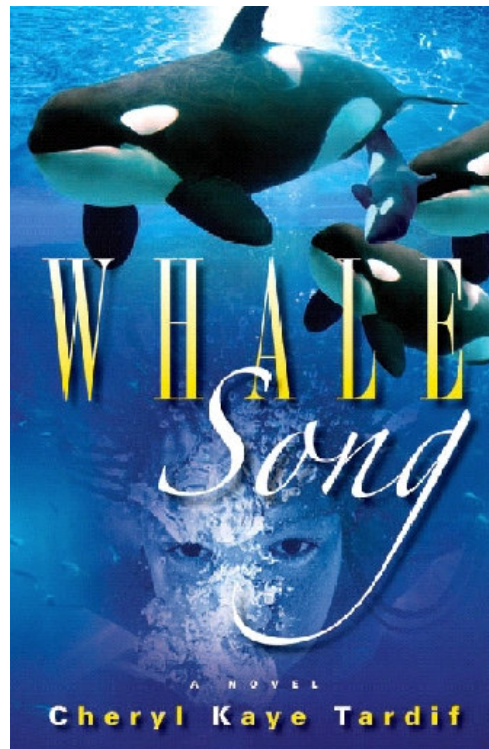


Whale Song

Discussion Guide for Book Clubs & Schools



***Whale Song* is the perfect choice for book clubs and schools!**

Not only is *Whale Song* a “beautiful” and “compelling” novel, it has had an emotional impact on many readers and it explores numerous topics. Reading it, you will learn about living in an isolated town, the lives of killer whales, west coast native traditions and legends, the effects of racism, the impact of bullying and abuse, the choice and consequences of assisted death, the depth of a parent’s love, and surviving great tragedy. In the end, I hope you will come away feeling inspired and hopeful.

This guide was designed to help book clubs, schools and individuals get the most out of *Whale Song*. It will give you some insight into how to interpret this work of fiction and the subtle or not-so-subtle messages found in the book. While this novel was originally marketed mainly for women 30-60 years old, it has now broken all boundaries in age and gender. My youngest reader that I know of is 7 and the oldest is 108. And *Whale Song* has become an international hit.

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This guide can be photocopied or printed as needed, and used in book clubs, schools etc.

Spoiler Warning: The following book club discussion questions on [Whale Song](#) reveal important details from the novel. You should finish reading it before continuing. Schools and pre-teen book clubs may decide to overlook question #10 as it deals with a controversial issue—assisted death.

1. *Whale Song* is very much a story about love and relationships. What are the different types of love described? How does Sarah's love for her parents change throughout the years? How does her love for Goldie and Nana change? How does her love for Adam change?
2. Sarah's relationships with her new best friend Goldie and Goldie's grandmother Nana is one that many can relate to. Have you ever had a best friend like Goldie, one from a different culture? If so, how did that affect your life? What do you like about Nana? Have you ever had a mentor like Nana?
3. The legends that Sarah hears from Nana are important to the novel. Why? What do they add? If they were deleted from the novel, would the story have the same effect? Which legend resonates the most with you and your life? Do you think the messages in these legends are applicable for people today?
4. Other than the legends, did you learn anything else about west coast natives and their cultures? What interesting facts about killer whales did you learn that you weren't aware of before? Have you ever gone whale watching? Do you want to go?
5. Sarah begins to see a wolf early on in the novel. What or who does the wolf represent? Why does it become so important in the story?
6. Sarah is bullied by Annie in school. Have you ever been bullied? How did that make you feel? Have you ever bullied someone else? Why? What kinds of bullying are there nowadays? How can we as a society (or school) prevent bullying?
7. There is much racial tension between Annie and Sarah. Why does Annie act the way she does? How does Sarah's mother help diffuse this situation? What do we learn about her mother?
8. Sarah becomes friends with Annie shortly after rescuing her from drowning. What changes, and why? What made Annie's life so difficult? Do you think that this story depicts the "normal" life for a young native child in that era? Why does Sarah have such a difficult time understanding Annie's behavior? Have you ever befriended someone who came from a troubled home? How did that impact your life?
9. When Sarah's mother becomes very ill, Sarah overhears her parents arguing. What does her mother ask her father to do? Why? How would you feel if you overheard your parents discussing death like this?
10. Discuss your feelings about assisted suicide or assisted death. Is there ever a right time to make this choice? Do we each have that right?
11. In the hospital, Sarah goes into a fugue-like state after her mother dies. Why?

12. Guilt can make people do things they don't want to do. In what ways does Sarah's guilt control her after her mother's death? How does it control her when she is living with her grandparents? How does it affect her as an adult?
13. Sarah's dreams are often omens about her life. How does her dream about Sisiutl and her mother at the end of the novel reflect her own life?
14. Sarah's father is put in prison. Now that you know the truth, do you think he should have told the authorities that he had nothing to do with his wife's death? Why didn't he? Once Sarah learns the truth, do you think she should have confessed to the authorities? Why?
15. Sarah learns about forgiveness in many ways. Why is forgiveness so important in her life? Do you agree that "forgiveness sets you free"? Why is forgiveness important to you? Have you ever found it impossible to forgive someone? How has that affected you?
16. Why is the legend of a killer whale being a reincarnated soul so important to this story? At the end, do you think Sarah's mother was coming to say goodbye? How did the scene with Sarah and her father scattering her mother's ashes affect you? How do you think the author wanted you to feel?
17. Many people believe in soul mates, and Sarah and Adam could be described as such. Why do you think they reunited after so many years? Do you believe in soul mates?
18. How can a teen benefit from reading *Whale Song*? How about an adult?
19. How would you rate *Whale Song* on a scale of 1-5, with 5 being "Excellent"?
20. Is *Whale Song* a novel you would recommend? Who would you recommend it to?

From Cheryl:

*I want to thank you for taking the time to read *Whale Song* and reflect on the answers to the questions in this discussion guide. I hope that you enjoyed what I call "my heart book" and I invite you to share it with friends and family. When you purchased this novel, a portion of the sales went to 3 non-profit organizations, and I hope that you will accept my sincere "thanks" on behalf of them and all the people that will be helped.*

Life is a journey! Enjoy!

~ Cheryl Kaye Tardif

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