



Fluke

By Christopher Moore
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Introduction

Biologist Nate Quinn is obsessed with one question: Why do humpback whales sing? All his research in the waters off Maui revolves around his quest to find the answer. He's got help: His loyal partner, photographer Clay Demodocus; his attractive new research assistant, Amy Earhart; Kona, a wanna-be Rastafarian with a knack for intuitive leaps of scientific thinking (even while stoned); a dotty old benefactress; and a ragtag cast of deep-sea divers, fellow scientists, an ex-wife and her girlfriend.

Everything's going swimmingly for Quinn until he spots the strangest thing. Is he losing it, or did he see the words "Bite Me" on a whale's tail? He snaps a picture, but when the film comes back the crucial frame is missing. Quinn gets even more confused when his benefactress, Elizabeth, tells him she got a phone call from a whale, who'd like a hot pastrami and Swiss on rye. Huh?

One afternoon, while trying again to get the "Bite Me" on film, Quinn is swallowed by the "Bite Me" whale, which isn't really a whale at all, but a whale-like ship piloted by humanoid whale-creature (whaley boys) and occupied by thousands of other humans.

While his friends mourn his death, Quinn is spirited from one whale ship to another, and finally to "Gooville," where much is revealed to Quinn. Inextricably imbedded in the science he's so doggedly pursued his whole career, Quinn finds magic. Eventually, he returns to life on top of the sea, instead of beneath it, but nothing ever looks quite the same again.

Topics for Discussion

1. Is the thrill of discovery what motivates scientists to stick to their work, day after day?
2. Sexuality is a prominent theme in the book. Did you find the sexuality of the whaley boys offensive? Funny? Do you think it's a commentary on traditional human sexual mores?
3. The author has a very distinct writing style, especially when it comes to dialogue and his characters' tendency for flip banter, even in the midst of serious conversations and situations. Do you find this treatment distracting, or humorous?
4. Did this book make you think? What are some of the questions it raised for you?
5. Did this book make you laugh? Is the author's unique sense of humor one that you can appreciate? Do you like Moore's writing style?
6. Do you think Moore is delivering an effective message about conservation? Has this book inspired you to change your actions? Or was a concern for the environment one of the things that drew you to the book in the first place?
7. What do you know about male-female roles in other animal populations? Are human gender roles in line with those of our fellow creatures? And are societal changes in the last several decades something we can attribute to evolution?

About the author

Christopher Moore is the author of *Fluke*, *Lamb*, *Practical Demonkeeping*, *Coyote Blue*, *Bloodsucking Fiends*, *Island of the Sequined Love Nun*, and *The Lust Lizard of Melancholy Cove*.