***A Crack in the Sea***

By H.M. Bouwman

### **Annotation:**

A portal between two worlds opens unexpectedly. Those who travel to the second world find solace, but the Raft King wants to change all of that. Relating the tales of three sets of siblings who endure hardships, experience magic, adventures on the sea, and an enchanting second world, *A Crack in the Sea* is a unique tale where the door to the first world may never reopen.

**Book Talk:**

There’s a door between two worlds; the first world and the second world. No one knows when the door opens, but when it does the travelers encounter a magical world unlike one they have ever seen. First, there’s Pip who can talk to the fish and his sister, Kinchen who is being used by the Raft King to get something he wants. Next, is the tale of Venus and Swimmer who need to survive a life of enslavement. Last, is the story of Thanh and Sang trying to escape post-war Vietnam. These three enchanting tales all come together at the crack in the sea.

**Book Trailers:**

* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5zYqeLQbB0Y>

### **Author on the Internet:**

* Website: <http://hmbouwman.com/>
* Twitter: @HeatherBouwman
* Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/heather.bouwman>

### **Items to use in a library display:**

* Rafts, fish, sea monsters / Kraken, rice, boat

**Book Club Discussion Questions/Topics:**

* The Raft King kidnaps Pip in order to get what he wants. Do you believe that he is justified in his actions?
* Three stories come together in this novel. Compare and contrast the hardships the characters in each story face.
* The various “cultures” in the book treasure storytelling. Why do they appreciate storytelling? In what ways does storytelling help the characters in the story thrive? Use details and examples from the story to support your response.
* Would you choose to live as an Islander or a Raftworlder? Why? Use details from the story to support your response.

**First Line of the Book:**

* “When Kinchen came back from milking the goats, Old Ren sat up in bed and told her that Pip was gone.”

**Non-Fiction Companion Title(s):**

* *Voices of Freedom: Four Classic Slave Narratives*
* *Zong!*  by Marlene Nourbese Philip (Adult)

**What to Read Next:**

* *Impyrium* by Henry H. Neff
* *Refugee* by Alan Gratz
* *Inside Out and Back Again* by Thanhha Lai’

**Other Books by this Author:**

* *The Remarkable & Very True Story of Lucy & Snowcap*
* *Owen and Eleanor Move In*

**Additional Resources:**

* **Music**: Ocean sounds, whale songs, Vietnamese music
* **Poetry**: Refugee poems, sea monster poems, Vietnamese poems
* **Art/craft activity**: Create a “raft world” using popsicle sticks or Strawbees
* **Lesson extension ideas**:
* Research Vietnamese refugees, slave ships, and the Zong Massacre 1781
* Research the Vietnam War & the fall of Saigon
* Study the legend of the Kraken
* Research Amelia Earhart
* Research more about the art of storytelling. Learn about famous tales, myths, legends, and the history of storytelling.
* In a MakerSpace create your own Raftworld.
* **Interview with the author**:

<https://www.mprnews.org/story/2008/11/07/bouwman>

<https://kidlit-central.livejournal.com/75119.html?thread=413807>

**Name that Book:**

* “As with true stories, Venus’s story has no beginning. As with fantasy, her tale weaves through everything.” (p.1)HB
* “He also stayed at the surface because - just a little bit - he wanted to show off. After all, his ability with sea creatures was the only interesting thing about him, the only thing that he was especially good at.”(p. 16)HB
* “We were kind of yelling at each other by that point. Well, *I* was yelling. So the king didn’t spell everything out exactly, but I have a theory about the doorway. And going out into storms . . . I have a gift with the sea.” (p. 40)HB
* “Sometimes she would wake up at night with a jerk, recalling a piece of a dream. It was always the same dream. She was walking slowly, raising little clouds of sand with her feet, and the air was so thick and cool, it felt like a real living thing, like it was pressing on her, kissing her everywhere. “(p. 59)HB
* “However, there was a lot here to grab his attention, especially now that the sun was fully risen. The gardens, even as crowded as they were, were impressive. Raftworld squeezed more out of each inch of space than the Islanders did, that was for sure.” (p. 87)HB
* “Yet the ninety-seven walked the bottom, following the ship like its deep, deep shadow. And the next day, the impossible happened - in a world of impossible. Thirty-six more arrived - alive - at the bottom*.”* (p. 101)HB
* “He’d remembered to hide and wait for her, but he’d forgotten everything else: the cooking pot, their good knife, the bag of rice, the *xoi vo* they planned to eat before they boarded the boat, their extra clothes.” (p. 143)HB
* “When they arrived at the heart of the maelstrom, the center of the draining sink, the boat was sucked downward and immediately cracked to pieces. To scraps: the force of the maelstrom broke it into shards that arrowed down into the depths of the ocean and disappeared.” (p. 219)HB
* “So they climbed, still holding hands. The Kraken’s back (or, from the Kraken’s perspective, the top of her head) was almost flat - good island making material - but her sides were steep.” (p. 325)HB
* “And she remembered. In the quiet of the cave she finally let everything lost come back to her. As the memories trickled into her conscious mind, she told the statue and the dog about the first slave ship, the one before Old Ceasar, and about being stolen from her parents.” (p. 347)HB