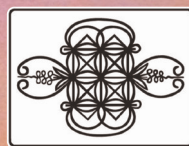


Level 6



Gracie Learns to Swim



By Gwen-Ella Govan
Illustrated by Tanya Zeinalova

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I was seven and still had a hard time swimming. I struggled a lot because I was scared of the big black stones I could see in the distance.

On Christmas morning, my family decided to go for a picnic on Moso Island.

Everyone went swimming in the calm turquoise water, feeling peaceful and happy.





I didn't swim, instead bobbing along on a floaty. My cousins and I ate all the sweets we'd brought, and none of us noticed the current getting stronger until it was too late!

As soon as we noticed, we started swimming, trying to get away. I paddled as hard as I could, but more and more waves were crashing into us.

I was panicking, and so were my cousins.





I put on my goggles to protect my eyes. It was just in time! A strong, cold wave suddenly hit me and flipped me off my floaty.

As it bobbed away, I started to sink into the quiet depths.

I couldn't hear my family's laughter anymore and could only hear their muffled screams. Everything else was silent. I looked around, desperate to find something that could save me.





Then, something touched my shoulder. As I struggled to turn, I could clearly see a huge turtle, its flippers outstretched. It started pulling me out of the water, towards the big black stone I was so scared of.

I could finally breathe again and saw a whole group of magnificent creatures.

There were fish, seahorses, turtles, and brightly coloured corals. One of the parrotfish swam towards me.

“Little friend, what brings you here?” it asked.

“I fell off my floaty, but this turtle saved me,” I said, patting the turtle. “Please help me, I have to get back to my parents.”

The parrotfish nodded. “We can help, but you have to promise to never tell anyone you talked with us.”





"I promise," I said.

"Okay," the parrotfish said. "First, we're going to teach you how to swim!"

I had never figured out how to swim by myself, but if anyone could teach me, it would be a marine creature that lived underwater.

Everyone came together to teach me something. The dolphins, the sharks, the fish, the seahorses, the turtles... all of them had something to share.

The turtle taught me how to paddle, and the fish taught me how to kick. But the coral taught me the most important thing: to believe in myself.





When I swam back to shore, my family were overjoyed to see me. They thought I'd drowned!

"How did you get back? I thought you couldn't swim," my dad asked, hugging me.

"I kind of figured it out," I said, with a little laugh.

I ran back towards the water, calling for my cousins to come and swim. My family was speechless, but I wasn't going to break my promise.

The marine animals were my friends now, and I wasn't afraid of the big black stone anymore.



**You can use these questions
to talk about this book with
your family, friends and
teachers.**



Which fish decided to help Gracie?



**How did Gracie's goggles help her
see under water?**



**What else could you use to stay safe
while swimming?**



**Plan out a trip to the beach for you
and your family!**

About the author

Gwen-Ella Govan was born and still lives in Port Vila. Through her story, she hopes to inspire children to dream big. Gwen-Ella loves snorkelling and paddleboarding. Her favourite story as a child was *Lilo and Stitch*.



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Original illustrations by Tanya Zeinalova

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Govan, Gwen-Ella

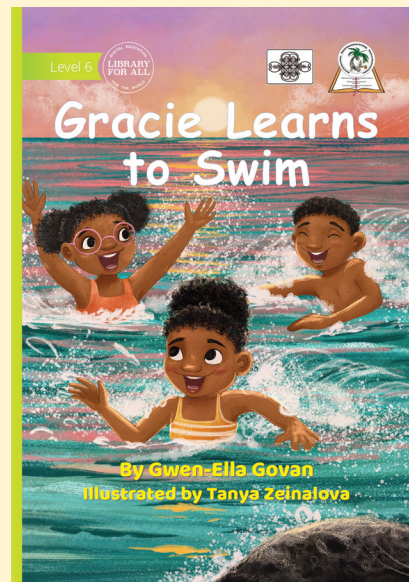
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Gracie can't swim, so what happens when she gets caught in a big wave and thrown off her floaty?



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