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A Sailing Surfer's Voyage  
of Awakening

# *Swell*



Captain

**Liz Clark**

**Teacher's Guide by Chris Gilbert**



# Introduction

In *Swell: A Sailing Surfer's Voyage of Awakening*, Captain Liz Clark invites the reader aboard as she details her incredible voyage on her 40-foot sailboat, *Swell*. In her riveting memoir, Liz reflects on the power of solitude, the physical and emotional challenges of sailing, the beauty and restorative power of nature, and the importance of pursuing one's dreams. As a classroom text, *Swell* offers students invaluable opportunities to learn from Liz's journey, and it beckons them to examine themselves and their relationships with each other and the natural world. As you guide students through an exploration of *Swell*, this teacher's guide will serve as a helpful navigational companion. This guide features four sections: discussion and writing questions, thematic questions and activities, research topics, and a related resources section. Importantly, this guide has an interdisciplinary focus and features a range of questions and activities appropriate for use with students in a variety of educational settings including high school and college classrooms. The activities and questions featured here can be easily modified and scaled, as they were constructed with flexibility in mind. Additionally, students are encouraged throughout to utilize technology and work together as they engage in a study of Liz's remarkable book. Hopefully, this guide will prove useful for you as you travel alongside your students on this transformational journey.

# Discussion and Writing Questions

These questions can be used to inspire individual reflection or group discussion

## **OPENING IMAGES, AUTHOR'S NOTE, AND LA CAPITANA**

- 1 *Swell* opens with a number of eye-catching images. Which images particularly strike you? Based on these images, what predictions can you make about the story to come?
- 2 What is your reaction, both intellectually and emotionally, to the Author's Note on p. 19?
- 3 On p. 23, in what ways does the environment mirror Liz's internal state? In general, how would you characterize her emotional state as described on pp. 23-24?
- 4 What is your reaction to the flashback sequence on pp. 24-25? How would you characterize the relationship between Liz and her father?
- 5 "The frigid sea washes away my accumulated angst. I'm at home in a four-millimeter wetsuit on my favorite shortboard. Strands of brown kelp wave at me with the surge of a swell. I smile and paddle for the break" (p. 27). What does this passage reveal about Liz and her relationship with the natural world?
- 6 "You, my dear, most certainly should go. Don't wait until life's responsibilities anchor you" (p. 30). What do you think this statement from Dr. Schuyler means to Liz? In what ways does it resonate with you?
- 7 What are some of the initial challenges Liz faces in this opening section of the book?
- 8 What is your reaction to the way the narrative shifts back and forth in time in this section of the book? What are the strengths of this stylistic approach?
- 9 What does the name of the boat, *Swell*, signify? If you had your own boat, what would you name it? Why?

## **LIVIN' THE DREAM**

- 1 “I’m mad with joy and creativity—so in love with surfing, the warmth, the freedom of my new life, and the victory of each small improvement in my surfing skill” (pp. 42-43). Why do you think Liz is so in love with surfing?
- 2 What are “cruisers” (p. 45)? How would you describe the “cruising” life of Liz and Shannon thus far?
- 3 How would you describe Shannon and Liz’s relationship?
- 4 According to Liz, what sort of challenges are wrapped up in the experience of living with someone else in close proximity for an extended period of time? Have you ever had a similar experience?
- 5 In general, how would you characterize Shannon and Liz’s experiences with the Mexican people? What forms of hospitality do you note?
- 6 “The darkness is freckled with twinkling stars and planets, clusters of lights from land, and thick blooms of tumbling phosphorescence in the bow wake. I can’t stop staring. There’s something about the scene that brings all the mysteries of life to mind” (p. 49). Why do you think the natural world often provokes deep reflection and contemplation? Have you ever had such an experience while in nature?
- 7 “The dark night and solitude coax my inner shadows to the surface” (p. 50). What are these “inner shadows”? Can you relate to some of the emotional challenges Liz discusses here? How so?
- 8 What are some of the projects on the boat that generate so much stress for Liz? Relatedly, who does she call for help?
- 9 “I curl up on the passenger seat on the drive home, tears streaming silently down my cheeks. It will be my deepest, darkest secret” (p. 61). Why does Liz decide to have an abortion? What is your reaction to her decision?
- 10 “I have my health back, and my sailing dream awaits. But it’s not just about my own dream anymore...Now I’m on this journey for something bigger than me” (p. 61). How does the purpose of Liz’s journey change after her abortion?



### **BUENA MANIFESTACION & GALLERY I**

- 1 “Although he speaks little, his peaceful presence and simple living move us to question our modern ‘needs’ and lifestyles” (p. 65).  
What exactly do you think Heather and Liz are questioning here?
- 2 In this section, Liz mentions that she tries to see “the upside in mistakes or perceived failures” (p. 65). Is this something you are able to do? What do you think is the value of such a mindset?
- 3 “All the new concepts we’re learning are simple, but breaking my ingrained patterns isn’t” (p. 67). What does Liz mean here?  
What are some ingrained patterns you would like to break?
- 4 What mechanical challenges confront Liz in this section?  
How does she successfully confront them?
- 5 What does the title “The Colombians are Coming!” (p. 72) refer to? What is your reaction to this particular ordeal that Liz and her crew endure?
- 6 What contrasting experiences with nature do Liz and her crew have in this chapter? In what ways does nature show the different sides of its “personality”?

- 7 “...the massive holds full of frozen fish unsettled me. Thousands of motionless tuna eyeballs of all sizes stared back at me, even haunting my dreams that night” (p. 81). What is your reaction to this description of the interior of the tuna ship? In what ways does this description contrast with some of the other “natural” descriptions in the book thus far?
- 8 “Progress they call it” (p. 82). What form of “progress” is Liz referring to here? In what ways is our commonly held perception of “progress” flawed?
- 9 In a romantic sense, who does Liz meet in this section? In what ways is this particular relationship different from others she has had?
- 10 In general, what strikes you about the images featured in Gallery I? Are there particular images you are drawn to? If so, why do you think they call to you?



**BLUE MOUNTAINS CONSTANTLY WALKING**

- 1 “My mother has signed up to join me in crossing the largest expanse of open ocean on Earth!” (p. 103). What emotions does Liz associate with her mother’s decision to accompany her on her voyage? If you were in Liz’s shoes, would you want a companion on such a journey, or would you rather go it alone? Why?
- 2 How would you describe Liz’s relationship with her mother? In what ways does Liz’s relationship with her mother compare to the relationship you have with your parents?
- 3 “Even then, we’re barreling down the steep ramps of water like a school bus with no brakes” (p. 106). What are some of the challenges that confront Liz and her mother during the early part of their voyage?
- 4 Who reemerges in Liz’s mind in this section of the book? What emotions does Liz associate with her thoughts of this person?
- 5 According to Liz (pp. 108-109), in what ways does extended time at sea alter one’s sense of time? Have you ever had a similar experience?
- 6 What epiphany does Liz have while staring at the clouds? What is your reaction to this epiphany?

- 7 “As a tomboy growing up in a culture that values women mostly for their physical appearance, I have never felt beautiful enough or comfortable with my unique femininity” (p. 111). How do you react to this statement? Have you ever had similar feelings?
- 8 After spending so much time with her mother, how does Liz’s view of her evolve?
- 9 “Surrounded by nature’s magic, I wonder about the ways of the West, and why we live like we do back home. Most of my friends are grinding their lives away behind a desk or register, paying off student loans, rent, or mortgages. Most don’t enjoy what they do, but everyone needs an income and the corporate ladder promises credentials and material security. Still, what is security with no freedom? Money with no time? Work without passion?” (p. 126). What is your reaction to this profound passage?





### **WIND IN MY HAIR**

- 1 “I want the freedom to move at a more natural pace. I want time to reflect and work on myself. I want more nature and solitude. I want to live by the moon” (p. 130). What is your reaction to this passage? Have you ever had similar feelings? Do you also crave nature and solitude?
- 2 “Is it okay to be this happy all by myself?” (p. 132). Why do you think Liz asks this question? In general, do you associate solitude with happiness or unhappiness? Why?
- 3 What are some of the advantages of solitude that Liz discovers?
- 4 “I let go of limits I’ve placed on myself for the sake of how other people might judge me, and try to recognize my own self-judgments too. I feel ready to be me, whatever the consequences” (p. 133). How would you describe the “awakening” Liz experiences in this section? To what extent do you allow the judgments/expectations of others to dictate your “limits” and actions?
- 5 During her interactions with Tautu, what does Liz learn about the relationship between the young and the old? What do you think about this?

- 6 Why is one section of this chapter titled “Rotten Reunion”? Regarding her options of staying and facing Gaspar or quickly leaving, what do you think Liz should do? What would you do?
- 7 “...Is just photos. You are real,’ he replies. ‘Don’t you think you’re beautiful too?’ I don’t know how to answer. His question shines a light directly on a sore spot” (p. 141). What “sore spot” do you think Liz is referring to here? Would you say you have a similar sore spot?
- 8 After her break with Gaspar, how does Liz attempt to navigate to self-love?
- 9 “By now I’m resigned to the fact that sailing is often suffering, but I like that the discomfort and unpredictability put me in touch with something primal, real, human. The less privileged majority of humanity confronts these realities daily” (p. 143). What is your reaction to this passage?





### **PRECIOUS TEACHERS & GALLERY II**

- 1 Why is Liz so happy at the beginning of “I-Matang and an Unwanted Surprise”? Put yourself in Liz’s shoes. What do you think your emotional state would be?
- 2 What is an “I-Matang”?
- 3 Are you surprised by Gaspar’s reappearance? Why/ Why not?
- 4 ““You know, my guru explains that we must turn our poison into medicine. Buddhists believe that difficult people and situations in our lives are our most precious teachers. They give us the greatest opportunities to practice our virtues” (p. 151). What do you think about Melanie’s statement? Do you agree or disagree? Why?
- 5 What are some of the *Eight Verses for Training the Mind* Liz references on p. 152? What is your reaction to them? What value do these verses have for Liz?
- 6 What effect has nuclear fallout had on the residents of Kiritimati?
- 7 What do you think about Liz’s decision to start things over with Gaspar?
- 8 What effect does Loreen have on Liz? How would you have handled Loreen?
- 9 In general, what strikes you about the images featured in Gallery II? Are there particular images you are drawn to? If so, why do you think they call to you?

### **AUTONOMY AFAR**

- 1 “I’ve spent a lot of time marveling at the paradisiacal scenery here, which contrasts with the harsh realities of life that I’ve encountered. Without foreign aid, easily cured illnesses go untreated. Kids suffer with horrible skin rashes and chronic diarrhea from the polluted drinking water. Their arms and legs are covered in scars from bug bites. Education is limited to elementary levels. Stories of birthing and infant deaths and amputations are frequent” (p. 178). What is your overall reaction to this passage? In terms of quality of life, how does the description of the I-Kiribati compare to your own?
- 2 According to Liz, what gender roles are apparent in the I-Kiribati culture? How do they compare to the gender expectations present in your community/culture?
- 3 Why do the Kiribati fishermen not like having women aboard their fishing boats? What do you think about this belief?





- 4 “As difficult as this voyage can be, there is something valuable in the process. Appreciation deepens for a prize earned through hardship. And every action along the way becomes sacred” (p. 183). What do you think Liz means about actions being sacred?
- 5 As Liz attempts to become more proficient with meditation, she encounters some challenges. What are these challenges? Have you had any experiences with meditation? If so, what was it like for you?
- 6 What does Liz mean when she says she mowed the “underwater lawn” (p. 186)? Why do you think this task is an important one?
- 7 “I sigh with relief. After the flurry of departure and my exasperating ‘teachers,’ this caliber of solitude and tranquility seems more precious than ever” (p. 187). Who are the “teachers” Liz refers to here? What do you think she ultimately learned from them?
- 8 What does “The Belly of Hell” refer to? How does Liz successfully navigate it?
- 9 How do Liz’s experiences at the Le Meridien compare to her experiences aboard *Swell*?



### **THE BOATYARD**

- 1 What new mechanical issues confront Liz at the start of this chapter?
- 2 How does Liz go about tackling the many maintenance tasks confronting her?
- 3 In what ways does *Swell's* repair process complicate her interactions with her many suitors?
- 4 In what ways do Liz's various mechanical challenges at the boatyard also present opportunities for personal growth?
- 5 "By becoming aware of my own internal struggles, I gain the ability to sense the individual challenges of people around me. I realize they are either going to look at their issues, or keep encountering them again and again in the universal struggle to find meaning, happiness, security, balance, love, and peace amongst the seas of life. I feel less alone when I see that everyone is dealing with similar stuff, and I feel a new softness toward all of them..." (p. 210). What is your reaction to this profound passage? Can you identify with what Liz says here? Why? Why not?
- 6 What are "first-world problems"? In what ways do they contrast third-world problems?
- 7 How does Liz's trip home go for her? Does this surprise you?
- 8 "I quietly cast off *Swell's* lines and disappear across the turquoise lagoon" (p. 212). What emotions do you think Liz associates with *Swell's* departure?

### **TUBE TRIALS & GALLERY III**

- 1 What is the “wave phenomenon at Teahupo’o” (p. 215)?
- 2 Why do you think Liz is drawn to surfing? Why do you think she is particularly drawn to surfing at Teahupo’o?
- 3 What persistent problem on *Swell* rears its ugly head again in this section? How would you go about addressing this problem?
- 4 How does Liz sustain herself financially during this challenging time?
- 5 What setback does Liz experience in “Back to the Blue(s)” (p. 222)? How do you think you would handle such a challenge?
- 6 How would you describe Liz’s relationship with her brother, James? How would you compare Liz’s relationship with her brother with the relationships you have with your siblings?
- 7 What new “friend” does Liz nurture aboard *Swell*?
- 8 “Only when I’m aboard *Swell* or in wilderness do I feel a sense of true belonging. I try not to judge myself for still being single and nearly broke at thirty years old, but I constantly wrestle these irritating subconscious beliefs about needing a permanent partner and an accruing 401(k)” (p. 234). How would you describe the internal struggle Liz refers to here?
- 9 What has Liz learned from some of her past romantic relationships? What is she currently looking for in a romantic partner? What qualities do you look for in a prospective romantic partner?
- 10 In general, what strikes you about the images featured in Gallery III? Are there particular images you are drawn to? If so, why do you think they call to you?



### REVELATIONS

- 1 “I am the raindrop, and the cloud, and the sky, and the setting sun. On this unusual frequency, I feel the connectedness of all things, a sensation of deep belonging. All one and simultaneously separate” (pp. 259-260). What sort of experience is Liz having with nature here? Have you ever had a similar transcendent experience while in the natural world?
- 2 “But a new question burns in me: How do all these concepts I’m learning—Melanie’s wisdom, karma, compassion, inner healing, oneness—how do they all fit into solving the environmental crisis?” (p. 260). How would you answer Liz’s question?
- 3 “It’s an uncomfortable feeling knowing that my light skin somehow links me to the erosion of Polynesian culture” (p. 261). What is Liz referring to here?
- 4 “*Is it okay to test bombs in someone else’s backyard? Is it moral for corporations to sell their processed snacks here without informing Tahitians that it can hardly be considered food, and that the wrappers they arrive in will never biodegrade?*” (p. 261). How would you answer these questions?
- 5 “I can’t remember the last time I watched a day’s full transition to night. How have we become so busy that we hardly notice Earth’s daily miracles?” (p. 263). How do you react to this passage? When is the last time you witnessed a day’s full transition to night?

- 6 When immense loss does Liz experience in this chapter? How does she cope? How do you think you would cope?
- 7 What sort of uncomfortable experiences does Liz have with men in the outer islands? How would you handle this?
- 8 “For millennia, here and beyond, the natural world was seen as a dynamic, interconnected web of life in which humans participated fully, not just as an object of exploitation that primarily exists to meet our needs” (p. 273). What are your thoughts on this passage? How do you define humanity’s relationship with the natural world?
- 9 In what ways does nature provide Liz with a sense of balance and tranquility? Does time in nature make you feel similarly? Explain.





### **DARKNESS AND LIGHT**

- 1 What accident is detailed at the start of this chapter? How would you have handled such a challenge?
- 2 In what ways does Liz's relationship with Rainui take a turn for the worst?
- 3 "My neck break doesn't seem like an accident anymore" (p. 288). What does Liz mean by this statement?
- 4 How do you explain Rainui's deplorable behavior? How would you have handled him?
- 5 What do you think about Liz's decision to attempt to work things out with Rainui?
- 6 During her time living with Rainui's family, what does Liz learn about other women on the island? Does this surprise you? Why? Why not?
- 7 What new furry friend does Liz meet in "New Crew, New View" (p. 294)? What do you think the presence of Liz's new friend will bring to her life?
- 8 "I'm suddenly reminded of my purpose..." (p. 299). According to Liz, what is her purpose? What is yours?

### **VAHINE & GALLERY IV**

- 1 As detailed in the opening section of this chapter, what dietary changes has Liz made? How have these dietary changes affected her health?
- 2 “I continue seeking practical, immediate solutions to making a positive difference in a world where the mightiest powers seem stiffly resistant to bending from our destructive trajectory. I focus on what I *can* do, examining my daily choices and actions” (p. 303). What are some ways Liz positively impacts the environment? Relatedly, what are several behavioral changes you can make to more positively impact the natural world?
- 3 In what ways do Liz’s new healthy habits rub off on her family members?
- 4 “We all deserve this kind of chance to spread our wings and learn to fly” (p. 308). In what ways did Liz provide herself with an opportunity to “learn to fly”? How can you provide a similar opportunity for yourself?
- 5 “May we understand that our health and the health of the planet are inextricably connected. May we find a way to accept that we are multidimensional beings—separate, yet at the same time, energetically, socially, ecologically, spiritually interconnected and dependent on everything else. Everything” (p. 309). What are your thoughts on this passage? Do you agree or disagree with what Liz says here? Why?
- 6 As *Swell* comes to a close, what central lessons can you take away from Liz’s incredible external and internal voyage? In what ways do you believe your own journey can be enriched by your reading of this book?
- 7 In general, what strikes you about the images featured in Gallery IV? Are there particular images you are drawn to? If so, why do you think they call to you?

# Thematic Questions and Activities

This section features a number of questions and activities that connect with three of the book's central themes.

## **THE IMPORTANCE OF CONNECTING WITH AND SUPPORTING THE NATURAL WORLD**

- 1 “Lea and I dive among the plunging rays of light, until the whales surface again ten minutes later. One of them nears, making eye contact while passing slowly. Boundless respect stirs my spirit. I’m suddenly reminded of my purpose: the Earth, the kids, the plants, trees, cows, corals, and whales need my voice” (p. 299).

Invite your students to follow Liz’s lead and use their voices to benefit the natural world. To begin, have your students form up in small groups. Next, have each group select a local environmental issue that would benefit from their actions. Each group should research the issue to determine the history of the problem, its primary contributors, possible ways to address it, and other important items of information. Finally, have your students take action. Some suggested forms of activism include:

- Use a website such as <http://www.change.org> to start an online petition.
- Write Op-Ed articles and send letters to the editors of local newspapers.
- Initiate an e-mail writing campaign directed toward legislators.
- Staff an information booth to inform the local community about the issue.
- Use free resources such as Wix (<http://www.wix.com>), Weebly (<http://www.weebly.com>), or Google Sites (<http://sites.google.com>) to design a website related to the issue. Promote the website through social media in order to publicize the issue and connect with other activists.
- Use free resources such as Canva (<http://www.canva.com>) or Google Docs (<http://docs.google.com>) to create engaging flyers and brochures to be distributed to the public.
- Screen related films in your local community and follow up with audience Q & A.
- Use social media to organize public demonstrations.

- 2 “As we begin to feel part of the wildness around us, we climb trees, bathe in the swirling fluorescent sunset sea, pee off the stern under the moonlight, and sleep outside under a sky of winking stars. Nature restores, soothes, and heals. While attempting to harvest coconuts, catch fish, forage hightide lines, and make mud baths, we talk through our recent adversities and begin to feel new strength and clarity” (p. 65).

Liz speaks here of the importance of connecting with the natural world and receiving the benefits such a connection offers. Have your students use this blog writing activity to help strengthen their connection with the natural world and form a beneficial relationship with it. To begin, have your students locate a safe, natural setting that is unscathed by human activity, and instruct them to spend some time in this location and answer the questions below in writing while they are there. Additionally, instruct students to take several pictures and/or video of their selected natural setting.

- Where are you?
- What do you notice about your surroundings? What do your senses reveal?
- What living organisms do you notice?
- How do you feel in this setting? In what ways does being in this natural setting bring clarity to, and/or heal, various aspects of your life?
- Compare/contrast this location with your daily surroundings.

Next, have each student create a blog by using a free resource such as <http://blogger.google.com> or <http://www.wordpress.com>. On the blog, have students import their writing and associated media. After their blogs are finished, have students share their blog addresses with their classmates and encourage them to comment on each other's work. Also, promote their material to the larger community by posting links to their blogs on your school's website.

- 3 “In every direction our view is an endlessly dynamic canvas of blues and whites. All day long, innumerable indigo windswell peaks, driven by the force of the trades, push west across the sea surface. Whitewater toppling from their crests looks like the wind's shoes sprinting west. Plump white tufts of clouds trot through the unbounded azure overhead. On and on and on” (pp. 108-109).

*Swell* is packed full of beautiful, descriptive passages such as the one featured above, and these passages provide students with opportunities to better appreciate the beauty of the natural world and learn about the power of language. Use this activity to invite students to explore figurative language and heighten their appreciation of nature.

To begin, have students, either individually or in pairs, select 1-2 passages from *Swell* that they find particularly descriptive (you may want to share the passage above as an example). After students have selected their passage(s) from the text, ask them to perform a Google Image Search (<http://images.google.com>) and locate a natural image they believe represents, or corresponds with, their selected passage(s). Next, ask students to integrate the text of their passage with their selected image via one of the free resources listed below:

- Canva: <https://www.canva.com/photo-editor/>
- Adobe Spark: <https://spark.adobe.com/about/post>
- Thinglink: <https://www.thinglink.com>

Give students an opportunity to present their passages and images, and ask them to discuss why they selected them. Also, have them explain what they learned about language use from their exploration of Liz's prose.

To extend this activity, have students compose their own descriptive passages. Next, have them capture corresponding natural images via their smartphones, and have students use one of the resources listed above to create a text/image design. Doing so gives students practice in creative writing, photography, and graphic design, and this activity also requires them to spend time in nature. Invite students to present their work to the class.



### **THE IMPORTANCE OF COMMUNITY AND CONNECTING WITH OTHERS**

- 1 “Even out there alone in the middle of the sea, I am connected to everyone who shaped me and my vessel...The children who gave me bracelets off their arms and unasked-for hugs kept me hopeful when I doubted. Countless people offered a warm meal, an extra hand, or let me fill my water jugs and do my laundry—without any expectations” (p. 309).

As she navigates in and out of various communities, Liz benefits from the kindness of numerous strangers, family members, and close friends. Ask students to take a look back through the text and select 1-2 individuals that demonstrated kindness toward Liz during her journey. After students select the specific individual(s) they wish to focus on, have them respond to the following questions in writing:

- Who did you select and why?
- While drawing on evidence from the text, describe the specific acts of kindness/support demonstrated by your chosen individual(s), and explain how Liz was positively affected by their acts of kindness. How, specifically, did she grow from these interactions?

After giving students time to write and reflect, invite them to share their thoughts with each other through small-group and/or whole-class discussion. Finally, ask students to consider how certain individuals have aided their own navigational journeys, and give students an opportunity to discuss those individuals in their lives, strangers or otherwise, who have greeted them with kindness and generosity.

- 2 “Meeting Dr. Arent H. ‘Barry’ Schuyler was like catching a shooting star. Without his encouragement and generosity this voyage would not have happened like it did” (p. 335).

Throughout Liz’s journey, Dr. Schuyler served as a tremendous role model and mentor. Have students explore the importance of mentorship through this activity. To begin, ask students to look back through the text and select several passages that exemplify Dr. Schuyler’s profound influence on Liz. Ask students to explain the significance of these passages, and have them explore, through class discussion, the specific positive impacts Dr. Schuyler had on Liz.

Next, ask students to reflect on their own lives, and have them make a list of 1-2 mentors who have guided them and served as role models; for each mentor, have students list the specific characteristics they admire. Allow students to share and discuss these lists with their classmates.

Finally, invite students to serve as mentors via their work with one of the following organizations:

- <https://www.volunteermatch.org/>  
A website that lists many volunteer opportunities, including mentorship, throughout the country.
- <https://www.unitedway.org/get-involved/volunteer>  
This resource allows students to view United Way volunteer opportunities, including those for mentoring and youth development, across the country.
- [www.bbbs.org](http://www.bbbs.org)  
The Big Brothers Big Sisters of America website provides access to multiple mentoring opportunities.

While students pursue mentoring opportunities in their communities, have them record their thoughts in a mentoring journal, and ask them to share their reflections with their classmates once their mentorship concludes.

- 3 During her journey, Liz encounters a number of different communities/cultures. Ask your students to form groups and select one of the communities Liz encounters in *Swell*. Once students have selected a community, have them answer the following questions, and ask them to consult *Swell* and other secondary sources as they do so:
- From Liz's experiences with this community, what inferences can you make about their values?
  - What sort of relationship would you say this community has with the natural world? Relatedly, how do they define and measure "progress"?
  - In general, in what ways is this community similar to/different from your own?
  - What environmental challenges is this community facing? How is it being affected by climate change?
  - What lessons do you think Western society could learn from this community?

Next, ask students to use one of the free resources listed below to construct and deliver a presentation on their selected community to their classmates.

- Google Slides: <http://slides.google.com>
- Prezi: <https://prezi.com>
- Microsoft Sway: <https://sway.com/education/>





## **THE IMPORTANCE OF LISTENING TO AND EXPLORING ONE'S SELF**

- 1 “Each of us has a unique journey that is ours to claim. My hope is that by sharing both my inner and outer voyages on these pages, you will be inspired to listen more closely to the yearnings of your heart, to face your inner dragons, and to decide to choose love over fear, again and again” (p. 19).

Ask your students to carefully consider Liz’s profound words in the passage above, and have them explore the following questions in a piece of reflective writing:

- How would you describe both your inner and outer voyages? What would you like for them to become?
- What are your dreams and the yearnings of your heart? What are your inner dragons? In what ways can you listen more closely to the former and face down the latter?
- Moving forward, how do you think you can choose love instead of fear? What does this choice look like to you?

If they are comfortable doing so, give students an opportunity to share their writing with each other. If you would like to deepen this activity, you can have students access Adobe Spark’s video feature (<https://spark.adobe.com/about/video>), an online tool that allows students to combine narration, video, music and other

forms of multimedia. Students could construct video stories in response to the questions above and then share them in class and through social media.

- 2 “As a tomboy growing up in a culture that values women mostly for their physical appearance, I have never felt beautiful enough or comfortable with my unique femininity. In fact, I associate femininity with weakness, so I have fostered only the traditionally masculine aspects in myself—the ones that make me a good surfer, a capable captain, a problem-solver and go-getter. But I long to feel more balanced in my feminine skin” (p. 111).

Ask your students to consider how they have navigated gender expectations. To what extent have gender roles shaped their behavior, identity, and the expression of their femininity/masculinity? Like Liz, do they long to feel more balanced in their gendered skin? In what ways can they work to locate this balance and achieve self-acceptance? Allow students to explore these questions through writing and/or small-group discussion.

- 3 “As April moves into May, I find rhythm to my yoga sessions, seeking the balance between strain and poise, grace and strength, effort and flow, too much and too little. Balancing breath and movement, I feel profound presence and connection with my body, the planet, and beyond” (p. 185).

Ask your students to consider the ways Liz finds inner peace and forges a connection with her innermost self. Aside from yoga, what other meditative activities does she engage in throughout her journey? Additionally, ask your students to consider how they find a sense of inner calm in their own lives. What works for them? Lastly, invite your students to try yoga and forms of guided meditation (a search for either of these terms on YouTube will provide students with a number of helpful videos), and have them write about and discuss their experiences with these forms of “inner work.”



## Research Topics

These topics provide students with opportunities for extended investigation and analysis. Students can compose research papers, deliver presentations, construct websites, etc., in response to these topics.

- 1 “For the first time, human activity is to blame as we near the sixth great mass extinction on Earth” (p. 273). What exactly is the sixth great mass extinction? Who/what are its central contributors? What are some of the species being eradicated? What should be done to help reduce the immense size of our collective human footprint and address widespread biological collapse?
- 2 “As remote as it feels in these islands, I shudder, thinking again about the inescapable impacts of climate change that will likely kill both the coral and the coconut palms. The atoll peoples will inevitable be displaced” (p. 272). What is climate change? What are its central contributors and primary effects on both human beings and wildlife? What type of human relationships with nature produce climate change? What needs to happen to stop climate change? Specifically, how can you participate in the fight against it?

- 3 Spend some time researching yourself. Where are you presently navigating to? Why? Which “stars” and “landmarks” guide your way? To what extent are you allowing the expectations of others to dictate your path? Where did those who came before you navigate to? Do you feel that your own journey is in harmony with nature? If not, how you can you reorient yourself and steer in a different direction?



# Related Resources

These resources relate to *Swell* and its many themes and subjects.

## **BOOKS**

***Malama Honua: Hokule'a - A Voyage of Hope***

By Jennifer Allen

***Surf Is Where You Find It***

By Gerry Lopez

***No Bad Waves***

By Micky Munoz

***The Long Way***

By Bernard Moitessier

## **FILMS**

***Steer With Your Heart***

<https://swellvoyage.com/2017/08/steer-with-your-heart-film-release/>

***Dear & Yonder***

<http://www.patagonia.com/blog/2009/07/dear-yonder-daring-stories-of-ladies-united-by-the-sea/>

***Fishpeople***

<http://www.patagonia.com/fishpeople.html>

## **ONLINE RESOURCES**

**An interview with Liz Clark**

<https://www.surfer.com/features/how-to-live-on-a-sailboat-for-12-years/>

**Patagonia's *Swell* book trailer**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J28LEZIKdh8>

**Liz Clark's *Swell* voyage website**

<https://swellvoyage.com>

# About the Author of this Guide

**Chris Gilbert** is a former high school English teacher and current doctoral student who lives in the mountains of North Carolina. He is also an avid writer. His work has appeared in *The Washington Post's* education blog, "The Answer Sheet," NCTE's (National Council of Teachers of English) *English Journal*, and he has also written a number of resource guides for Penguin Random House and Patagonia. He is a 2013 and 2015 recipient of NCTE's Paul and Kate Farmer *English Journal* Writing Award.

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