mermaid. This is a legitimate and appropriate narrative to use as Emily is discussion her personal journey from discovering she is part mermaid to rescuing the father she thought long gone.

The narration is consistent throughout, giving the reader insights into Emily's own personal thoughts and feelings but refraining from doing so with the other main characters. Their contributions to the story are confined to their own observations, or Emily's feelings and perspectives where they are concerned.

The narrative touches on the subject of bullying, using the main character as the person who is bullied, but does little to resolve the issue from a structure sense. The author does conclude the story by allowing Emily to reveal herself to her tormentors and despite the fact that Mr. Beeston will wipe their memories directly afterward, it is a way for the main character to get vindication for previous incidents.

For the most part, this character's narration only concerns itself with the present tense, although remorse for time lost and occasional but brief memories are offered. This is in contrast to the traditional method of first person narration which tends to deal more with the past or reflections than the present tense. The narration also includes Emily's dreams and nightmares regarding the changes occurring and her fear of her secret being discovered.

Language and Meaning

The language in The Tail of Emily Windsnap generally employs the relatively unsophisticated language of the 12-year-old girl who is narrating this story. The story-telling is also consistent with this age group, employing slang that would be age appropriate and fit in with the level at which this would be read such as 'wicked' to imply terrific or 'gross' to describe something unpleasant. The main character, Emily, befriends another merchild named Shona who is the same age, and while she uses the same age appropriate slang, the words used are slightly different, reflecting the surroundings that they separately grew up in. For example, Shona uses words like 'swishy' instead of wicked as a slang for terrific and calls Emily a gill-brain in keeping with the fact that she lives under the sea so her experiences and references would effect that.

The reader is given a hint of what reflexology is, although beyond massaging Mr. Beeston's feet until he comes to giggling, little else is revealed. The same can be said for Millie's attempt to hypnotize Emily - the narration revealing only the basics.



The author does a credible job of presenting the novel from the perspective of a young girl, including many of the issues that girls of that age face in school and at home. She also takes Emily into the world of the merfolk, having her share a day in Shona's school and using a variety of creations like plastic coated scrolls that hang from the ceiling for reading. The mermaids described vary from one to another with different colored tail and scales and the class bell is a fog horn. Classes such as Beauty and Deportment and Diving and Dance make up a mermaid's curriculum, and history class teaches how sirens lured ships to their ends and caused sailors to fall in love with them.

Beyond this, the reader is given a lightly glossed over example of what the sea bed is like, and how large and complete the Great Mermer Reef is, but the author takes this opportunity to mention areas in the reef that were dying and crumbling to dust - a nod to acknowledge the deteriorating reefs we are already aware of perhaps.

Structure

The Tail of Emily Windsnap is a fictional novel of one hundred and 25 pages in length. The story is broken up into 16 chapters, numbered 1-16 but without further description. The smallest chapter offered is five pages in length while the longest is ten pages. The average page length in each chapter overall is between seven and eight pages.

Each chapter begins and ends with graphics that depict a bit about the chapter contents such as the first chapter has a drawing of the King of the Sea which is the boat Emily and her mother live aboard. The second chapter shows a drawing of the pier that King is docked at, and that Emily swims out to sea from. A seahorse finishes chapter two, and chapter three shows Emily as a mermaid. Chapter four shows a school of fish, revealing some of what Emily is seeing, and King at night on the way to the reefs in chapter five.

Chapter six shows a door which is representative of the door Shona found and wants to explore on The Voyager and chapter seven shows the seaside town of Brighton Bay presumably. Chapter eight reveals Neptune's trident while chapter nine begins with the trunk that Mr. Beeston had with files on Emily and her family. Chapter ten shows the bench above Rainbow Rocks and eleven shows Mary and Mr. Beeston trying to reach Emily after she leaves the pier with Millie aboard King. Chapter twelve shows the rolling seas Emily tries to navigate while chapter thirteen is an underwater shot. Fourteen brings Jake and Emily together while fifteen shows Neptune's throne. The final chapter, sixteen, shows the island that Emily and her family are relocating to so that they can live happily ever after.

Throughout the story, there are smaller graphics that include fish, seahorses, Emily as a mermaid swimming with fish of different kinds, starfish and even snails, all consistent with the age group this book was written for.



Quotes

Can you keep a secret?

-- Emily Windsnap (One paragraph 1)

Importance: This quote provides the foundation for this entire tale as Emily is about to divulge a secret that will change her life. She is a mermaid.

I'm not a freak.

-- Emily (Chapter 2 paragraph 12)

Importance: This quote is one that comes from Emily's nightmares, beginning when she discovers that immersed in water, she sprouts a mermaid's tail. It reveals the intensity of her fear of discovery, and insecurity.

I've never really been in water - properly - and then when I did, it happened and I was scared, but I'm not now and I wish I'd found out years ago.

-- Emily (Chapter 3 paragraph 25)

Importance: This quote reveals Emily's feelings about her newly discovered appendage, and hints at the degree of loss that constant memory wipes of her mother had caused.

I should have realized that if I was cured I'd have to go swimming again!

-- Emily (Chapter 4 paragraph 10)

Importance: Mary takes her daughter Emily to hypnosis to cure a fear of swimming that Emily doesn't have, and when Emily plays along to keep her mother from discovering her secret, she inadvertently allow hypnotism to 'fix' her, forcing her to endure another fearful swimming class and possible discovery.

Welcome to Shiprock - merfolk style!

-- Shona Silkfin (Chapter 5 paragraph 14)

Importance: Shona takes Emily to her school for a day, and Emily is astonished to discover an entire world of merfolk living beneath the sea. This discovery is important to her self-image because by discovering an entire species like herself, she learns that she is not a freak of nature as she'd thought until now.

Some say it's [the one thing that makes Neptune truly angry] because he once married a human and then she left him.

-- Shona (Chapter 6 paragraph 45)

Importance: Shona explains the reason that she believes Neptune is so against mixed marriages between humankind and merfolk, believing that it is largely due to a mixed relationship he'd had himself, marrying a human who later left him.



You don't remember the man you married?

-- Emily (Chapter 7 paragraph 17)

Importance: Emily prods her mother for more information about her father, trying to discover if he really was a merman, but Emily's mother Mary reveals that although she would love to tell Emily about him, for some reason she simply can't remember him beyond vague impressions.

I'll get you back for this, fish girl.

-- Mandy (Chapter 8 paragraph 20)

Importance: This is an example of the peer pressure Emily faced, and helps the reader understand how the bullying at school affected Emily and her actions. In this instance, Mandy is furious that Emily would tell the truth and reveal that it was Mandy who pushed her into the pool.

One dose is usually enough for a one-off incident - but not for a whole series of memories.

-- Shona (Chapter 9 paragraph 20)

Importance: This information from Shona tells Emily that Mr. Beeston has been drugging her mother on a regular basis for years, and explains her mother's memory losses where her father is concerned.

He has not broken our arrangement once in all these years, and I'm not about to do the same.

-- Mary (Chapter 10 paragraph 18)

Importance: Mary is determined to be back in time for her regular weekly visit with Mr. Beeston - the one in which he's been drugging her for years - unaware that he is one of the reasons that Emily is so desperate to get her mother out of the area and to somewhere that she might remember Jake - Shiprock Bay.

Undo the ropes... and go for it.

-- Television mother. (Chapter 11 paragraph 24)

Importance: This is a fragment of a reality program Emily was watching that sticks with her and inspires her to undo King's ropes and go for it - head to the Great Mermer Reef to find her father.

Do you think there's anything you'd like to share with me?

-- Millie (Chapter 11 paragraph 3)

Importance: Millie comes out of King's cabin to find they are near the Great Mermer Reef and Mr. Beeston is unconscious on the deck.



When you didn't come, I had a funny feeling you'd be doing something like this!
-- Shona (Chapter 13 paragraph 7)

Importance: Shona reveals how true a friend she is when she swims out to the Great Mermer Reef to see if she can help when she realizes that it is likely where Emily has gone after she misses their rendezvous time.

No one does a stretch in this place without going a little bit crazy.
-- Jake Windsnap (Chapter 14 paragraph 40)

Importance: This quote reveals Jake's state of mind when he first sees Emily in the prison, believing that after so long in his cell he is only dreaming or imagining her there.

I haven't done anything!
-- Emily (Chapter 15 paragraph 5)

Importance: Emily is objecting to the fact that she has been arrested for doing little more than loving her father and wanting to be with him - the same crime he was arrested for so many years before.

The three of you will join a community on an island with a secret location.
-- King Neptune (Chapter 16 paragraph 19)

Importance: Neptune frees Emily and her parents, as well as Shona and Millie, and offers Emily and her family the opportunity to live together in an undisclosed location revealing that he understands the importance of love and that it is not a punishable offense.