

Summer Reading
English Skills 11-12

WHALE TALK by Chris Crutcher

WHALE TALK is a controversial young adult novel that came out in 2001. Chris Crutcher brings together a unique band of character led by the narrator TJ. These characters form a swim team in the quest to earn a Cutter High School Letter Jacket. The book looks at a number of issues, particularly sportsmanship, abuse, racism, and honor.

Directions: 1. Read the book WHALE TALK(It should be easy to find in libraries and book stores.). 2. Write responses to the questions. Word process or write out the responses legibly in pen. 3. Be ready to turn in your responses on the 2nd day of school.

Please answer the following:

1. List the members of the swim team and describe each of their personalities.
2. List and describe a good teacher/coach and a bad teacher/coach from the novel.
3. Describe TJ's family.
4. What motivates TJ? What are his good qualities?
5. How does the setting of the story in rural Washington add to the plot?
6. What are some issues that WHALE TALK tackles that are relevant to teens' lives?
7. This book, like many others by Chris Crutcher, often hits a raw nerve with his honest use of language and dark situations. Did you like how it was written? Explain. Did some parts bother you? Explain.
8. What is TJ's objective for putting the team together? Is he trying to help other students, prove something to himself, or get revenge? Explain.
9. What did you learn about "bullies" from the novel? What could be done to solve any "bullying" situations at Lutheran West?
10. The families in the novel are not perfect. Describe one of the families, other than TJ's.
11. List three examples of comedy from the book, and three examples of tragedy.

12. Chris Crutcher said when asked where did the title WHALE TALK come from, “It’s a metaphor for telling the truth. The main character’s father talks about how, when a whale experiences anguish or joy, his ‘talk’ or sounds can be heard for hundreds or thousands of miles, and every whale who runs into those sounds knows the truth. That’s pretty much the opposite of how humans do things.” Give two instances where characters communicate through ‘whale talk?’

I hope you enjoy the novel. It will be fun to discuss this book with you when school begins. Have a blessed summer.

22. Georgia Brown gets away with calling TJ's head a "peanut."
23. Children are scared of TJ's dad.
24. Tay-Roy has the most overall talent next to TJ.
25. TJ couldn't attend Charlotte Volare's birthday because of his ethnic background.
26. Georgia Brown is a white racist.
27. Andy Mott gets in trouble at the pep rally for "mooning" the student body.
28. Chris's aunt tells TJ that he is Chris's hero.
29. Andy Mott refuses to swim the same events as Simon DeLong.
30. TJ hates the bus rides to swim meets.
31. Chris tutors Simon DeLong with as biology coloring book.
32. Rich Marshall has abused Heidi.
33. TJ's dad eats French fries on the floor with Heidi.
34. TJ sleeps with Rich's wife Alicia.
35. TJ promises his mom that he will not fight Mike Barbour.
36. Andy Mott uses Tay-Roy's picture as his own as he tries to impress girls on the internet.

Matching: Match the statement to the character saying it. Characters may be used more than once.

- a. Simet
- b. TJ's mom
- c. TJ's dad
- d. TJ
- e. Alicia
- a. Coach Benson
- b. Kyle Couples

37. "As big a smart ass as I am?" (hint: it's a respected adult)
38. "So what were you going to do if you found him?"

39. "Do your best, win the letter, and wear it with pride."
40. "It must be tough being an educator, having to figure out who to believe all the time."
41. "I swear if I'm ever going to get over Rich, it will be because he is dumber than dirt."
42. "Simet and Icko are the only decent adults they've ever known."
43. "I'm telling you, when it comes to protecting folks, I make my own rules."
44. "Dead last, I say."
45. "You have no respect for anything."
46. "Is Heidi ok?"
47. "I love bikes and whales."

Multiple Choice: Choose the one best answer.

48. The swim team trains at a) the YMCA b) All Night Fitness c) the lake d) the Columbia River.
49. Carly vandalized her father's a) Harley motorcycle b) Ford truck c) Lexus d) office
50. TJ's dad, thirty years earlier, a) accidentally killed a child b) robbed a bank c) had a bi-racial child d) received a letter jacket.
51. Heidi's mom is a) Alicia Marschall b) Carly c) Kristen Sweetwater d) Mrs. Benson
52. A football accident paralyzed a) Heidi's father Willis b) Oliver Van Zandt c) John Paul Jones d) Rich Marshall's brother
53. Coach Oliver's nickname is a) Night man b) Swim monster c) Top Driver d) Icko
54. Barbour attempts to sexually attack a) Carly b) Heidi c) Georgia d) Kristen
55. TJ gets a \$273 ticket for a) speeding b) fighting c) swearing d) breaking the dress code.

56. TJ's mom and dad also take in a) Chris Coughlin b) Simon DeLong c) Kristen d) Alicia
57. Kristen Sweetwater becomes the girl friend of a) Dan Hole b) Simon DeLong c) Jackie Craig d) Tay-Roy
58. Andy Mott's amputation of his leg was caused by the negligence of a) TJ's real father b) Coach Benson's poor coaching c) Rance Haskins d) Rich Marshall
59. All of the following get letter jackets except a) Simon b) Tay-Roy c) TJ d) Jackie.
60. Chris Coughlin gives TJ a) his brother's jacket b) his letter jacket c) a t-shirt with a deer on it d) John Paul's letter jacket.

Essay—WHALE TALK

1. Write a paragraph summarizing the end of the story.
2. Did you like how the story ended? Write a paragraph giving your reasons.
3. As a Christian what are two lessons one could learn reading this book. Explain.

