

## Literature Circle Questions

Use the following questions and activities to get more out of reading *The Missing Manatee* by Cynthia DeFelice.

1. In the first chapter, what do we learn about the consequences of harming a manatee?
2. Why doesn't Skeet's mom want her son to grow up to be a fisherman?
3. What happens when Skeet brings Deputy Sheriff Earl Wells back to the place where he first found the dead manatee?
4. What is unusual about the behavior of Blink, Dirty Dan's son?
5. Skeet says that he will never forget a single thing about the day he caught his first tarpon with Dirty Dan. Explain what happened to make that day so frustrating, shocking, and thrilling for him.
6. When Skeet finds the dead manatee for the second time in chapter 12, what does he find that implicates Dirty Dan as the killer?
7. Mac and Skeet's mom have serious disagreements about how to raise their son. Compare their differing attitudes toward Skeet.
8. Skeet is fascinated by the large scar on Dirty Dan's face, and near the end of the book, he finally learns how Dirty Dan got his scar. Why is this story so surprising to Skeet?
9. Skeet recalls the story of the time Dirty Dan fought a hammerhead shark for a tarpon. (p. 35) What does this episode show about Dirty Dan's personality?
10. When we first meet Memaw, Skeet's grandmother, she is getting ready to sing in a karaoke contest. What is Memaw like, and what role does she play in Skeet's life?
11. Skeet reflects: "I was always making everybody into heroes or bad guys, but most people—even parents—were muddling around somewhere in the middle." (p. 166) Explain Skeet's thoughts in your own words.
12. After discovering the manatee, Skeet is determined to find out who killed it and hid the body: "Whoever it was ought to be caught and punished, plain and simple." (p. 17) How do his ideas about this change through the course of the book?

13. What life lessons does Skeet learn through his experiences with Dirty Dan and Blink, the dead manatee, and his parents' separation? List four lessons that Skeet learns during spring break.
14. Skeet's mom keeps promising him that after Mac returns from his fishing trip, the three of them will talk about their family situation. What do you imagine Skeet's mom and dad plan to say to their son? How do you predict Skeet will respond to his parents?
15. At the end of the book, Deputy Sheriff Earl Wells decides not to pursue justice for the killer of the manatee. He says to Skeet, "I've been asking myself, what good would it do to follow the letter of the law in this case?" (p. 176) Is Earl's decision a good one? Explain your answer.

*Note: These Literature Circle questions are keyed to Bloom's Taxonomy as follows: Knowledge: 1-3; Comprehension: 4-6; Application: 7-8; Analysis: 9-11; Synthesis: 12-13; Evaluation: 14-15.*

### **Activities**

1. After rereading Skeet's description of the dead manatee, (p. 4) find a photo of a manatee on the Internet or in an encyclopedia. (You might visit <http://www.savethemanatee.org/>). Using your source, write a one-page description of the manatee's appearance, habitat, and behavior, and be ready to share what you learned with your class.
2. You've been assigned to write your own essay on the topic of "Methods of Growing Yourself Up." With Skeet's essay as a model, write your own creative piece. Try to come up with a central metaphor for your essay, just like Skeet does. Skeet's metaphor, for example, is the menu at the Golden Moon Chinese restaurant.
3. Skeet's spring break included many personal highs and lows. Create a line graph depicting Skeet's spring break week, from the day he found the dead manatee to the day he learned the truth behind the manatee's death. Be sure to label all of the high and low points on the graph. When you are finished, compare your graph with a classmate's and discuss.

### **Other Books by Cynthia DeFelice**

*Death at Devil's Bridge*  
*The Ghost of Cutler Creek*  
*The Ghost of Fossil Glen*  
*The Ghost and Mrs. Hobbs*  
*Nowhere to Call Home*  
*Under the Same Sky*