

## **Reading Guide for “The Little Black Fish” by Samad Behrangi**

- 1.** How does the story open (setting)?
- 2.** Why does the Little Black Fish want to leave home? (Where does she want to go, and what does she want to do?)
- 3.** The mother says, “The world is just where we live.” What does she mean by that? What is she trying to say to her child?
- 4.** Whom did the neighbor and the mother blame for the Little Black Fish’s unusual desire? Why was the Little Black Fish upset about this assigning of blame?
- 5.** How did the other fish (neighbors, friends) react?
- \*\* 6.** What is Behrangi saying about human nature and people’s reaction to those who want to expand their horizons and do or see something different?
- 7.** Why did the Little Black Fish think the tadpoles (and their mother, the frog) were ignorant? What did the tadpoles and the frog think about themselves, others, their pond?
- \*\*8.** What people do you know are like the tadpoles and the frog (very sure of themselves and their superiority to others)? What is Behrangi saying about such people?
- 9.** How did the Little Black Fish react to the crab? What does her reaction tell you about her?
- 10.** The lizard provides a lot of good advice and assistance to the fish. Explain.
- \*\*11.** What is Behrangi saying about new people that you meet during your life?
- 12.** What interesting sights did the fish see?
- 13.** What happened when the Little Black Fish met the fish who lived in the river? How did she meet up with some of them later?
- 14.** What happened when they are swallowed by the pelican?
- \*\* 15.** What is Behrangi saying about people who try to protect themselves at all costs?
- 16.** When the Little Black Fish gets to the sea, she meets some fish who work together for protection. What do they do? Why doesn’t the Little Black Fish join them immediately?
- 17.** What happens when the Little Black Fish is swallowed by the heron?
- 18.** How does the story end? What connects the ending to the beginning of the story?

**\*\*19.** In what way is the story sad, and in what way is it hopeful?

**\*\*20.** When the little fish continues to explore, she reflects: "Death could come upon me very easily now. But as long as I'm able to live, I shouldn't go out to meet death. Of course, if someday I should be forced to face death – as I shall – it doesn't matter. What does matter is the influence that my life or death will have on the lives of others . . ." How does this foreshadow what happens in the story? In the author's own life?

**\*\*21.** The author taught children who lived in a small village, cut off from the wider society of Iran by geographic isolation and by the fact that they spoke a minority language. What is the author telling them in this story?

**\*\*22.** What meaning does the story have for us?