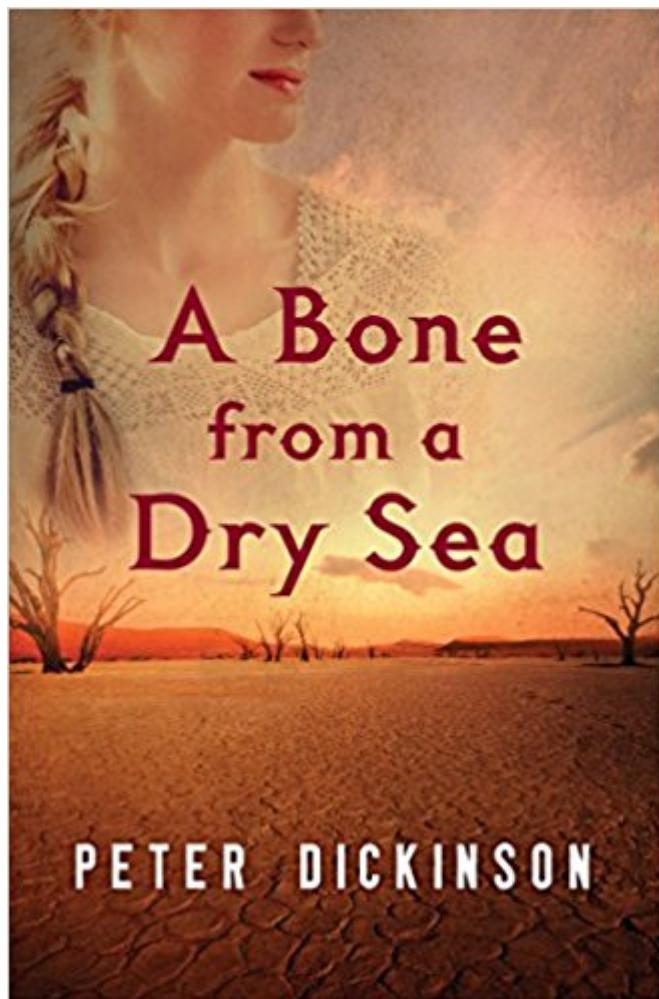


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# A Bone From A Dry Sea



## **Synopsis**

On a prehistoric shore, a young girl fights to help her tribe survive. She is at home in the ocean, as comfortable in the water as she is on dry land. The child's people have made their homes by the bay for as long as anyone can remember, diving for mussels and any other food the ocean will serve to them. They have no language; they have no names. Although they know love and jealousy and pride, they are not quite human—not yet. This child of the sea will show them the way. Two million years later, Vinny is visiting her father at an archaeological site in Africa when they discover the remains of that forgotten tribe of cliff dwellers. Across the ocean of time, these two young women will find a connection, an inexplicable bond that builds slowly but arrives with all the power of a tidal wave. This ebook features an illustrated personal history of Peter Dickinson including rare images from the author's collection.

## **Book Information**

Paperback: 188 pages

Publisher: Open Road Media Teen & Tween; Reissue edition (May 26, 2015)

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Average Customer Review: 3.3 out of 5 stars 23 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #633,483 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #15 in Books > Teens > Historical Fiction > Africa #42 in Books > Children's Books > Literature & Fiction > Historical Fiction > Africa #292 in Books > Children's Books > Geography & Cultures > Explore the World > Africa

Age Range: 12 - 18 years

Grade Level: 7 - 12

## **Customer Reviews**

PW's starred review commended the "gripping" narrative, in which scientific speculation, a feminist slant and a school of helpful dolphins coalesce in the tales of dual heroines born more than two million years apart. Ages 12-up. Copyright 1995 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an alternate Paperback edition.

Dickinson (AK, etc.) returns to his native Africa for an imaginative look at humanity's dawn, postulating a male-dominated tribe of ape-like hominids who depend on the sea for food, have no tools, and communicate with calls that are not yet language. (In one of several scrupulous parenthetical explanations, Dickinson apologizes for the names he gives them as a fictional convenience.) ``Li'' has a genius surpassing Edison's: she not only invents useful devices (a net to catch minnows, a splint for a broken leg) but is the catalyst for changing the nature of tribal leadership so that ``it depend[s] less upon dominance and more upon consent.'' Young and female, Li lacks conventional power; what fascinates her is solving problems--especially how to get food in the coastal environment so persuasively described; and she's clever enough not to challenge authority but to bolster it in the most benign available leader. Meanwhile, in alternating chapters, modern anthropologists investigate the site, their scholarly pursuits and rivalries subtly echoing the earlier time. Each expertly crafted story builds to a suspenseful climax, but most intriguing is their eponymous link: a fragment of a dolphin's scapula found on what's now an arid upland site, with a hole that could only have been drilled by a not-quite-human hand. An engrossing portrayal of a gifted early hominid, less contrived, more convincing than--and a fascinating contrast to -the ape with a transplanted human brain in Dickinson's *Eva* (1989). (Fiction. 11+) -- Copyright ©1993, Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an alternate Paperback edition.

This book has an interesting premise and format. It tells the story of a modern girl, whose father is an archaeologist in Africa, and an ancient female of a species presumably ancestral to modern humans. The modern high-school-aged girl is visiting her father at an archaeological site where ancient human remains may possibly be found. There are two distinct stories: (1) The modern girl, at the archaeological site, and (2) the ancient, proto-human young female, who lived her life in the same area. The chapters alternate between "Then" and "Now," telling the two stories separately, but parallel. In terms of human evolution, the book follows the theory of Elaine Morgan, that humans originated from a water/shoreline adapted species, and not from a species who depended on males hunting food on land. This theory presumes that females were the ones who spurred the changes that resulted in tool-making, and eventually, modern humans. As a person who spent three summers on an archeological excavation, I found the book presented a "dig" in a realistic way. The nuts and bolts of Elaine Morgan's "Aquatic Ape" theory were presented correctly. (I will not comment as to whether or not her theory is correct--just that it is a possible hypothesis.) I found the story of the ancient female to be interesting and thought-provoking. The story of the modern girl, on its own, was rather predictable (girl with divorced parents spends summer with Dad in unusual location).

However, the two stories intertwine in a way that makes you want to keep on reading. I would recommend this to middle-school or high school readers who are interested in science, and enjoy science mixed in with fiction.

Storyline moved back and forth between the ancient time and the modern world seeking to understand man's evolution. My regret is the storyline ended too quickly without tying up loose ends. Nevertheless, an enjoyable read that opened up a unique perspective of early man's beginnings.

I read this book aloud with my 11 and 8 year old daughters. They both loved the story. This book was written with an interesting tie between modern day archeologists piecing their finds with the other simultaneous story of many millions of years ago. What if... was a lot of my daughters' and I's discussion points. A good read for curious thought about life that happened before us.

I recently joined a new book club with my local museum. I am planning on being a teacher and thought it would be cool to give this book club a dry run before I am in a classroom. This is the book I selected to read. It had a nice pace. I enjoyed the author's choice of volleying between two time periods having both stories converge. Although this was a fictional read, I felt like I was right there in Africa on a dig. The author included many modern day issues political, professional and personal. I also felt like I was right there millions of years ago watching a story play out. As you read, you think that maybe we are not so different from our ancestors afterall. It was a fun escape.

This book was intended for children? A conceptual "what if" scenario or not, I wouldn't expect most children to know enough evolutionary science to separate pure conjecture from theory supported by evidence. (This book is, basically, asking readers to imagine for a moment that the sea-ape theory is true, regardless of current scientific thought, and presents a possible scenario based on the "evidence.") I'd stay away from this book, and find others that present scientific concepts more competently and more engagingly.\*  
\*THERE MIGHT BE SPOILERS BELOW, IF THAT MATTERS TO YOU\*  
This book champions subpar science through a young girl named Vinny, visiting her scientist father in Africa at a digsite. She doesn't understand evolution or aspects of paleontology. I wouldn't expect her to, except that she learns

nothing from the actual scientists in the book, parrots theories she found in a library book, demands that others disprove said theories, and in the end it validates her ignorance with the story of Li, a sea-ape child and early human ancestor who lived 4 million years ago. The scientists tell her that the sea-ape theory is not supported by evidence and is, essentially, crackpot. I get what Vinny did she tried to get a very conservative field to see something from another angle and give it some fair study. There is nothing wrong with that, but how she does it sets a bad example and spawns some bad consequences for her and her dad. The dialogue is choppy and vague. I was often confused about what characters were talking about, as they would jump between subjects and speak as if readers shared the father-daughter bond that sometimes leaves things unsaid, but implicitly understood. Scientific terminology and concepts either aren't explained, are explained in passing, or aren't explained for many pages. Even I'd forgotten what a taphonomist does, so what are the chances a younger reader would know? The term isn't defined until many pages after its first use. Current theories in hominid evolution also aren't well-explained, so it's difficult to feel the surprise and excitement the scientists are feeling when bones with "odd features" are discovered. Could have at least explained that humans are part of the genus *Homo*, and that Li was probably part of the genus *Australopithecus*. You know, in case readers wanted to learn more. Instead, the author only points readers to the highly-conceptual sea-ape books, which are not very useful for understanding current hominid science.

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