

***The Wave* Reader's Guide**

ABOUT THIS GUIDE

From Susan Casey, the bestselling author of *The Devil's Teeth*, an astonishing book about colossal, ship-swallowing waves, and the surfers and scientists who seek them out. The following questions are intended to enhance your reading experience and to generate lively discussion.

1. Why do you think there isn't more news coverage on sunken freighters, tankers, and bulk carriers? Do tragedies at sea strike a different chord in the popular imagination than say, a plane crash?
2. What's the difference between surfing a wave and surviving it? What drives people to extreme situations and how does one draw the line between determination and courting disaster?
3. Many big wave surfers, like Laird Hamilton, are married with children. How do you think they rationalize putting their lives on the line for what many would consider sport?
4. Why do you think the psychological beating is often worse than the physical for surfers? Do you think Brett Lickle's mishap towards the end of the book helped him see what was really important in life or psychologically cripple him?
5. Surfers and scientists have different methods of judging a wave's intensity. Is one rubric more accurate than the other?
6. Susan Casey detected a strong female presence in the scientific community that seems to be lacking in the surfing world. Why do you think surfing—and tow surfing in particular—seems to be so male-dominated? How much of it is physical and how much is psychological?
7. Why is respect for the waves so important? What happens if you lose this respect?
8. Many surfers in the book refer to themselves as "watermen." They're not simply athletes, or thrill seekers—they almost have a sixth sense when it comes to the water. What can we learn from these watermen in regards to how they regard and harmonize with the ocean? What responsibility, if any, do you think these adventurers have to the ocean and to each other?
9. Geological history has a long memory but humans have largely forgotten devastating natural disasters of the past couple of hundred years like the Lisbon tsunami of 1755. Do you think this ability to forget and move on is part of what makes our species so resilient? Or do these sorts of memory lapses leave us ill-prepared to deal with future disasters?
10. After Susan Casey witnesses a sixty-eight foot wave at Killers, she remembers Laird Hamilton's assertion—"If you can look at one of these waves and you don't believe that there's something greater than we are, then you've got some serious analyzing to do..." How has your perception of the ocean—and those who study it and ride its waves—changed after reading *The Wave*?