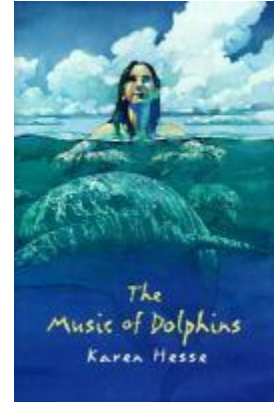


[The Music of Dolphins](#) by Karen Hesse  
(Scholastic, 1996)



Four-year old Mila is raised by dolphins after surviving a plane crash. Nine years later she is “rescued” by scientists who set out to teach her how to be human. But the more Mila finds out what it means to be human, the more she misses her ocean home.

### Discussion Questions

To set the scene for the discussion the following quotes taken from the newspaper article near the beginning of the book may be helpful.

Three different government agencies “are disputing custody of the newly discovered wild child, the second such discovery in as many months”.

According to Dr. Elizabeth Beck “feral children are an invaluable source for studying the role language and socialization play in the making of a human being”.

1. The scientists feel they have a right to capture Mila in the name of scientific study. Do you feel that it was right to capture her?  
(Contradiction of Mila’s capture and denial of her freedom to expand knowledge of human behavior.)
2. In the newspaper article reporting on Mila’s capture, Lieutenant Stone says the girl “studied me with one eye, then slowly turning, she studied me with the other.” P. 5 Why did Mila look at her like this?  
(Thinks like a dolphin; speaks in fish images; has adapted physically-large ears, can see with one eye at a time.)
3. How did Mila initially respond to the scientists’ efforts to teach her?  
How did her motives for learning change during the course of the book?
4. How is Shay similar to Mila, how is she different?  
Why is it that Shay cannot feel the music? (P. 54)
5. Mila’s interaction with the other characters:  
On p. 87 Mila describes Dr. Beck as an Orca – “Big, and strong and beautiful, and so dangerous when he is hungry.” Why do you think Mila describes her this way?  
When Mila injures herself after trying to break out of her room, Sandy says, “What have we done? P.113. What does she mean by this?  
About Justin Mila says “With this human I am most happy. With this human I am most sad.” P.133. Why does she say this about Justin?  
(angry/handsome-gives Mila the courage to defy the scientists, ultimately frees her)  
Why does Mr. Aradona bring back Mila’s early memories?  
(full of stories, releases memories in Mila)

6. Why is there different typeface in this book?  
How does the different type help tell the story?  
(Newspaper article, Mila thoughts, learning to speak literally, more complex thought processes)
7. P. 110 Mila says, "I am trapped in net of the room. In the net of humans. I think maybe I am drowning in the net of humans." What does she mean by this?  
On p. 116 Sandy says to Mila, "Your thinking is different. Mila, you think like a dolphin." Does Mila ever become more human than Dolphin?  
Why does Mila cease her human learning?  
Why does chapter 47 just have one line – "I want to go back to the sea."
8. Why do you think the book is called The Music of Dolphins?
9. Why was it Justin who was able to release Mila to the sea?  
Was the experiment a success or a failure? Did Mila survive?