

The Motion of the Ocean

1. The book opens with the author thinking her husband is an asshole, but after they survive a small calamity together, she says she's never felt so in love. When have you experienced this sort of flip-flop of emotions about a person you love? Throughout the story, how does Janna reveal both the positive and negative aspects of marriage? Of her husband? Of herself?
2. When looking at the mint color of the walls in her foyer, Janna says, "those little color squares are cruel jokes; they trick you into thinking you know what you're getting when really you never can tell." Is this an apt metaphor for choosing a life partner? Why or why not? What can prepare us to make this monumental decision? How does one choose the One?
3. Throughout the book Janna demonstrates that she finds it difficult to be on time or do tasks in a timely manner -- in her words, she is a "Pokey Person." Graeme, on the other hand, is "one of those super-efficient so-called humans who gets twice as much done in half as much time." What are the pluses and minuses of each of these approaches to time? What kind of person are you when it comes to time? In what ways do time issues affect your own relationships?
4. The pink and blue division of labor aboard *Dragonfly* challenges Janna's sense of worth in their sailing endeavor and raises questions about her new role as a wife. What perspectives do the other female cruisers provide to Janna about the division of tasks and, by extension, her role? Is Janna able to develop an appreciation for her value as a sailor and wife? If yes, how? If no, why not? How do you see the pink and blue division play out in your own life? Do these divisions impact your sense of worth as they did Janna's? Why or why not?
5. On the crossing, when sea and sky are ever constant yet always changing, Janna observes that "there's also a monotony in marriage that's equally delightful and dangerous." What does she mean by this phrase? What were some of the dangerous and delightful moments for Graeme and Janna while at sea? Were they able to make peace with this tension between extremes? Why or why not? How do you think this idea of staying attentive despite -- or because of -- monotony can help you to re-envision the moments in your own life?
6. Once in French Polynesia, Janna and Graeme "mark the passage" by getting tattoos together. How does this help them make sense of their ocean crossing and their first year as a married couple? Are anniversaries (birthdays, weddings, new years) important to you as a way to reflect on or celebrate the passage of time? Why or why not? What sorts of ceremonies or events help you mark your own passage through life?

7. Graeme and Janna's reactions to their engagement, approaches to sailing, and experiences along the way reveal that they often hold completely different views of the exact same event. How do these diverging perspectives strain and/or enhance their relationship? When has your experience of an event totally diverged from someone else's? How did you react when you realized you weren't on the same wavelength? What did you take away from the interaction?
8. Janna believes that their sailing honeymoon is a test of their boat, their seamanship, and their relationship. Do you think that Graeme would agree with this assessment? Why or why not? How else might Janna have viewed their honeymoon and the challenges they encountered along the way? If their journey is a test, how would you evaluate their success and/or failure?
9. Discuss the pros and cons of Janna's notion of the One, Graeme's anti-One thesis, and Frits's Green Box Theory of Love. Whose idea of love is most in line with your view? Why? Do you have your own personal theory of love? If yes, what is it and how have you developed this theory?
10. At the outset of their trip, Janna wonders if marriage is about agreeing to drink only from the relationship's cup and being satisfied with whatever sustenance it offers. By the end of the voyage, however, she argues for a couple's need for otherness in order to thrive in their togetherness. Do you agree with her contention? Why or why not? How does one go about building and maintaining otherness while staying close and committed to the person you love?
11. What does Janna mean when she says, "It's the space between, the getting from point A to point B, that terrifies and teaches us the most"? How is this sentiment borne out in both the actual and figurative crossings and spaces that develop between Graeme and Janna on their journey? What do you believe Janna and Graeme learn about themselves and their relationship in these spaces between? Identify some of your own crossings from one stage of life to another and discuss the strategies you used to overcome the challenges of the space between -- whether it be between a new self and an old self, or between you and a loved one.
12. Back at home in Seattle, Janna says that what matters is "not the what but the how" -- that one can have an extraordinary existence no matter how ordinary one's life appears. How is this philosophy true or false? What is your own big, hairy, audacious goal? What have you done or might you do to pursue it?

Adapted from www.simonandschuster.com