

# BOOK & BAKE

## 2/28/2026

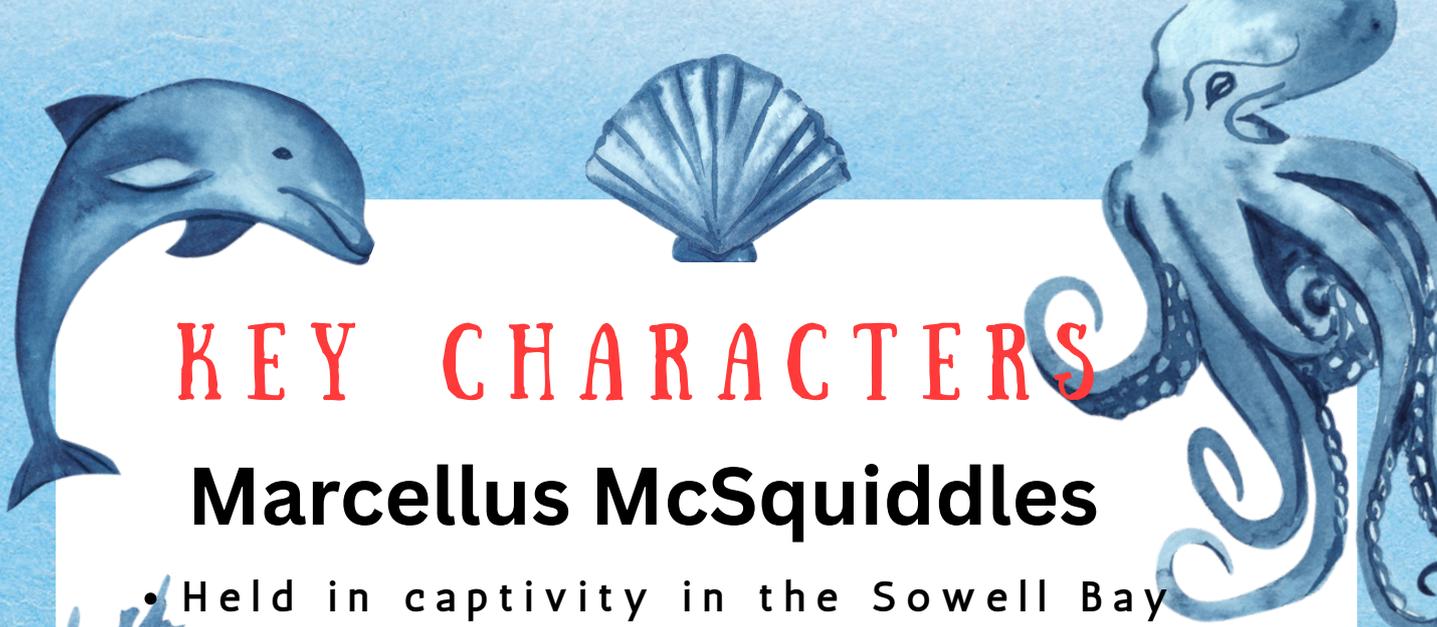
### KEY CHARACTERS

#### Tova Sullivan

- Intelligent, adventurous, and independent
- Lives alone; estranged from her brother, Lars
- Widow and mother of Erik who died (18 years old) 30 years prior
- Manages her grief by staying positive and busy
- Nighttime cleaner at the Sowell Bay Aquarium
- Highly sensitive to imposing herself on others; resists becoming a "burden" to her loved ones

#### Cameron Cassmore

- 30 years old; looks and acts younger than his age
- Abandoned by his mother; loyal to his aunt, who raised him
- Stark contrast to his friends Brad and Elizabeth
- Strong inclination to blame others for his problems
- Goes to Sowell Bay on a get rich quick scheme - hopes to find his father, Simon Brinks



# KEY CHARACTERS

## Marcellus McSquiddles

- Held in captivity in the Sowell Bay Aquarium; counting down the days to the end of his life
- Highly intelligent
- Snarky yet lonely - handles boredom by escaping his tank
- Can be considered a liaison between the story and reader
- Forms a unique relationship with Tova
- Finds a sense of purpose in helping Tova (and Cameron by extension)



## Ethan Mack

- Notorious for his propensity for gossip and tendency to insert himself into others' business
- Has a fundamental need to care for those around him; he has no family in Sowell Bay
- Plays a pivotal role in the stories of Tova and Cameron
- Owner of the community grocery store, originally from Scotland
- Has feelings for Tova but is hesitant since he experienced heartbreak in the past





# THEMES TO EXPLORE THROUGH QUESTIONS

## GRIEF



1. Explore how differently Tova and Cameron manage their unresolved (and unexplored) grief.



2. As Tova cleans, she has a moment of empathy with the sharks.....

*“understands what it means to never be able to stop moving, lest you find yourself unable to breath.”* How does she manifest this, and why do you think she feels this way?



3. In what ways do each character (animal and human) need each other?



*“These women have always worn motherhood big and loud on their chests, but Tova keeps hers inside, sunk deep in her guts like an old bullet. Private.” (p. 18)*



4. The quote above is referring to the Knit-Wits. How is Tova’s grief like an old bullet?



**BLOOD FAMILY AND  
FOUND FAMILY** 

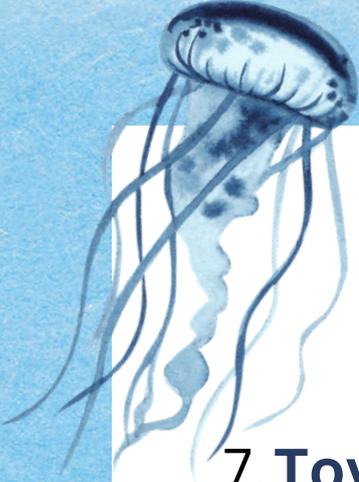


5. What role do the Knit-Wits play in Tova’s life? How are they a foil to her character and the way she operates in life?



6. How do you feel about the family you choose rather than the one you are born into?





## LONLINESS AND COMPANIONSHIP

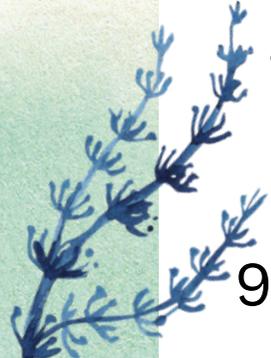


7. Tova worries about becoming a burden to her friends as she ages as she has no surviving family members. How do you view the role of community and family in caring for older people? Did you think Tova's feelings about this changed?



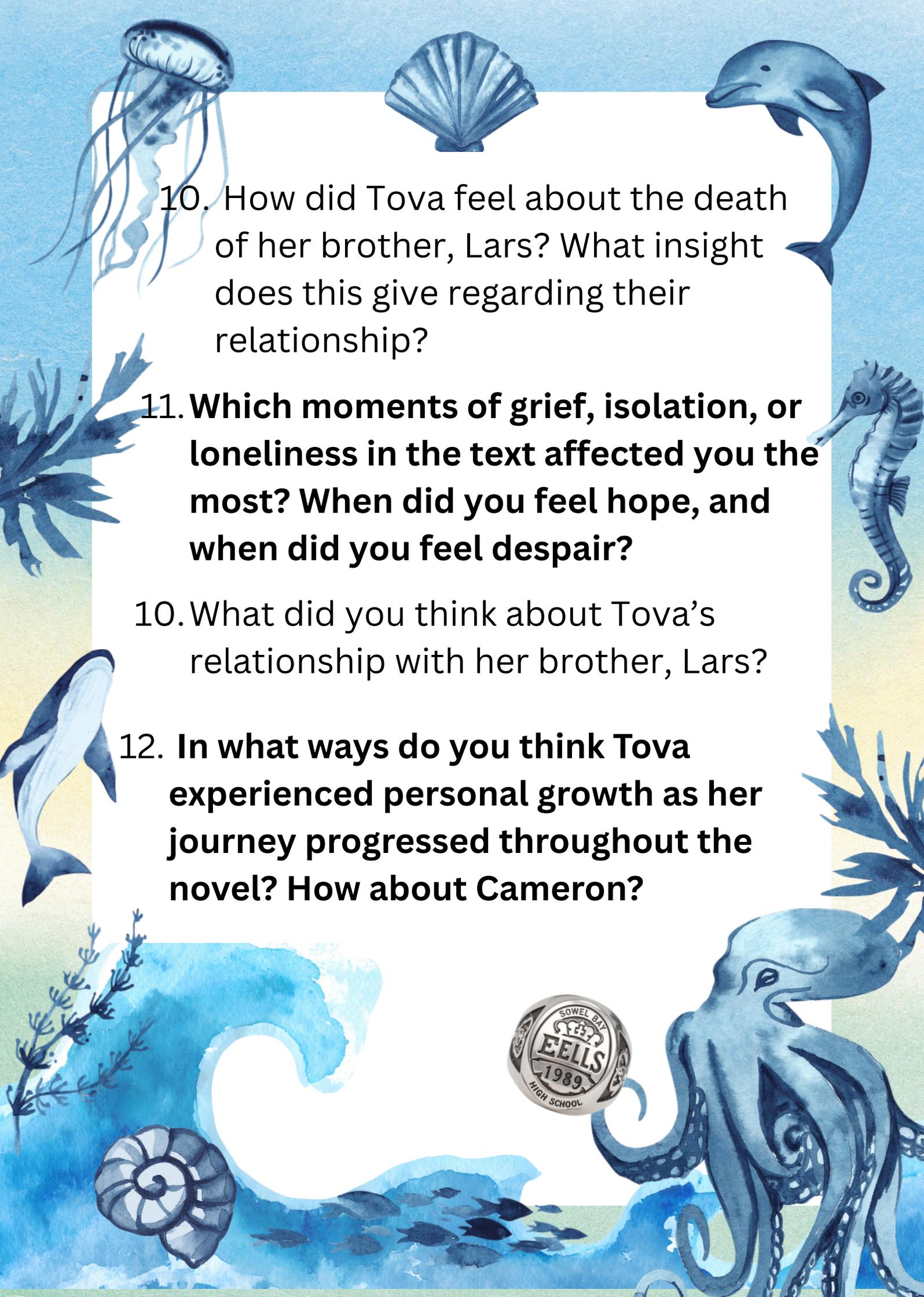
7.5 Have *you* thought about your own arrangements?

8. Tova opts for an overnight position at the aquarium without coworkers - why do you think she made this choice at this stage in her life? How did this benefit and/or harm her?



9. Why do you think Marcellus was drawn to Tova, yet not Terry, Cameron, or anyone else?





10. How did Tova feel about the death of her brother, Lars? What insight does this give regarding their relationship?

**11. Which moments of grief, isolation, or loneliness in the text affected you the most? When did you feel hope, and when did you feel despair?**

10. What did you think about Tova's relationship with her brother, Lars?

**12. In what ways do you think Tova experienced personal growth as her journey progressed throughout the novel? How about Cameron?**