

Sophie

The Incredible True Story of the Castaway Dog

Emma Pearse

For Discussion

1. Dave and Jan believed “that childhood and family life were better with dogs.” Would you agree and why?
2. Did any of Sophie’s personality traits or habits remind you of dogs you have owned? Like what?
3. What effect did Sophie have on Dave and Jan once they became empty-nesters? Can you relate to their experience in your own life and how?
4. Do you think Dave and Jan let their feelings get in the way of their judgment in bringing Sophie on the boat?
5. What do you think of Dave and Jan’s decision not to alert the authorities about Sophie’s disappearance? What would you have done if you were in their situation?
6. Did Dave and Jan’s reaction to Sophie’s disappearance surprise you considering they had said that “they had always loved their dogs, but they were not sentimental”?
7. Did you think it was a good idea so soon after Sophie’s disappearance to give Dave and Jan a new puppy? How did the new puppy, Ruby, impact the Griffith family and how did she differ from Sophie in their eyes? And do you think it made it easier or harder for them to cope with the loss of Sophie?
8. Why do you think Sophie was able to survive in the open ocean and for five months on the islands of Keswick and St. Bees? Is it only explained, as Australian vet, Rob McMahon says, by the fact that it “would take a dog as tough as a cattle dog to do it” or could there be some other explanation?
9. Was Jan’s sense of Sophie being alive when Dave and she were on St. Bees just wishful thinking or a premonition?
10. Why do you think Sophie chose not to respond when several people who lived on the island, including Peter Berck offered her food and companionship? Do you think it was out of loyalty to the Griffith family as suggested in the book?

11. How did Sophie's extraordinary return home affect the relationships between members of the Griffith family—Dave, Jan, Bridget, Luke, and Ellen?
12. Have you ever experienced or heard of a similar story of a dog or any pet overcoming tremendous adversity on par with Sophie?
13. What does this story say about the bond between pets and their owners?

About the Author

Emma Pearse is an Australian journalist who lived in New York for over ten years, where she wrote for *New York* magazine, the *Financial Times*, and *The Village Voice*, among others. Emma lives and works between Australia and New York.