

# Love, Compassion and Relationship: Balancing the Act in Andrew Stanton's *Finding Nemo*

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## **Abstract:**

*The concerns for the environment, fish biology and oceanography have gained growing importance in children's literature. A considerable number of literary and visual texts have been found exemplary and exciting in disseminating knowledge, so far as children's psyche is concerned. It offers healthy entertainment for children, where they may feel like deliberating and delineating the discourses on the animals and the organisms in waterbodies. Rivers, seas and oceans are a treasure of innumerable flora and fauna that has amazed the professionals and their imaginations from time immemorial. Guardians and parents are often eager to find texts and related stuff for children that are enchanting, knowledgeable, exciting and entertaining too. Visual imagination and sophistication have amazed kids in cinematic text, and Finding Nemo offers quite interesting acquaintances with sea creatures. Finding Nemo offers a rare story of love, compassion and courage for children, centering it on hope and survival through a balanced act of a clownfish called Nemo. The present article is a working analysis of Stanton's Finding Nemo, a significant visual text for children, charting its association to kid's world of imagination and concerns for the environment.*

**Keywords:** *Environment, Children's Literature, Cinema, Visual imagination, Relationship*

While going through the experiences of young minds of the children, it is very convincing to read them like crazy, curious and inquisitive human brains, inventing in their own unique terms. The knowledge volumes of the *Junior Encyclopaedia for Curious Young Minds*, too could be an inseparable companion for children. Many children are seen not letting their fingers stop in the study of amphibians. Especially fish is quite a popular object among children. One can easily find these children telling the stories of their imagination, underwater. The children find millions and millions of species of fish and other water creatures as their close friends. Interestingly, they do not exactly understand how to count millions of varied aquatic lives under water. When it comes to water, it is the oceans that they can count on fingertips, to speak of Arctic, Pacific and Indian Ocean, of course, at such ease and defined the aura of their shaped imagination as if they are talking of something as the next-door ponds or lakes. One can observe them finding a lot of fish talking to them right out of Yellow Sea, the Black Sea, the Red Sea. The younger mind's fantastic imaginary exploration keeps elevating everyone's spirit to remain intact with the aquatic lives, specifically the varied variety of fish, and their beautiful hues and fins that they sketch, draw and colour in. The children put them in their imaginary seas and oceans that occupy pages in their drawing books and stickers. The cravings for procuring print outs, stickers, books, magazines and encyclopaedia that shape and talk of fish, make them dance, sing to their tunes, language, colours, flippers and flappers that only they can understand.

In their charged conversations, the children may be seen to share with parents and others that the Gray Whale is the longest mammal that can swim up to ten thousand kilometres, only to leave anyone

stunned and surprised. One would be amazed to find the same, elaborating the details on page 99 of *Junior Encyclopaedia for Curious Young Minds* that gives complete information of the swimming skills of the Gray Whale in the subtropical waters of Baza, Mexico. It is to our surprises and amusements that they often play fish-related games, as their favourite ones, again to reveal their knowledge of Piranha fish, often transforming their roles into one of those piranhas that feed on almost anything that comes her way in the fresh-water rivers of South America. Interestingly, they can be found describing the Piranhas' natural habitat as one of the significant creatures, and that there are those quite harmless piranhas – the vegetarians that live on a diet of fruits. The conception of Piranhas being tiny creatures with scathing teeth which can even eat big sharks and humans would obviously be filtered with an added knowledge that the children often ask us to refer from books. For instance, one such stuff is written by Anita Ganeri, where Michel Posen has illustrated Piranhas at page number 13, that it “can strip the meat off a cow in minutes” (Ganeri13). These beautiful inquisitive minds often talk about the working of Fighting Fish, Shooting fish, Scaly Armour, fish that change colours, Hammer-Head Fish, Sharks, Mermaids' Purses, Ray Fish, Hag Fish, Shrimp, Porcupine Fish, the Mud Skippers, Angler Fish, Floating Fish, Cold Fish, Gentle Giant, Sea Anemone, Sea Urchins, Stone Fish, the Flounder, the Great Barracuda, the Siamese, Jelly Fish, Clown Fish, Blue Whale, Discus, Shoals, Saw Fish, Sea Horses, Crabs, Star Fish, Clams, Slugs and Snails, Squids, Oysters, Cutlet Fish, Sun Star, Sea Cucumbers, etc. They talk about Round white coins called Bottom Dollars, Dolphins, Porpoises, Singing Whales, Back Scratchers, Narwhals and Bottle Noses, Brainsy Whale, Octopus and some sea monsters, Molluscs, Tube Worms, Lobsters, Neon tetra, and a number of Bizarre Beings.

Coloured with the fanciful, imaginary and knowledge power pack, an interesting children's film, and an exemplary visual text called *Finding Nemo* directed by Andrew Stanton deserves special attention. *Finding Nemo* is an American animated film. Representing the genre of an animated adventure film, it was released in 2003, and since then it is reining the imagination of children around the world. The screenplay of *Finding Nemo* is credited to be written by Bob Peterson, David Reynolds, and Andrew Stanton from a story written by Andrew Stanton.

Primarily *Finding Nemo* is the story of finding a baby clown fish Nemo by his father -clown fish Marlin. Father fish Marlin used to keep his little son Nemo in a much pampered and protected zone. Unfortunately, on an ominous day, Nemo is lost, and here starts the adventure where Marlin sets on overcoming the odds with Dory, a regal blue fish tang.

*Finding Nemo*, a 2003 Pixar animation style, exemplifies a visual text, a vision of images and rare unexpected beauty of nature in its varied colour and form that brings the life under the sea, the flora and fauna of shallow water, somewhere close to Australia. It is a moving story that swings the emotions of the audience – kidding at times and tragic at the other moments. It connects to the hearts of children at large. The story brings to the kids, the adventures of little Nemo, a clownfish. Although born with an underdeveloped fin, Nemo, with a curious mind always thinks to invent and discover the world around. Nemo has a desire to see and find how the world, round it, works. The kids find themselves being attached not only with its colourful bodily aura but also with ‘the entire time carefree attitude.’ They want to swim with Nemo across the sea and want to enter the world of colourful tropical fish, and to penetrate the zones generally prohibited by Nemo's father Marlin.

Marlin is anxious and worried about Nemo's craziness and crafty character that frequently encourages Nemo to follow up the root hidden to it. Any guardian or parents of a son or daughter would find Marlin, the father of Nemo as one's close associate who would advise the children to be cautious of the dangers and the life-threatening vibes and would often ask to take measures and precautions

before entering the ways of the world. Marlin, like any father, is obsessed of his love to the only child whom he could save after a much-exaggerated warlike situation, when he and his wife Coral, the female clownfish could not protect all those four hundred eggs that were lost to the attack by Barracudas. It is shown in the film that on the first day of his school, Nemo receives many advising and warnings from his father Marlin, for instance, to stay away with the mess in the class and avoid the dangers of the deep water. Marlin, after the loss of his wife Coral and their other eggs, could not accept the risk of losing Nemo anymore. His advice to his son reminds the similar fatherly guidance as of Polonius to Laertes as a caution one should keep in mind apropos to the ways of the world, in William Shakespeare's play *Hamlet*. All adults, perhaps, would associate with the genuineness of the advice of father Marlin to his little clownfish Nemo on an average estimate of this kind of relationship that binds humans together.

The children may be observed to be anxious and astonished to find little Nemo, forgetting all advice of his father Marlin, when it, suddenly, was caught up by a pair of scuba divers through a speed boat at a greater distance from the Great Barrier Reef. The Great Barrier Reef was the place where Nemo used to live, over Sea Anemone, with his father Marlin. It flashes across immediately that the great Barracuda has been known to attack humans. The *Junior Encyclopaedia for Curious Young Minds* reads that "these creatures vary in size, the biggest reaching up to two metres, and they have very long and sharp teeth. They are known for many attacks on divers, especially the ones that have a lot of shiny stuff on them. This is because they confuse the shiny objects with the shiny scales of their prey. They love bright and glittering things, so the next time you want to go deep-sea diving you might want to leave your jewellery at home" (160).

The untoward incidence is a heavy penalty that Nemo had to pay in disobeying his father's concerns, for which he was often unintentionally embarrassed during his dropping at Nemo's school. The story, then, is fabricated to cover the adventurous journey that Nemo's father Marlin took on, along with his friend and companion Dory, a female Blue Tang, who suffers from a short-term memory loss. Nemo has been shown to be a captive in the saltwater aquarium of a dentist in Sydney, where he meets many a fellow fish mate. It is here that he learns to fight for the big escape. Nemo's thoughts on dentist's niece Darla often horrify him on the pretext that his other fellows of the tank shared regarding Darla's careless attitude and maltreatment towards fish in the aquarium. It is because of dentist's niece Darla they have lost some of their dear fish mates in the recent past. The sympathetic attitude of Migel, a pelican, towards the fish in the tank gang, has been amazing and awesome to bring about the incredible elements of the plot towards the final escape of little Nemo and the final happy meeting of Nemo with his father Marlin. The ending of the story and the happy meeting of Nemo with his father Marlin comes alive with a twist in the story when Dory, in the whole process, is caught up by a fishing boat. It is now that brave Nemo enters the net to pass an order, and to cast influence upon the fish to make them swim downward in order to break the boat's net. It is all with a purpose to escape, and they remain successful. It is here that Nemo's aunt Dory reunites with his friend Marlin, Nemo's father. The children are taken to make up a big bang, clapping for the safety of the fish whose lives are saved underwater.

Clownfish as of Marlin and Nemo do not seem to be clowns at all, they exemplify rare courage and patience and a story of faith and belief, a warm relationship that binds them together. Their story inspires every human being. What one cannot forget in the deep blue-black waters of the sea is that when Nemo's father Marlin and his friend Dory, the Blue Tang were engulfed by a blue whale, leaving the children dumb and silent. However, the episode energises the children with the hope that the clownfish and the Blue Tang would be able to make up their survival. *Junior Encyclopaedia for*

*Curious Young Minds* states that “the largest of all the sea animals are the whales. These creatures look like huge fish but in fact, they are mammals; they breathe air and are warm-blooded creatures. This means that their bodies remain warm, even if the sea is cold. Whales breathe air just as we human, do and often have to come to the surface for air every five to seven minutes. If they stay underwater for too long, they can drown” (173). It is amazing to find Blue Tang Dory, communicating their plight of finding Nemo in the eastern Australian currents to the Blue Whale (that engulfed Dory and Marlin), and the Blue Whale helping and carrying them to Sydney Harbour, expelling them through his blowhole.

Similarly, it amuses the children to find the scene of Seagulls fighting for the prey Marlin and Dory who were saved by Nigel, the pelican. The language and behaviour of the porcupine fish, the Sea Star peach, Cleaner Shrimp, the Blow Fish Bloat, Royal Gramma Gurgle, the Dam Selfish Deb, celebrating the arrival of Nemo, and contributing to his training of making a narrow escape from the dentist’s aquarium, offer some beautiful sights to look and enjoy at. The devastation of the aquarium at Darla’s arrival, and the ultimate culmination of the movie taking the fish off the aquarium into their way back home sea, gives a lot of satisfaction to the kids and audience at large.

The cinematic text, *Finding Nemo*, effectively portrays, nature’s own set of rules and frameworks that know to make up a fine balance in the environment. It questions the human understanding of handling fish aspects. The rebellious nature of the environmental lives has much to speak on the factors and measures that should be facilitated to penetrate each and every organism’s space in the environment. The film for the children speaks on the relationship that binds us together in the environment, a story of rare courage, skill and training towards hope and survival. It is, indeed, such a visual text that delivers the mysterious world of water, and the treasures that the water bodies have, since the time immemorial, to the cause of the beauty of nature and environment. *Finding Nemo* shares many subplots with *Pierrot the Clownfish*, a children’s book that, to an extent, establishes a few similar thematic understanding (Perhaps that is the cause that allowed the author of *Pierrot the Clownfish*, Franck le Calvez to sue Disney for infringement of his intellectual rights. However, the judgment was ruled against him on the pretext, citing the colour differences between Pierrot and Nemo). The book *Pierrot, the Clownfish* and the film *Finding Nemo*, both are worthy of being significant texts in the category of Children’s literature.

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