

## **From the Author's Desk:**

*Hello Parents and Teachers! Thank you for sharing "Bronte's Book Club" with your readers. I hope this discussion guide will help them reflect on the story and enjoy it on a deeper level. It's a favorite of my contemporary novels because it's set in a town by the sea, based on the home of my childhood. I've added a recipe, a few random activities, and personal tidbits that might be fun for them.*

*Best wishes,  
Kristi*

## **Bronte's Book Club:**

**About this book:** When twelve-year old Bronte moves to a small California beach town, she tries to form a book club in order to make friends. It has a rocky start with jealousy, quarrels, and gossip. But as the girls discuss the historical novel *Island of the Blue Dolphins* by Scott O'Dell, they see parallels in their lives and that of the main character, Karana, the Chumash Indian who had lived alone on San Nicholas Island during the mid-1800s. As they reflect on, and quote from the story they begin to discover true friendship. And of course, a good dog is involved!

ISBN 9780986152214

### **Discussion ideas:**

<> **Part I:** [Chapters 1-15]:

1. Bronte's determination to be "new and improved" gives her courage. What is something you'd like to change about yourself?
2. If you were to start a club, how would you go about planning it and inviting people?
3. How would you feel if a friend blabbed a secret about you?
4. Despite the differences between Bronte and the other girls, what helped their friendships to grow?

<> **Part II:** [Chapters 16-30]:

1. If you were in charge of a meeting and it "spun out of control" like Bronte's, what would you do?
2. What are some ways you could practice Nan's Three Rs: Recycle, Reduce, and Reuse?
3. Name two things that would help you be a better friend.
4. How did Bronte and her friends learn to listen to one another?

### **Activity suggestions:**

<> **Write --** These can be a brief paragraph or several pages:

1. "If I lived in a lighthouse, I would ..."
2. Describe a picnic with friends
3. Five things you would take with you for a day on the beach

<> **Read** -- the wonderful historical novel that inspired Bronte to start her book club:  
*Island of the Blue Dolphins* by Scott O'Dell

<> **Draw**

1. A map of a small town by the sea
2. An animal or sea creature from the story
3. A lighthouse

<> **Make**

1. Diorama of Gray's Beach
2. A kite

<> **Cook**

**Bronte's Brownies** -- My book club friend helped me tweak this recipe and we think it's pretty good. I hope you like it, too. When the brownies come out of the oven, they should cool for an hour before slicing. Makes one dozen.

**Ingredients:**

- 1 box brownie mix (19 to 21 oz. size)
- 2 eggs
- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 3/4 cup applesauce
- 1 cup miniature marshmallows
- 6 oz. (one small package) semi-sweet chocolate chips or butterscotch chips or white chocolate chips or a combination of the three

Optional: 1/2 cup chopped pecans or almonds

~~~~~

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Grease a 9x13 inch pan.

In a large bowl, combine the brownie mix, eggs, oil, and applesauce. Stir with a large spoon about 50 strokes until blended so that no dry powder is sticking to the bowl.

Now add the marshmallows, chocolate chips, nuts, or whatever combination you have in the kitchen. Don't smash it around; just stir until blended evenly.

Pour into pan, spreading the batter to the edges with a spoon or spatula.

Bake for 30 to 35 minutes. Watch for the brownies to just start pulling away from the side of the pan. Poke a toothpick into the center, and if it comes out dry, your brownies are done.

**Behind the scenes of this story:**

The setting of Gray's Beach was inspired by many sunny days and swims at Avila Beach, California. I based Nan and her family on friends who lived on a sailboat in the bay. Climbing down a barnacle-crusted piling of Avila's pier then rowing out to their boat was a charming experience for me. Bronte's house with an ocean view describes the home of my childhood in Manhattan Beach, California -- white with blue shutters -- on a hill of sand dunes, a quick walk to the water's edge. Exploring tide pools was always a thrill.

Chapter One, "Great Expectations," and Chapter Thirty, "Little Women," are titles of classic novels by Charles Dickens and Louisa May Alcott. I used them to symbolize Bronte's journey to friendship, but also to reflect my love of literature.

**A secret about the author:**

As a young girl I was shy, extremely insecure and nerdy. Bronte reflects my adolescent self when I would stay in my room listening to classical music and alphabetizing my books. Then I'd read, read, read!

A sea breeze always makes me feel happy. I love wind chimes made from seashells, and I love dogs. Sonny Boy is modeled after our golden retriever, Russell.

P.S. *Bronte* was inspired by the girls' book club I led for several years. We'd meet monthly at Barnes & Noble, and over fresh-baked cookies and juice provided by the store, we discussed practically everything and anything, even books! These girls so warmed my heart I wanted to weave them into Bronte's story.

**Contact:** I would love to hear about your discussion. Just click the Contact button on my website, [kristianagregory.com](http://kristianagregory.com), and I'll answer you!