

Teacher Guide

Grades 3–4

# The Music of Dolphins

Karen Hesse

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# THE MUSIC OF DOLPHINS

by  
Karen Hesse

## Teacher Guide

Written by  
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### Note

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**Please note:** Please assess the appropriateness of this book for the age level and maturity of your students prior to reading and discussing it with them.

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## Skills and Strategies

### Comprehension

Prediction, sequencing,  
drawing inferences, cause/effect,  
time line

### Literary Elements

Genre, figurative language,  
character analysis, plot, story  
mapping, literature, theme

### Writing

Grant, essay, descriptive,  
persuasive, brief, informational,  
poetry, journaling

### Critical Thinking

Compare/contrast, recalling,  
summarizing, evaluation

### Listening/Speaking

Oral report, presentation,  
discussion

### Vocabulary

Definitions, prefixes/suffixes,  
context clues, parts of speech

### Across the Curriculum

Social Studies—geography,  
map skills, anthropology,  
immigration; Science—  
psychology, biology, ecology,  
engineering; Art—design,  
illustration, diorama; Music—  
history, playing an instrument;  
Careers—fishing; Drama—  
monologue, performance

9. Is Shay making progress? How do you know? (*Shay is not making progress and may be regressing to her former state. She has become introverted, responding and playing less, and acting less social.*)
10. Why does Mila view her life at this point as hopeless? (*Mila realizes that she may never make enough progress for the doctors to let her live freely. She feels that she will be imprisoned forever.*)

### Supplementary Activities

1. Science: Learn how a television works. Create a diagram of the process, and share it with the class.
2. Careers: Research the life of a commercial fisherman. Learn about the equipment that is used and the business of commercial fishing. Write a short report about your findings.
3. Science: Do research to compare the intelligence of different mammals (dolphins, pigs, dogs, horses, humans, etc.). Create a graphic to share this information.
4. Writing: Write an essay to do one of the following: a) persuade Mila to cooperate and become more social or b) persuade the researchers to give Mila more freedom.

### Chapters Thirty-eight–Page 131

Mila refuses to eat to force the researchers to unlock her door. She becomes friends with Mr. Aradondo. Shay stops making progress and is sent to live on shore. Mila feels more and more alienated from the human and longs to return to the sea. Dr. Beck, Justin, and Sandy take Mila to visit the sea where Mila chooses to return to her dolphin family.

#### Vocabulary

stumbles  
blister  
shriek  
grasp  
churned  
murmurings  
choppy  
mussels

#### Discussion Questions

1. How do the doctors keep Mila alive when she refuses to eat? Do you agree or disagree with the doctor's actions? (*The doctors feed Mila through an IV and feeding tube. Answers will vary, but students will probably realize that no matter what Mila's wishes are, the doctors have a responsibility to keep her alive.*)
2. At this point, how does Mila see herself compared to other humans? (*Mila still does not view herself as completely human. She sees herself as an outsider who observes humans and feels like she may never truly become human.*)
3. Mila says, "My music is fading. In fact, everything is fading" (p. 151). What does she mean? (*Her music in Mila's life is her spirit and will to live. If her music is fading, this means that her strength is waning.*)
4. How has Dr. Beck's view of Mila changed? (*Before, Dr. Beck saw Mila primarily as a subject in an experiment and a way to learn how dolphins communicate. Dr. Beck is finally expressing sympathy for Mila's thoughts and feelings.*)
5. How does Mila use food to bargain with Dr. Beck? (*Mila refuses to eat until the researchers unlock her door. She also asks the doctors to take her to the sea if she eats. Mila realizes that the doctors need her to be alive and healthy for their research, and she uses this power to her advantage.*)



6. How do Dr. Beck's ideas about dolphins differ from Mila's? (*Dr. Beck sees the dolphins as wild animals that could possibly harm Mila, but Mila sees them as safe and familiar—the only family she has ever known.*)
7. How does Mila feel about the human world after she returns to the dolphins? (*Mila occasionally thinks longingly about the human world and especially about Justin, but the feeling passes and she still chooses to stay with the dolphins.*)

### Supplementary Activities

1. Anthropology: Research cases of people who choose to live in the wild. Include how they do day-to-day things like eating, cooking, and sleeping. Create a poster to share this information.
2. Biology: Learn about why sharks beach themselves. Share this information in an oral report.
3. Writing: Mila comments that “To be human is to live for someone else” (p. 173). Write an essay agreeing or disagreeing with Mila's opinion. Give examples that prove your argument.
4. Comprehension: Using the Cause/Effect Map on page 24 of this guide, list all of the causes that make Mila's “music” fade away.

## Metaphors and Similes

A **metaphor** is a comparison between two unlike objects. For example, "he was a human tree." A **simile** is a comparison between two unlike objects that uses the words *like* or *as*. For example, "the color of her eyes was like the cloudless sky."

**Directions:** Complete the chart below by listing metaphors and similes from the novel, as well as the page numbers on which they are found. Identify metaphors with an "M" and similes with an "S." Translate the comparisons in your own words, and then list the objects being compared.

Metaphors/Similes	Identify Objects Being Compared
1.  Translation:	
2.  Translation:	
3.  Translation:	