



The Music of Dolphins

By Karen Hesse

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A girl raised by dolphins must choose between two worlds in this critically acclaimed novel about what it means to be a human being.

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The Music of Dolphins By Karen Hesse Bibliography

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

As moving as a sonnet, as eloquently structured as a bell curve, this book poignantly explores the most profound of themes—what it means to be human. The narrator, Mila, is discovered by the Coast Guard on a deserted island, where she has been living with dolphins. The so-called feral child becomes the subject of government study—tried at and poked, taught language and music. Her amazing progress contrasts with that of another "wild child," Shay, who is being studied by the same team of experts. While Shay remains locked in silence, Mila's hands can fly over the computer keyboard or the holes of a recorder, and she even tries to explain dolphin language to the eager doctors who become her family. But Mila feels the call of the wild growing stronger and doubts about the sparkling lures of civilization growing louder. Finally the longing for her island consumes her entirely. It's a difficult plot to pull off, but Hesse (*Letters from Rifka*; *Phoenix Rising*) succeeds. While she insists on simplicity in framing the story, she also employs a high-wire writing technique, having Mila tell the story first in halting, little words (in big type), then in more complex, fluid words (in small type), so that the language and themes become increasingly sophisticated. All together, a frequently dazzling novel. Ages 9-12.

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From School Library Journal

Grade 6-9—After a plane crash off the coast of Cuba, a four-year-old survives, nurtured by dolphins. At adolescence, the girl is "rescued" by the Coast Guard and turned over to a scientist who has a government grant to study the part language acquisition plays in socialization. Mila, the otherworldly "dolphin girl," is enthusiastic to please, learning to speak words and write her thoughts on a computer, but gradually she understands that she is a prisoner "in the net of humans." She begins to lose ground, regressing physically, begging to be returned to the sea. Hesse's skill is in making readers believe in this wise, intuitive feral child. Mila's longing for the sea and her dolphin family is so achingly palpable that her return is equally believable. Her story is told in her own perfectly sustained voice: the clear and simple, but profound and poetic language of a "foreigner" with a keen mind and resonant spirit but limited vocabulary. Readers, engrossed, will follow the intriguing device of changing typeface that indicates Mila's evolution—flowing script, to chunky bold, to standard size, and back-reflecting changes within her character. Deceptively easy in format, this is a complex and demanding book. Evoking a Selkie myth, it is a reminder that the link between humankind and nature is mysterious and ignored at our peril. This powerful exploration of how we become human and how the soul endures is a song of beauty and sorrow, haunting and unforgettable.

Kate McClelland, Perrot Memorial Library, Greenwich, CT

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From [Booklist](#)

Gr. 4⁺-7. It was no ordinary rescue for the Coast Guard: the girl preferred to stay unrescued, running away with movements more animal than human. The young teen, called Mila for miracle, and thought lost at sea years earlier, was raised by dolphins until her discovery. Now she begins her acculturation back into the world of humans, and the scene shifts to a special school-hospital in Boston, where doctors study and observe their fascinating find. Mila tells the story, speaking in simple, halting prose in the opening chapters as befits her own feelings of strangeness in a radically new environment. A quick study, she rapidly figures out human civilization and makes great strides in language and music. Being human disappoints her, however, and she feels longingly that "I have been coming back to the sea from the moment I left it." Return she does, though in a somewhat unconvincing reunion with her sea family at the end. The book works largely because of Mila's sharp observations, the stranger-in-a-strange-and scenario, and the incredible

notion of the dolphin family, all of which will interest elementary and middle-school readers. *Anne O'Malley*

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Christina Moss:

Book is to be different for each grade. Book for children until adult are different content. As it is known to us that book is very important for people. The book *The Music of Dolphins* had been making you to know about other know-how and of course you can take more information. It is quite advantages for you. The e-book *The Music of Dolphins* is not only giving you more new information but also being your friend when you truly feel bored. You can spend your own personal spend time to read your book. Try to make relationship with all the book *The Music of Dolphins*. You never truly feel lose out for everything should you read some books.

Leigh Weimer:

This *The Music of Dolphins* book is not really ordinary book, you have it then the world is in your hands. The benefit you obtain by reading this book is definitely information inside this e-book incredible fresh, you will get info which is getting deeper anyone read a lot of information you will get. This specific *The Music of Dolphins* without we understand teach the one who looking at it become critical in considering and analyzing. Don't always be worry *The Music of Dolphins* can bring if you are and not make your tote space or bookshelves' become full because you can have it in the lovely laptop even cellphone. This *The Music of Dolphins* having good arrangement in word and also layout, so you will not sense uninterested in reading.

Markus Walker:

Often the book *The Music of Dolphins* will bring you to the new experience of reading the book. The author style to spell out the idea is very unique. When you try to find new book to read, this book very suitable to you. The book *The Music of Dolphins* is much recommended to you you just read. You can also get the e-book from the official web site, so you can more readily to read the book.

Louis Hartford:

Reading can called mind hangout, why? Because while you are reading a book specially book entitled *The Music of Dolphins* the mind will drift away trough every dimension, wandering in most aspect that maybe unidentified for but surely can be your mind friends. Imaging every word written in a reserve then become one contact form conclusion and explanation in which maybe you never get before. The *The Music of Dolphins* giving you an additional experience more than blown away the mind but also giving you useful info for your better life on this era. So now let us show you the relaxing pattern here is your body and mind will be pleased when you are finished reading through it, like winning a sport. Do you want to try this extraordinary paying spare time activity?

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