

Realistic
Fiction

Dolphin Cove

by Paul Mason

illustrated by Martin Sanders



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PAIRED
READ

Poetry

STRATEGIES & SKILLS

Comprehension

Strategy: Ask and Answer
Questions

Skill: Point of View

Vocabulary

brittle, creative,
descriptive, outstretched

Vocabulary Strategy

Figurative Language

Word Count: 2,170



Education

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A



Essential Question

How are writers inspired by animals?

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Chapter 1

A Lifetime Away

Jenny looked out of the bus window in dismay. The sign above the diner read “Dolphin Cove.” There was no escaping the fact that they had arrived. The town looked dull and gray, but perhaps the window was grimy—or maybe it was just how Jenny felt.

The bus door swung open, and the odor of fish wafted in, wrapping itself around Jenny like a blanket. On the sidewalk, Grandpa and Grandma beamed up at the bus, their arms outstretched. Jenny and her mother smiled back and waved.

“It’s great to be home, Dad,” said Jenny’s mom after they’d climbed into the car. “I just wish we were here under different circumstances.”



“Lots of people are finding it difficult at the moment,” said Grandma, “but don’t worry, you’ll soon be back on your feet.” She leaned over and squeezed Jenny’s hand. “Anyway, we’re glad to have a chance to spend time with you both.”

Jenny replied unenthusiastically, “I’m glad, too, Grandma.”

As the car sputtered along the main street, Jenny’s life back in the city seemed a world away. She knew they’d had few options when mom lost her job and they could no longer afford to live in their apartment, but this place was truly dismal. From what she could see, Dolphin Cove boasted a diner, a general store, a dusty motel, a gas station on the highway, and not much else. “Where do kids hang out?” Jenny wondered.

Grandpa was full of life as they drove to their house. “Now, you’re back in your old room, Kate,” he said to Jenny’s mom. “And, Jenny, we have a surprise for you. We’ve been fixing it up ever since we heard you were coming to stay.” He chuckled quietly. “Wait till you see!”

The promised surprise did little to lift Jenny’s spirits when they arrived at the house. Grandma and Grandpa had converted the old studio at the back of the house into a bedroom for her. There was carpet on the concrete floor, a bookshelf, and a small bed with a nightstand. Jenny did her best to look pleased.



“It took us ages to empty out all the junk,” confided Grandma as they all stood looking at what would be Jenny’s bedroom. “It still needs a coat of paint though.”

“Best thing about it,” said Grandpa, “is that you can sit on your bed and look out at the ocean through the window.”

Jenny nodded hesitantly. Then she asked, “Is there a computer?”

Grandpa’s face fell. “We don’t have one, sorry. But Bill at the diner says you can use his if you need to.”

“The room is really great,” said Jenny’s mom. “Isn’t it, Jenny?” Jenny smiled weakly.

“Now, Jenny, how about you give me a hand with the boat and we’ll go fishing before dinner?” said Grandpa. “You can get settled later.”

Jenny shook her head. “No thanks, Grandpa. I think I’ll just stay here. I’m expecting a call from a friend.”

“Another time, maybe,” Grandpa said with disappointment in his voice.

A Bad Mood

Jenny found starting at a new school even harder than adjusting to living with her grandparents. Her first week there seemed to drag by. Jenny’s new teacher and classmates were nice enough, but she missed her old friends, her old life.

As the weekend approached, Ms. Hoffman handed out a homework assignment. “For next Monday, I want a piece of descriptive writing that really *captures* something,” she said, threading her way between the desks. Then she paused, her eyes glinting with enthusiasm. “It could be a favorite place, a person you know, whatever you like. Just make sure the writing’s vivid—be creative!”

There was a murmur of voices as several students swapped ideas, but Jenny kept to herself as she’d done all week. If she kept her eyes focused on her work, she could almost pretend she wasn’t there at all.

“What do you think you’ll write about?” Jenny looked up to see Ms. Hoffman standing by her desk.

“I’m not sure,” Jenny replied. “Maybe something about where I used to live,” she offered.

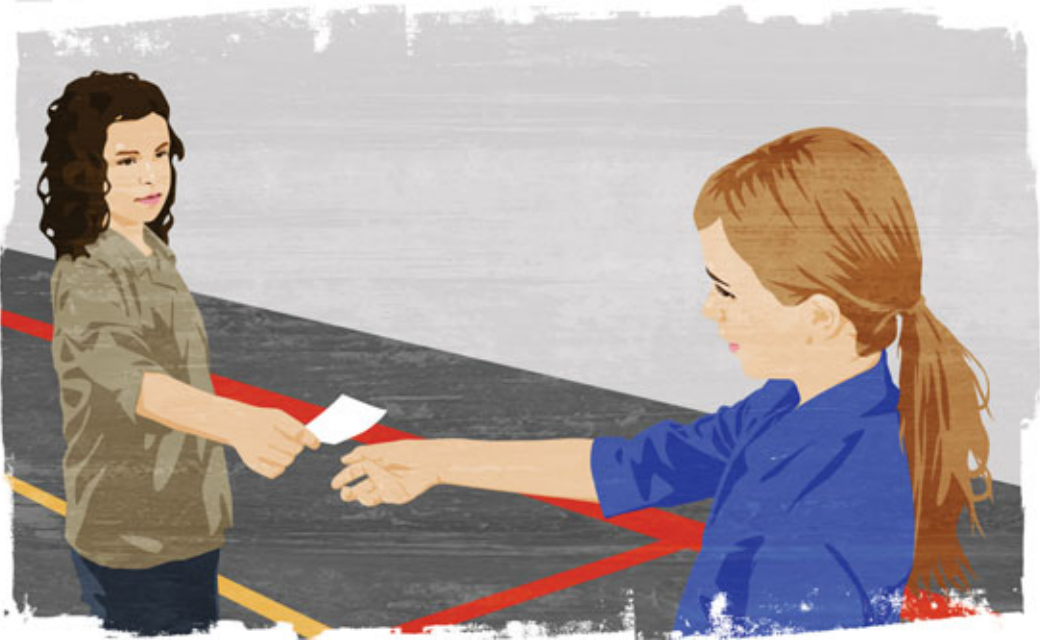
“That could work,” said Ms. Hoffman, smiling. “Then the class would learn a little bit more about you.”

The bell rang, and Jenny watched the other students chatting and joking as they filed out of class. They all seemed so content while she just felt miserable.

At recess, Amber, the girl who had been assigned as Jenny's buddy, ran over to her. "Some of us are going to Pyramid Mall on Saturday with my mom. Would you like to come?" she asked.

"There's a mall?" Jenny responded, surprised.

"It's about a 15-minute drive away," said Amber, tearing a piece of paper from her notebook. "This is my number if you feel like coming along."



Jenny felt embarrassed. Amber had been really friendly all week, and Jenny's responses to her had been brittle. "That would be great," she replied. It felt strange to smile again after so long. "I'll ask my mom."

When Jenny asked her mom if she could go the mall, her mom shook her head. “I know you need to make new friends, but we’re going to be busy this weekend. We need to start painting your room.”

Jenny turned away, her eyes welling up with tears.

So on Saturday, while Grandpa was out on his boat, Jenny and her mom helped Grandma paint the old studio. The two women sang and joked while they worked, exchanging memories, but it was obvious to everyone that a dark cloud was hanging over Jenny.



Out on the Water

That evening, after they had finished painting and had moved the furniture back into her room, Jenny and her mom went for a stroll along the beach. The wind had dropped, and the ocean was as smooth as glass, picking up the cheerful lights of Dolphin Cove farther along the bay.

“This place certainly brings back memories,” said Jenny’s mom. “I can remember spending hours on this beach as a kid. The town seemed more lively back then, but I guess a lot of families have moved away.”

“When are *we* going to move away?” asked Jenny.

Her mom shook her head. “Not for a while yet. It’s going to take some time to save enough money to live on our own again.”

“I miss our old life.”

“I know. Me, too. But just think how lucky we are to have Grandma and Grandpa to help us.”

Jenny shrugged and sighed.

“The two of them can use our support as well, around the house and with Grandpa’s boat.” Her mom gently nudged Jenny. “Maybe even served up with a smile,” she teased.

Jenny stared at the water, knowing her mom was right. She had been pretty gloomy since they'd moved, sulking and bringing everyone down. The least she could do was offer to go fishing with Grandpa. She'd ask him about it when she and her mom got back from their walk.

The next morning, Grandpa was up early, a spring in his step. He and Jenny were heading out after breakfast, and from her bedroom, Jenny could hear him whistling as he clattered around in the kitchen and carried things out to his boat. He knocked on Jenny's door and peered in, his face creased with a smile. "You don't have to get up right away, but Grandma's making some of her famous pancakes."

Jenny dressed and stumbled into the kitchen to find Grandma cooking. "You've got to have a full stomach if you're going to be out on that boat all morning with the captain here," Grandma said happily.

"I've got a feeling we're going to have a good run today!" Grandpa winked at Jenny. "Especially now that I'll have my second in command on board."

Once they were out on the open water, it became clear that the fish didn't share Grandpa's plan. He tried different bait, different rigs, and different rods. He and Jenny swapped sides in the boat—a superstition of Grandpa's—and he lifted the anchor and moved to a different spot. But still they caught nothing.

Jenny tried to look as if she was having fun, but really she was bored, and her mind had wandered away from fishing. She looked out at the ocean and wondered what her friends in the city were doing. Then she spied it—a fin cutting through the water! She saw sunlight gleam off smooth, dark skin before it dipped back beneath the surface.

“Shark! Grandpa, look!” Jenny called, pointing. The fin rose again, slipping through the water like cold steel.

Grandpa stared. “Well,” he chuckled. “That's why the fish are running scared.” He patted Jenny on the shoulder. “It's not a shark, though. See how the fin is curved? That's a dolphin.”



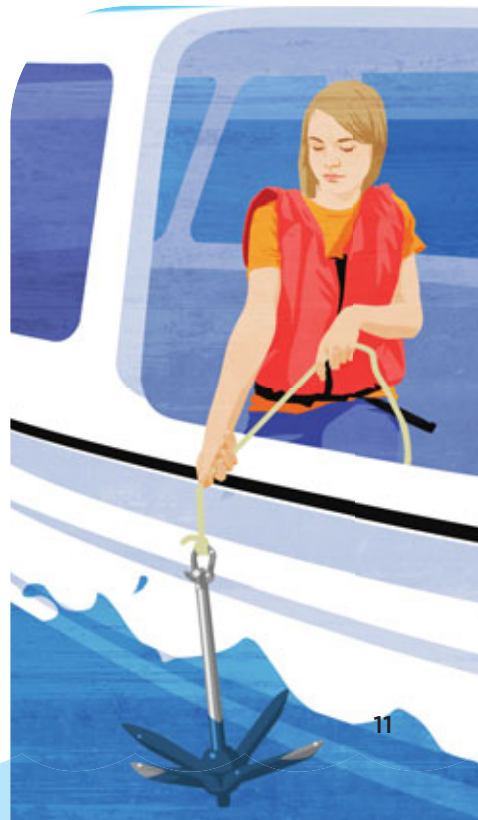
Sticking Close

Jenny gazed across the water at the spot where she'd seen the fin. The sleek shape broke the surface again, and Jenny thought she heard a sigh. Then she saw more fins, four, possibly five, close together. The dolphins' dark bodies rose through the calm water and then slipped back below the surface. The pod seemed to be moving quickly, but she thought the boat could probably catch up with them.

Grandpa read her thoughts. "Why don't we try to get a better view? They won't mind as long as we give them plenty of space."

He fired up the engine, waiting until Jenny had wrestled the anchor on board before giving the motor some gas.

The little boat bounced over the waves, following the pod. The cold spray felt good on Jenny's face, and she smiled at Grandpa.



Grandpa turned off the engine, and the boat came to rest, waves slapping against the side. Jenny spotted the dolphins off the side, a few boat lengths away. Their gleaming bodies arched above the surface as they carved through the water. Jenny wanted to swim alongside them to see how it felt to slip through the water like that.

Suddenly, a pair of dolphins broke away from the pod and whirled in wide circles, their movements urgent and hurried. One darted swiftly toward the boat, the dark shape flying at them beneath the surface. The dolphin looked as though it would hit the side of the boat, but changed direction at the last moment and veered away. Seconds later, it charged at the boat again. “What are they doing, Grandpa?” Jenny asked nervously.

“Do you see that dolphin over there in the center of the pod?” Grandpa replied. Holding the side of the boat, he peered out at the pod. “It looks like it’s having trouble swimming. I think it’s injured, and maybe they’re trying to protect it. I’m not sure they like us being here after all.”



Jenny looked intently at the pod. One of the dolphins appeared to be struggling, and she wondered why she hadn't noticed it before. The dolphin floated near the surface, looking feeble and barely moving its tail. There was another dolphin swimming alongside, nudging it with its snout. The dolphins gave the impression that they were taking turns to support their companion, preventing it from sinking below the surface and drowning.

Grandpa whistled. "I've heard that dolphins take care of each other like that. They'll keep supporting the weak one until it can swim on its own again."

Jenny saw another dark shape dart at the boat and dive underneath it. "Maybe it's time to leave them alone."

"I agree. We don't want them to spend their energy worrying about us," said Grandpa, starting the engine. The outboard motor whined, and Grandpa whipped the boat around in a circle, pointing it back to shore. As the boat skimmed over the water, Jenny gazed back at the dolphins, until the dark shapes in the water had vanished. Her thoughts were in a jumble.

The dolphins reminded her of something. Then it struck her—they reminded her of her grandparents. Jenny and her mom had come to Dolphin Cove because they needed help, and Grandpa and Grandma were there, helping them to keep their heads above water. Why hadn't she realized that earlier?



She watched her grandfather steer the boat across the waves, hat clamped down over his snowy hair, face lit up in the sun. For the first time since she and her mother had arrived at Dolphin Cove, she was content. It felt good to be with her family.

“Now that’s something to tell your friends about at school on Monday,” said Grandpa happily.

Jenny nodded. “*And* it’ll make a good piece of descriptive writing for my homework,” she thought.

“Grandpa,” she said, smiling, “why don’t I clean the boat when we get back?”

Respond to Reading

Summarize

Summarize how Jenny is inspired by the dolphins in *Dolphin Cove*. Use your graphic organizer to help.

Details

↓

Point of View

Text Evidence

1. What features tell you that *Dolphin Cove* is realistic fiction? **GENRE**
2. How does the author show us Jenny's point of view? Use examples from the text to support your answer. **POINT OF VIEW**
3. What does "threading her way between the desks" on page 5 mean? **FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE**
4. Write a description of watching the dolphins from Jenny's point of view. Use details from the text in your writing. Make sure Jenny's point of view is clear, and include figurative language in your writing. **WRITE ABOUT READING**

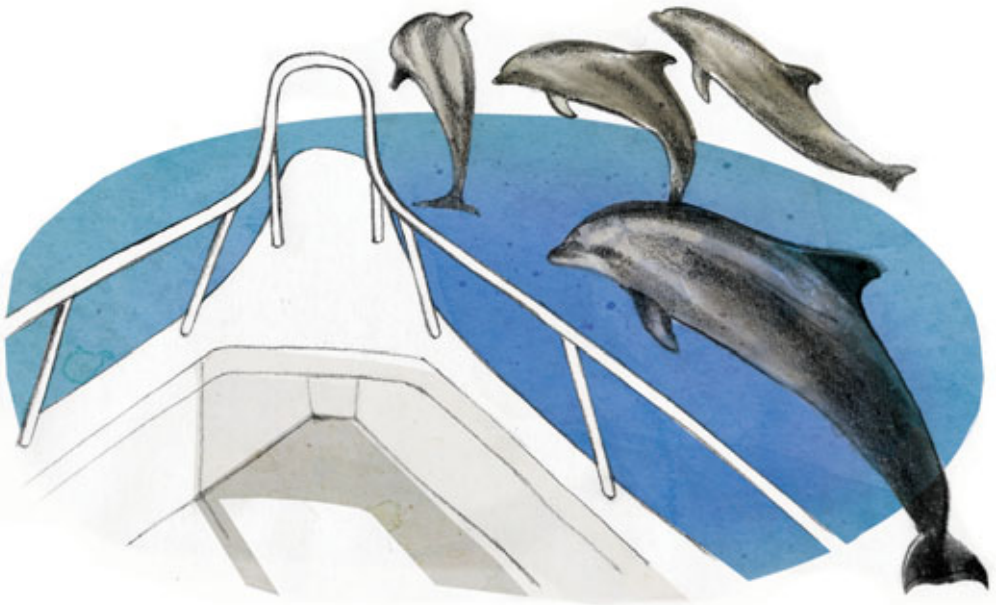


Compare Texts

Read some haiku that have been inspired by animals.

Dolphin

Playful dolphin leaps,
A smooth dart soaring through seas,
Bringing sailors luck.



The illustration depicts a rural scene. In the foreground, a small, light-brown rabbit is shown in profile, nibbling on the grass. A dark, rustic wooden fence with three horizontal rails runs across the middle ground. Behind the fence, the grass is a vibrant green. Two tall, slender stalks of grass with long, thin leaves frame the central text area. The background is a plain, light color, suggesting a bright sky.

Rabbit Field

Farmer's fence stands guard
Rabbit slips in like a ghost,
Nibbles at the grass.



Squirrel

Squirrel craves a seed

Fearlessly springs from high wall

Tree's arm bends to catch.



Make Connections

What event might have inspired the writer of the haiku *Rabbit Field*? **ESSENTIAL QUESTION**

Why do you think dolphins inspired the writers of *Dolphin Cove* and *Dolphin*? **TEXT TO TEXT**

Focus on Genre

Poetry Haiku are short poems that have seventeen syllables in three lines of 5, 7, and 5. Haiku often use figurative language, such as simile and metaphor, to convey a description or a feeling. Sometimes, the writer leaves out words to emphasize the meaning.

Read and Find Each haiku in the paired selection is inspired by an animal. In “Rabbit Fence,” the writer uses a simile to describe the rabbit. In “Dolphin,” the writer uses a metaphor to describe the dolphin.

Reread these two haiku. Look for the simile and metaphor. How does each one describe the animal?

Your Turn

Choose a photograph or illustration of an animal that interests you. Use this as the inspiration for a short poem or haiku.

Remember to use simile and metaphor to convey a strong image of the animal. If you’re writing a haiku, use the conventions described above.

Display your haiku or poem alongside the images you used for inspiration.

Literature Circles

Fiction

Thinkmark

Characters

Who are the main characters in *Dolphin Cove*?
How did Jenny change during the story?

Setting

Where did *Dolphin Cove* take place?
When did it take place?

Sequence of Events

What happened first, then, next and finally in *Dolphin Cove*?

Author's Purpose

Why do you think people write poems?

Make Connections

What connections can you make between *Dolphin Cove* and a time when your feelings about something changed?

Animals All Around

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