

MARA PURL

When Whales Watch

Reading Group Topics for Discussion

1. This novella differs from the novels in the series because it stands alone. How does it relate to the overall series? Do you prefer stories that have a traditional beginning, middle and end? Or do you prefer a serial story that continues through several books?
2. The story focuses on protagonist Miranda Jones, who lives in the world of art, and in the world of wildlife. How would you describe her relationship with the whales in this novella?
3. The sperm whale is said to be one of the most intelligent creatures on the planet. Do you believe this is because of the enormous size of its brain? Or is intelligence more a matter of tuning in to a universal Mind?
4. Do you believe humans can have meaningful encounters with animals, either domesticated or wild? What is a good measure of communication between humans and animals?
5. Miranda is surprised when “Mrs. Lime” appears on her whale watching trip. Did you enjoy this character as comic relief? Or do you feel her fears were warranted?
6. The three men on their own boating adventure each has a reason to be distracted from focusing on their own safety at sea. Yet they each deserve a day off and a chance to relax. Do you think they could have changed the outcome of their near-disaster? Or were they the victims of circumstance?
7. Though much of the story involves recognizable human behavior, the tale also includes an unusual perspective on a wildlife species. Would say that entering the consciousness of the whales makes this a Paranormal novella?
8. Were you aware of cetacean image-processing, echo-location and long-range communication before this novella? Did you learn new things about the sperm whale species? Did you know the book is based on research, or did you think some of it was imaginary?
9. As a writer, Mara Purl devotes a lot of effort to researching, and she also draws on her own experiences. She was a member of a Green peace Voyage to save whales, traveling 6,000 miles in the North Pacific for six weeks. Do you feel she conveyed what it’s like to be aboard a ship?
10. Why is this book called *When Whales Watch*? Do you believe the male whale was truly watching over his pod, and watching the humans? Did he act from an intelligent sense of protection for both fellow whales and humans? Or did he act from pure instinct?

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