

A Dog's Porpoise
Discussion Guide
Grades 4-6

Before Reading: to activate schema, build background knowledge, and set a purpose.

- Preview the content of the story using the author's description on their [website](#).
- Engage your students with an [Anticipation Guide](#) to activate prior knowledge, build curiosity about the topic, and set a purpose for reading.
- Review strong habits of discussion and active listening with students. Teachers are encouraged to use whatever norms they already have within their classroom (*if needed, use [this](#) resource*).

During Reading: to engage students, check for understanding, and make connections.

Chapters 1-3

- How do dolphins communicate with one another? Use details from the text to explain.
- Describe the dynamics of Bangor's pod. How does the author show their relationships?
- Why did the pod relocate? What evidence from the text supports this?
- Which direction did the pod travel, and why was this decision important?
- What do Natalie's internal thoughts suggest happened to her mom? Use text evidence to explain your reasoning.
- What happened to Lars in this chapters? Based on the book's cover and what you've read so far, make a prediction about what might happen next.
- How does Lars view humans? Use at least one piece of text evidence to support your explanation.

Chapters 4-6

- Why wouldn't Natalie's dad let her go in the water to look for Lars? What does this reveal about him?
- How do you think Lars managed to get back on the boat? Support your prediction with evidence from the text.
- Why did Natalie want to meet the porpoise?
- Why do you think Lars dreamed about Bangor? What might this dream symbolize?

Chapters 7 - 10

- How do dolphins sleep? Why is this detail important in the story?
- Why did Mayor Maher want Natalie at the town meeting? What was the significance of this event?
- What issue was discussed at the town hall, and what was the outcome?
- Why did Natalie research marine safety? How does this connect to the story?
- What impression does the town have of Lars? Use evidence from the text.
- Why does the town want to relocate Bangor?
- Describe Natalie's relationship with her mother. Use text evidence to support your response.

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During Reading: to engage students, check for understanding, and make connections. Continued.

Chapters 7 – 10 Cont.

- Why did Natalie ask Sam to find an adult to supervise them? What was her motivation?
- Who helped Natalie and Sam get to Bangor? Why might this adult have wanted to go with them?
- Describe the connection Nancy Jane made between Bangor and Natalie's mom.

Chapters 11 - 13

- What does Bangor think of Sam? Use text evidence to support your response.
- How does Bangor feel about his new friends? Provide examples from the text.
- Describe Bangor's feelings about Perkins Cove. Support your explanation with details from the text.
- Infer what Mr. Prater's conversation with Natalie's mom was about. What do you think happened? Use text evidence to support your claim.
- What did Lars overhear? How might this affect Bangor and himself?
- What is the significance of Lars sleeping with Bangor on the beach?
- How did Nancy Jane show the town the importance of the new animals? Why was this meaningful?
- What did Natalie learn about her mother in this chapter? What did her mother say about Bangor?

Chapters 14 - 16

- How did Bangor and Lars bring the town of Ogunquit together?
- Explain the meaning of Natalie's statement: "Sometimes letting go of something isn't giving up—it's helping." How does this connect to the story's theme?
- How did Natalie plan to reunite Bangor with his pod?
- What else happened at this time with Natalie's family? How are the two events connected?
- Why were the boats so loud near Bangor?
- How was Bangor feeling as the boats approached? Use text evidence to support your response.

Chapters 17 - 20

- How did Natalie's town show their support? Why do you think they acted this way?
- Compare this boat ride to the one Lars took at the beginning of the story. What changed?
- How did Natalie help Bangor during the rescue attempt?
- How did Lars help in this chapter? Why do you think he chose to do this?
- How did Lars bring Natalie and her mom closer together? Use evidence to explain your answer.
- What is the significance of Bangor returning on Natalie's mom's wedding day? How does this event connect to the overall story?

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After Reading: to summarize, question, and reflect.

- What lessons can we learn from Natalie's relationships with the other characters?
- Utilize RIF's What's My Character Thinking? to deepen students' understanding and character development of Natalie throughout the story.
- **Writing Activity:** How did Natalie unite the town of Ogunquit for a common purpose? Describe what she did and explain why it was important for the community.
- **Point of view task:** Throughout the story, Natalie and other characters have differing perspectives on things. Choose **one** example from the story and compare both characters' perspectives.

If your students enjoyed this book...

- Encourage them to continue to discuss it and refer to it in other lessons and conversations.
- Let them explore more about the topic by reading other books with similar themes, structure, characters, or content.
- Read the next book in the series, *Find Your Porpoise*.