

**Dove**  
**by**  
**Robin Lee Graham**

### Book Information

Robin Lee Graham, Dove  
Quiz Number: 5264  
Bantam Books, 1984  
ISBN 0-553-24449-3; LCCN  
199 Pages  
Book Level: 6.6  
Interest Level: UG

This exciting true story details sixteen-year-old Robin Lee Graham's round-the-world voyage in a 24-foot sloop.

**Award:** NCTE Notable Children's Books in the Language Arts

**Topics:** Adventure, Discovery/Exploration;  
Sports/Recreation, Travel;  
Transportation/Vehicles, Ships/Boats

### Main Characters

Patti Ratterree the California girl Robin meets in Fiji, falls in love with, and eventually marries  
Robin Lee Graham the sixteen-year-old boy who sets out to circle the globe in the twenty-four-foot "Dove"

### Vocabulary

**Balaklava** a knitted cap that covers the head, neck, and upper shoulders  
**copra** the dried meat of the coconut from which coconut oil is expressed  
**doldrums** a belt of light winds north of the equator between the north and south trade winds of the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans  
**knots** a unit of speed equal to one nautical mile or about 1.15 statute miles per hour  
**lee** the side or part of the boat that is sheltered from the wind  
**vicarious** felt or enjoyed through imagined participation in the experience of others

### Synopsis

As a child growing up on the California coast in the mid-1960s, Robin Lee Graham develops a love of the sea and its promise of freedom from a

conventional lifestyle. His boredom with school and the routines of life prompt him to plan the goal his father had wanted to carry out—to sail around the world. Unlike his father, however, Robin determines to make the entire trip alone.

Robin leaves San Pedro on July 27, 1965, and has a rather uneventful trip to Hawaii, where he meets his parents before setting sail once again, this time south towards Fanning Island and Pago Pago. At Fanning Island, he improperly addresses a message to his parents. With no word from Robin, the media begins to speculate that he has been lost at sea. On the way to Pago Pago, his mast breaks, but he jury rigs a sail that brings him safely to Upolu Island, where he makes a permanent repair to the mast and notifies his family of his safe arrival. While in nearby Fiji, he meets and falls in love with a California girl named Patti. He agrees to meet her again later in his voyage and sets out for Guadalcanal. Meanwhile, his father has arranged for *National Geographic* to feature his story. Robin makes plans to meet Patti in Darwin, Australia. Just before reaching Darwin, however, he narrowly escapes being run down by an ocean liner.

He next sails toward Mauritius, but again loses his mast on the journey. Unable to turn back, he makes temporary repairs and is able to limp the rest of the way to Mauritius. *National Geographic* air freights a new mast, and he makes repairs. He then sets out for Durban, South Africa, but on the way, is again mistakenly reported lost at sea. Ironically, this report almost becomes the truth when he encounters the worst storm of his voyage. Patti is greatly relieved when he meets her in Durban. There he proposes to Patti, but discovers that, because he is underage, they can't legally marry without his parents' permission, which they refuse to give. They privately give their own vows and consider themselves married. They explore parts of South Africa on a motorcycle, and then, receiving permission from his parents, they officially marry.

Robin sets sail again, this time for Ascension Island in the South Atlantic and on to Surinam in South America. On arrival in Surinam, he has become so

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tired of the loneliness at sea he notifies *National Geographic* that he intends to end his voyage there. They offer him an advance to allow him to buy a bigger boat. He accepts the offer, buys a bigger boat, sells the old one, and sets sail to the Panama Canal. Patti meets him on the San Blas Islands near Panama with the news that he may be a father. He fears for her health, but eventually realizes his fears of the dangers of childbirth are unjustified. He makes the passage through Panama, and then he and Patti meet in the Galapagos to tour the islands. On the final leg of the journey, he fights severe depression because of his slow progress through the doldrums. On April 30, 1970, he ties up at the berth at the Long Beach Marina and is met by a swarm of reporters. Both Patti and he are relieved that his long trip is over.

Robin and Patti begin planning for the birth of their baby. Their daughter, Quimby, is born on Catalina Island during a short sailing trip twenty miles from the mainland. Shortly after, he accepts a scholarship from Stanford University, but leaves after one semester because he still feels he doesn't fit into a traditional lifestyle. They then move to Montana where they build a house in the freedom of the wilderness.

### Open-Ended Questions

Use these open-ended questions as the basis for class discussions, student presentations, or extended writing assignments.

### Initial Understanding

In your opinion, is Robin realistic about the dangers he faces? Is he being brave, or is he naive, or is he both?

*Robin demonstrates a mixture of bravery and naivete. While his sailing skills prepare him well for circumstances he can control, he evidently has underestimated the problems that can occur that are beyond his control. In fact, at the beginning of the book as he flashes back to the completed journey, he debates whether he would have attempted the journey if he had known all he would face in the years ahead. When he does face unforeseen problems, however, he handles them courageously.*

### Literary Analysis

How does the book's theme reflect the prevailing attitude of youth during the late 1960s?

*Robin, like many others his age during the late '60s, was reacting against the values of society. They believed American society had become too materialistic and had lost the appreciation for simplicity and real purpose in life. Robin expresses the same feelings in his book and, as one example, describes the happiness of the Polynesians, who live with very few possessions.*

### Inferential Comprehension

Based on what is revealed about Robin's personality in the book, do you think he will remain in Montana permanently, or do you think the sea will eventually lure him back to the coast?

*Because the book indicates that Robin has a restless and adventurous nature bound to the sea, it seems likely that, at some point in the future, he will want to move back to the ocean so he can sail again. It is possible, however, that the five-year journey will have quenched his thirst for adventure, or that having a family will create a longing to establish roots and will outweigh his desire to explore.*

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**Constructing Meaning**

While at sea, Robin reads a great deal, and while he reads mainly for pleasure, he learns from and is influenced by the books he reads. What have you learned from *Dove*, and how has it influenced you?

*Students may mention learning about some of the history, geography, and culture of various places in the world. They may have been challenged to examine their own values and goals. They also may have been inspired to set a difficult goal for their lives, such as the completion of medical school or winning a marathon.*

**Teachable Skills**

**Understanding Hist./Cultural Factors** In the book, the author gives background information about many of the places he visits, such as Darwin's exploration of the Galapagos Islands a century before. This increases interest for the reader because it provides insight into the significance of the area. Have students choose a place or topic named in the book and research it for additional information. Have them share their findings with the rest of the class. Encourage the use of visual aids such as posters, charts, and photos. Particularly fascinating subjects might be the tree jumpers of Pentecost Island or the piranhas found in Suriname. *National Geographic* features full articles on these topics and can be located using the *National Geographic* index.

**Comparing and Contrasting** As Robin travels, he discovers vast differences in the lifestyles among the different cultures he visits. Have the students choose two of the cultures he mentions. Ask them to both compare and contrast the lifestyles. What are the advantages and disadvantages of each? Have them outline their findings on two halves of a poster board and display them in the classroom. As a class discussion, ask them to explain which they would prefer and why.

**Identifying Persuasive Language** Robin attempts a dangerous voyage at a very young age. Understandably, his parents are concerned

for his safety. Most parents would probably not allow their children to take such risks. Ask the students to pretend they have made detailed plans for the same voyage Robin took. Have them create a sales pitch to "sell" their parents on the idea. They should try to anticipate their parents' objections and counter them with convincing reasons why they should let them go. They might want to use videotapes, posters, photos, statistics, quotes, examples of famous explorers, etc. to make their cases as strong as possible. Have them present their sales pitches to the rest of the class. Vote on the most convincing presentation and give an award.

**Responding to Literature** Robin fulfilled his dream of living on the ocean. Ask the students to consider where they would go if they could choose and plan their own adventure. Assign them to write a creative story fictionalizing an adventure they took or planning a trip they would like to take, complete with details of maps, provisions, plans, and an explanation of why they chose that particular destination.