

# EDUCATOR'S GUIDE



# Gracie Under the Waves

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## ABOUT THE BOOK

If there was ever something 11-year-old Gracie was sure of, it's that she was born to snorkel. She's got her mind set on one day visiting the Maldives, one of the most famous and beautiful places for snorkeling in the world! Luckily she's also skilled in the power of persuasion, and convinces her family that they should head to the more accessible snorkeling destination of Roatán, Honduras for their upcoming vacation first. Nothing can go wrong, as long as Gracie's overly eager (and annoying) little brother, Ben, doesn't mess up her plans!

The crystal clear waters and fish-filled reefs of Roatán are everything Gracie hopes they will be, and she even makes a friend who knows more about the reefs than she does! But when an unexpected injury threatens all of her perfect plans, Gracie is confronted with the ecological forces threatening the precious reefs. She's determined to help, but as a kid, what can she possibly do to make a difference?



Photo courtesy of the author

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Linda Sue Park is the author of many books for young readers, including the 2002 Newbery Medal winner *A Single Shard* and the *New York Times* bestseller *A Long Walk to Water*. Her most recent title for middle grade readers is *The One Thing You'd Save*, a collection of linked poems.

Linda Sue is the founder and curator of Allida Books, an imprint of HarperCollins. She serves on the advisory boards of We Need Diverse Books and the Rabbit hOle museum project, and created the kiBooka website, [www.kibooka.com](http://www.kibooka.com), to highlight children's books created by the Korean diaspora.

In addition to writing essays for numerous publications, Linda Sue has served as a panelist for the National Book Award, the Kirkus Prize, the PEN Naylor grant, and the SCBWI Golden Kite Award. In her travels to promote reading and writing, she has visited more than 30 countries and 49 states. Linda Sue knows very well that she will never be able to read every great book ever written, but she keeps trying anyway.

Visit her website at [www.lindasuepark.com](http://www.lindasuepark.com); follow her on Twitter @LindaSuePark

# DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Gracie recalls how she was hooked on snorkeling the first time she tried it. What first experiences have you had that sparked a love for a new hobby or passion for a cause?
2. Despite their shared love for the reefs, Alina is somewhat skeptical of Gracie when they first meet. Why does she respond that way?
3. On page 66, Kate describes the broken pieces of coral as “fragments of opportunity.” What does this mean? What are other examples of “fragments of opportunity” you’ve encountered in your own life?
4. At first, Gracie doesn’t think that using her sunscreen in the water is that big of a deal, but many small acts add up to make a big difference! What are examples of small actions we can take that can add up in a big way?
5. At dinner with Alina and her family, Gracie learns that the beautiful lionfish are an invasive species and thinks, “It doesn’t seem right that it’s beautiful. It should be ... mean looking. Ugly. But things don’t always work that way in nature” (p. 88). What connections can you make to Gracie’s realization? Have you noticed anywhere else, in the book or in your life, where something with a good appearance doesn’t always have a good effect?
6. Alina shares that she has a cousin who reminds her of Ben, and she calls him “el percebe” (p. 108), which means “barnacle” in Spanish! Why is that nickname fitting for Ben?
7. Gracie reaches her emotional tipping point and loses her cool with Ben. Imagine you are Gracie and write a letter to her parents explaining what’s frustrating her and why.
8. As an organizer with laser sharp focus, Gracie plans her family’s entire vacation to Roatán, but her injury forces her to change her plans. When are times in your life when unexpected events have taught you to be flexible?
9. Even the closest families argue and get on each other’s nerves! How do you let your loved ones know how you’re feeling and what you need when challenges arise?
10. At the end of the story, Gracie realizes, “For all the research she had done before the trip, it was embarrassing, really, to recall how little she had actually known about Roatán” (p. 159). Why does she feel embarrassed? What does she wish she had done differently?
11. What are the advantages and disadvantages of tourism for both the traveler and the destination? Gracie and her family are very fortunate that almost everyone on Roatán speaks English. How might things be different for travelers who don’t speak the local language?



# EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

- 1. I CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE:** Sometimes we can feel overwhelmed when we think about big problems like climate change. Think of an issue in the world that means a lot to you. Take a piece of paper and draw three circles, one inside of the other. In the smallest circle, jot down some of the things you can control. In the middle circle, write down the things you can influence. In the outer circle, list the things you do not have control over.
  - a. How can this activity help us focus our time and energy when it comes to issues that matter to us?
- 2. JUSTICE JOURNEYS:** Even though Gracie plans an entire trip for her family, she realizes how much she didn't learn about Roatán. Pick a vacation destination you'd like to visit anywhere in the world, and create a presentation about a social justice issue taking place in that location, and what people are doing to make a difference in that community.
- 3. CROSS-CULTURAL CONNECTIONS:** Alina teaches Gracie a lot of new things—including more about Honduran culture through music and dance! With a partner, share a song that is meaningful to you for either personal or cultural reasons. Extra credit if you choreograph a dance together!
- 4. SAVE THE REEFS!:** In the Author's Note at the end of the book, Linda Sue Park offers a list of organizations working to preserve and revitalize the reefs in Roatán. Choose one of the organizations and create a presentation on the work it is doing to preserve this ecosystem.



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