

## ***Ocean Country* Discussion Questions**

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### **Parts I & II**

1) What happened to the coral reefs of the Caicos between Liz Cunningham's first and second trip to the region? What caused this transformation?

2) *Ocean Country* begins with a quote from David Orr that states, "Hope is a verb with its sleeves rolled up." How do we see active hope at work in efforts to restore Princess Alexandra Park?

3) Liz Cunningham uses the metaphor of a "body within a body" to discuss the relationship between habitat degradation and the issues facing the larger "body" of the world's oceans. What are some reasons Cunningham offers for why healthy oceans are vital to a healthy global ecosystem? What is one of the large-scale concerns that Cunningham identifies that is degrading the ocean's ability to support global life?

4) Throughout Part I of *Ocean Country*, Liz Cunningham struggles to maintain a sense of hope in the face of the many issues affecting the world's oceans. How do we see her cope with the specter of despair? How do you feel about the larger concerns that Cunningham brings up during the reading? What does Cunningham believe that we risk if we let despair become apathy?

*Key passages for discussion:*

\* Pages 37-51, especially 40 (dangers to coral), 41-44 (wastewater, bleaching, temperature, scope of the problem, no "silver bullet")

\* Pages 27-36, especially 29 ("what makes an MPA successful?") and 33 (reef balls)

\* Pages 14 (Exxon Valdez), 19-21 (ocean acidification and global aquarium-terrarium), 27 (oxygen produced by aquatic life)

\* Pages 43 (Thomas Hayden quote about change), 61 (nurturing hope), 62 ("earth allocation" in household budget), 66 (ecology as the study of home), 70-72 (magnitude of the problem, CA sea levels), 72 (Jared Diamond and civilization collapse, 99 (Hope is a process)

### **Parts III & IV**

#### **Chapter 9 Divestiture**

- What does research on the Coral Triangle reveal? What does Liz Cunningham learn from Ronny, a resident of Kasawari village?

#### **Chapter 10 Hearts**

- Liz Cunningham calls the Raja Ampat archipelago off of West Papua the "absolute epicenter of marine biodiversity." (129) What did you learn about biodiversity in this chapter? For example, what does Helen Newman of the Sea Sanctuaries Trust mean by the phrase "Biodiversity is like gold"? What is a "keystone species"? What about "crucial beauty"?

### **Chapter 13 It's Time**

- What is “bomb-bomb”? Why and how did some fisherman stop bomb-bomb and cyanide fishing? How can we—here, half way across the world—support these fishermen? What is the relationship, according to Cunningham, between environmental conditions and migration?

### **Chapter 14 Ular Laut**

- What do the terms “circular economy” and a “triple bottom line” mean? (pp. 183-184) Why does the author discuss a mid-1800s Austrian-Hungarian physician, Ignaz Semmelweis?

### **Chapter 16 Plus Signs**

- What is the “art of the *impossible*”? What actions and achievements does Cunningham discuss in this chapter that can move the world toward sustainability?

### **Chapter 17 The Ring in the Fish**

- In this chapter, Liz Cunningham meets Mauricio Pulido, one of the lead fishermen in the co-management cooperative. Describe key aspects of this “co-management” and how it works. What is the mood or tone of this chapter?

### **Chapter 20 Song**

- According to Liz Cunningham, the “story of men and whales is the story of the civilization and the ocean writ large.” (264) What does she mean? What was the impact of the album *Song of the Humpback Whale*? What is your image of whales?
- “There are questions in life you don’t answer with words. You answer them with how you live.” (270) What does this passage mean to you?

### **Resources (pp. 281-282)**

- Which of the resources/actions listed here intrigue you the most? Why?

### **Ask the Author**

- Referring to specific passages from *Ocean Country*, articulate 1-2 questions that you would like to ask author Liz Cunningham.