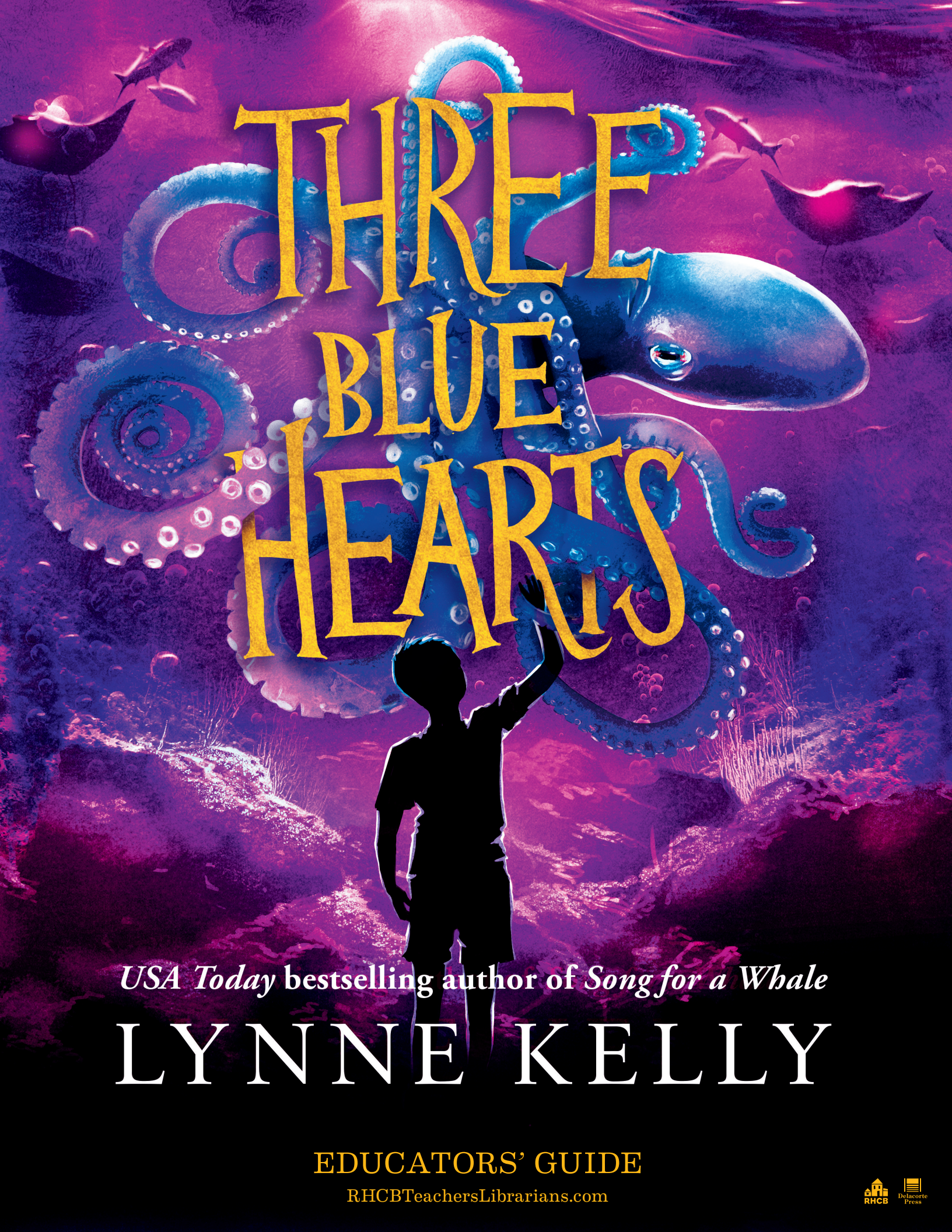




THREE BLUE HEARTS

USA Today bestselling author of *Song for a Whale*

LYNNE KELLY

EDUCATORS' GUIDE

RHCBTeachersLibrarians.com

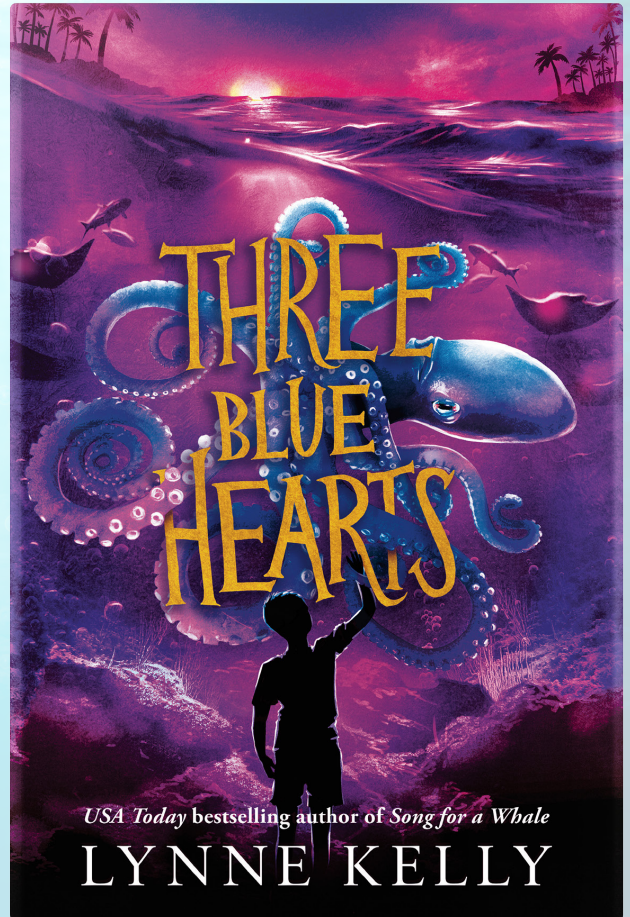
ABOUT THE BOOK

From the bestselling author of *Song for a Whale* comes a moving tale about the life-changing bond between a boy and the octopus he rescues.

Max can't seem to escape the big, looming shadow of his politician dad. But for the next few months, Max and his mom are going away to a quiet Texas beach town, where Max can be someone else. Someone who doesn't make dumb mistakes that embarrass his father—someone who knows how to be strong.

He stumbles on his fresh start right away, when he finds an injured octopus washed up onshore after a storm. With the help of a local wildlife center and a couple of new friends, Max rescues the octopus—whom they name Ursula—and vows to take care of her until she's ready to return to the sea.

But as their bond deepens and Max makes unexpected discoveries that turn his summer upside down, Max's true strength will be put to the test. Can he keep his promise after all?



Themes: Animals, Summer, Ecology & Conservation



Sam Bond Photography

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

LYNNE KELLY is the award-winning and *USA Today* bestselling author of *Song for a Whale*, *The Secret Language of Birds*, and *Three Blue Hearts*. She lives with her dogs, Abigail and Eloise, near Houston, where she works as a sign language interpreter and writes books for kids. Find her online at lynnekellybooks.com or [@LynneKelly](https://www.instagram.com/LynneKelly).

PRE-READING ACTIVITY

Read about octopuses on the following website:

[kids.nationalgeographic.com/animals/invertebrates/facts/octopus.](https://kids.nationalgeographic.com/animals/invertebrates/facts/octopus)

Have the class compile a list of facts to reference as they read the novel.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. The first sentence of a novel is extremely important. Analyze the opening sentence: "I knew the evening wouldn't go like I'd planned when Dad told me to wear a tie." (p. 1) How does this explain and reveal Max's relationship with his dad? Cite scenes in the novel that suggest that Big Max fixes his mistakes with money.
2. How is Max treated at school? Why is he called "Wrong Way Max"? What other embarrassments does he suffer? What is his dad's response to these incidents? Explain what Max means after he saves the octopus: "But maybe this one time I was actually in the right place at the right time." (p. 38) How does Max develop a more positive sense of self as the novel progresses?
3. Max spends the summer on Lafitte Island with his mom, who is researching historic hurricanes and the damage they caused to entire communities. Contrast Max's life on the island with his life at home in Houston. Explain what Max means when he says, "If people didn't like me here, that would mean they didn't like . . . me." (p. 36) What does Max learn about himself over the course of the summer?
4. Why does Max change his name to Milo for the summer? Where does he get the name? What is his mom's reaction? Explain the significance of the moment he decides to reveal his real name to Emmett and Ollie Mae. At what point does he realize that he can return to Houston as Max and no longer be in his dad's shadow?
5. How might Max define friendship? Describe the friendship that he forms with Emmett and Ollie Mae, two kids on the island. What do the three have in common? Why does it take Milo a while before he knows how he feels about Ollie Mae? How does Milo hurt her? Why is he so worried about losing Ollie as a friend? Discuss his apology to her.
6. On his first day on the island, Max takes a walk on the beach and discovers an injured octopus. Why does he feel that it's up to him to save this sea creature? What is his first lifesaving effort? Discuss Max's role in the entire rehabilitation process of the octopus.
7. Describe Emmett's thoughts when he sees one of his mother's photographs at Herb and Lurlene's bait shop. Why didn't his grandparents tell him that his mother lives nearby? Debate whether he feels abandoned. How do Milo and Ollie Mae try to help him feel better?
8. Describe the Juniper house. What fascinates Milo about the house? How do the Junipers make him part of their team?
9. Ollie Mae names all the animals being treated by her mom after characters in favorite books. Why is Milo annoyed with himself for allowing Ollie Mae to

name the octopus he rescued Ursula? Explain why Ursula is an appropriate name for the octopus.

10. Describe Max's relationship with Nana and Pops. Explain why Max is closer to them than to his biological grandparents. How do they show interest in Ursula? How do they help Max come to terms with his decision to return Ursula to the sea?
11. Lynne Kelly uses figurative language to create certain images in the mind of the reader. A simile compares two objects using like or as. Explain the following simile: "If I got in for a swim, I'd get tossed around like socks in a washing machine." (p. 35) Identify other examples of similes in the novel.
12. Max's dad wants him to go to zoo camp at the end of the summer. How is Max conflicted about going camping or staying on the island for Ursula? Why doesn't Max want to share Ursula with his dad? Max does return for the

last week of zoo camp. At what point does he learn why his dad wanted him to attend the camp? Debate whether this contributes to his decision to leave camp and return to the island.

13. Milo finds a piece of blue sea glass and gives it to Ollie Mae. Why does she reject the gift? At what point does Max learn her reason? Explain why Ollie Mae leaves the blue sea glass for Ramona at the Texas Chimpanzee Sanctuary.
14. What is a sea bean? Why is Mary's bean important to Emmett? Explain why he puts this particular sea bean in the water. Ollie Mae has three pieces of blue sea glass. She gives one to Max and one to Emmett, and she keeps one. What is significant about these three pieces of glass? Discuss the symbolism of her gift. How does this help explain the title of the book?
15. What is the conflict of the novel? Identify the climax or turning point in the plot. Discuss the central theme of the book.



EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

1. Write a one-page paper that Max might write at the beginning of the school year titled “What I Lived and Learned During My Summer Vacation.”
2. Select one of the following characters: Big Max, Max or Milo, Emmett, Ollie Mae, Dr. Juniper, and Lurlene. Write an acrostic poem that reveals their character, using their name as the spine word.
3. Max finds a book in his room on the island about Gulf Coast wildlife. Pick one of the Gulf Coast creatures mentioned in the book to research. Then write a short encyclopedic entry about the animal for the book Max finds.
4. Ollie and Emmett explain to Milo that a hurricane washed the old downtown into the water a hundred years ago. Emmett thinks it’s a place of ghosts. Write and illustrate a ghost story that is set underwater in the old downtown.
5. Ollie Mae wanted to be Ramona’s Jane Goodall. Research Jane Goodall. The following website is helpful: ducksters.com/biography/scientists/jane_goodall.php. Write a short paper that explains what Max means when he tells Ollie, “You were her Jane Goodall.” (p. 247)
6. Emmett has a YouTube show titled *Stuff I Found on the Beach*. Conduct an interview with Max on the day Ursula is returned to the sea. Think of a creative title for the segment.

VOCABULARY/ USE OF LANGUAGE

The vocabulary in the book isn’t difficult, but students should be encouraged to jot down unfamiliar words and try to define them by taking hints from context. Such words may include *meteorology* (p. 15), *tsunami* (p. 54), *decoy* (p. 77), *jetty* (p. 82), and *foraging* (p. 113).

ONLINE RESOURCES TO EXPLORE CONSERVATION INITIATIVES AND LEARN MORE

secure.nwf.org/Educational-Resources/Wildlife-Guide/Invertebrates/Octopuses

The National Wildlife Federation’s official webpage dedicated to octopuses

nhm.ac.uk/discover/octopuses-keep-surprising-us-here-are-eight-examples-how.html

The Natural History Museum UK’s official webpage on octopuses

audubon.org/

The official website for the Audubon Society

abcbirds.org/

The official website for the American Bird Conservancy

fws.gov/

The official website for the US Fish and Wildlife Service

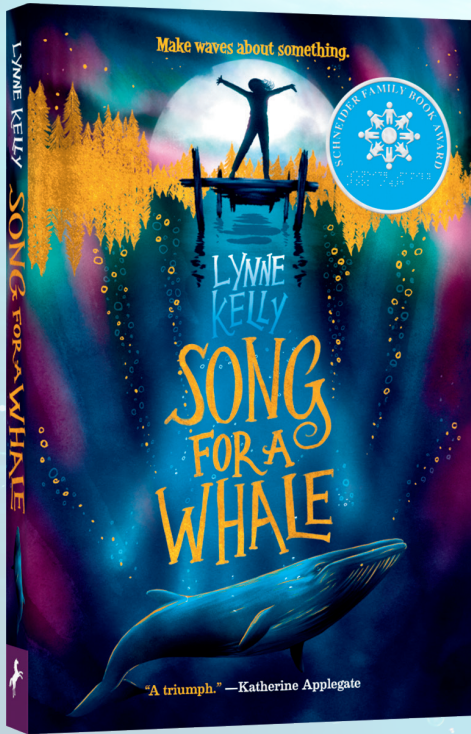
savethechimps.org/

The official website for Save the Chimps, a sanctuary for chimpanzees

houstonzoo.org/

The official website of the Houston Zoo

Praise for *SONG FOR A WHALE*



“A satisfying, energetic read.”

—*Kirkus Reviews*

“Uplifting.”

—*School Library Journal*

“Transformative.”

—*Booklist*

“Finely crafted.”

—*Publishers Weekly*

“Thoughtful.”

—*The Bulletin*



Awards

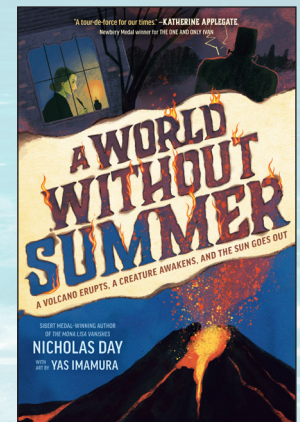
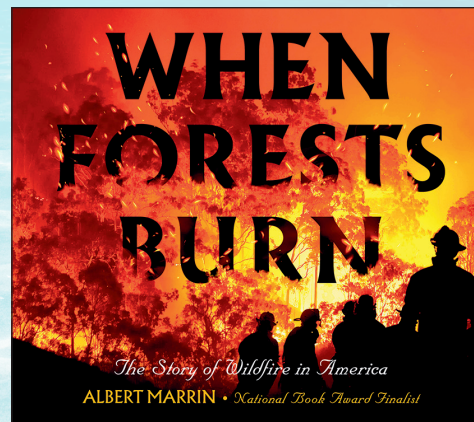
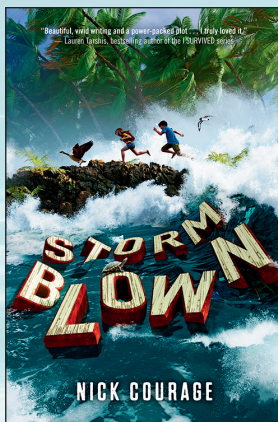
- WINNER, ALA/ALSC Schneider Family Book Award
- WINNER, Pennsylvania Keystone Book Award
- WINNER, California Horace Mann Upstander Book Award
- Chicago Public Library Best Books of the Year List
- New York Public Library Best Books of the Year List
- Georgia Children's Book Award Nominee
- Illinois Bluestem Book Award Nominee
- Kansas William Allen White Book Award Nominee
- Massachusetts Children's Book Award Nominee
- Minnesota Maud Hart Lovelace Book Award Nominee
- Missouri Mark Twain Book Award Nominee
- Nebraska Golden Sower Book Award Nominee
- New Mexico Land of Enchantment Book Award Nominee
- Oklahoma Sequoyah Book Award Nominee
- Pennsylvania Young Readers Choice Award Nominee
- South Carolina Book Award Nominee
- Texas Spirit of Texas Reading Program Book
- Vermont Golden Dome Book Award Nominee

Click here for the
SONG FOR A WHALE
EDUCATORS' GUIDE

RECOMMENDED READING

FOR CONSERVATION AND ENVIRONMENTALLY CONSCIOUS KIDS

These books promote the importance of protecting animals and our planet.



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