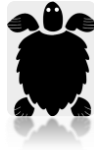


# FISH TANK



## A FABLE FOR OUR TIMES

BY  
SCOTT BISCHKE

\* A MountainWorks Press Book \*

FISHTANK

*Other books by Scott Bischke*

**GOOD CAMEL, GOOD LIFE**  
**Finding Enlightenment**  
**One Drop of Sweat at a Time**  
MountainWorks Press 2010

**CROSSING DIVIDES**  
**A Couples' Story of Cancer, Hope, and**  
**Hiking Montana's Continental Divide**  
American Cancer Society 2002

**TWO WHEELS AROUND NEW ZEALAND**  
**A Bicycle Journey on Friendly Roads**  
Pruett Publishing hardback 1992; Ecopress paperback 1996



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**A Fable for Our Times**

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The New American Library, 15<sup>th</sup> printing, 1963.

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## Pre-release reviews

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FISH TANK is the ANIMAL FARM for our times. The two books would make a great pair to teach together.

—*Dr. Pete Coppolillo, Ecologist*

Bischke serves up a cautionary tale both entertaining and dire—a cast of characters we recognize, and a message we ignore at our peril.

—*Alan Kesselheim, author of LET THEM PADDLE: COMING OF AGE ON THE WATER (available March 2012) and ten other books*

An important story for our times. Let he who doesn't live in a glass aquarium cast the first stone!

—*Otto Pohl, entrepreneur and international journalist*

I think that [FISH TANK] was a great read. The storyline was great and the conflict was interesting and made you think about what the creatures could've or should've done...For me the moral/message of the book was not to be greedy, to be aware of your surroundings. Greediness can never lead to happiness and if you're self centered it affects the people around you. To me, the book said that you need to listen to people. Being a know-it-all is never the way to go. Sometimes you're not always right.

—*Annie Lee, student, age 13*

This is a great allegory—I can really see the political stereotypes and how they parallel our society. The characters are universally western, not just American. We all know people like the fish in FISH TANK. I really liked that the book did not leave you hopeless, that there is good that will last. I read the book very quickly because I could not put it down! I would love my friends to read it and think the book would be a good book club book.

—*Gwen Laurie, former book store owner from Canada, age 78*

I liked [FISH TANK] ALOT. One of the things I saw was the school culture that exists both at the middle school and the high school—

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the bully behavior—the trust issues—the respect that is given and missing. It was all there.

And on another level, I could see the whole creation, God care, expectation, loss and recovery. It would make a great book club read! Thanks for offering so many ways to reflect.

—*Nancy Jordheim, Assistant Superintendent,  
Fargo ND Public Schools*

[FISH TANK's] message [is] that the self interest of the few can undermine the achievement of a common good....I think FISH TANK could benefit young adults in the same way LORD OF THE FLIES benefitted previous generations, helping them understand that bad things can happen when self interested people are not kept in check. It might also help some adults see our current situation with greater clarity.

—*Peter Cook, High School Teacher, Melbourne Australia*

FISH TANK [is] a great read for all ages. It has many different layers that appeal to people of all reading levels, from the enchanting characters and plot to the deeper messages that leave you thinking. I was really able to relate the issues and characters in FISH TANK to issues and people that I deal with in my life. FISH TANK leaves you thinking about the role you play in our society and challenging yourself do better. It is a must read for all ages!

—*Tessa Exley, student, age 14*

FISH TANK demands discussion. As I finished it I wanted to explore the connections and ideas more with someone. Given the concerns brought up in the book, I want to know how it will go for us humans? I am trying to see my place in it all—who am I? What am I doing in *my* world? How am I contributing to the problem or solutions? Do I need to change? I need to ponder the book's ending. Is there hope? Does anyone have any control?

—*Joan Exley, Community Literacy Coordinator, Province of BC*

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FISH TANK is a real eye opener! It depicts today's current social and environmental issues in a simplified way eliminating the confusing political and economic jargon which clouds the urgency of these concerns. It truly is a book for all ages because the future of our planet depends on everyone, not just a single generation.

—*Brittney Iverson, Marine Biologist*

Not only is FISH TANK a page turner, it is an important wake-up call as we head towards catastrophe with our heads in the sand. Even sea-creatures have conflicts of interest, and in FISH TANK we see a story about how those that stood to make short-term gains endangered all life—surely this is the most important story of our modern society. By telling it as an allegory, and encouraging readers to see the parallels with humanity, Bischke's book could have a profound impact.

—*Dr. Raina Plowright, DVM and PhD Ecologist*

A fun, poignant exploration of human nature! Scott's allegory reaches beyond the story of climate change and invites readers to look at the human dynamics that drive so many of the challenges faced by society.

—*Kate Burnaby Wright, Ecologist*

While I was well aware of them, I found the political undertones of FISH TANK less important—I just liked the story and the emotions it brought forth. I found myself caught up in the story, saying things like, "How selfish!" when the [xxx] were screwing things up!

—*Chris Coppolillo, Consulting Teacher Trainer*

So Nina LOVED your book! Read the first little bit on her own, then wanted to read it out loud with me. Which we did for a couple of chapters. And then this morning she just got INTO it and she read it every chance she got today (and yes, she did have to go to school) and tonight she FINISHED it. The allegory is mostly missed on her, but she loved the animal characters and said things like, "Well people just believe what they want to believe, that's for sure!" while reading it.

—*Nina Coppolillo, student, age 10 (as told by her Mom)*

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FISH TANK is an honest portrayal of the social dynamics that prevent us from confronting the problem of climate change. The events in FISH TANK demonstrate that our instinct to survive as individuals is much stronger than our instinct to survive as a species. The story challenges readers to rise above these base instincts and make the choice to face the problem together.

—*Natalie Meyer, Sustainability Director, City of Bozeman Montana*

You tell a great and important story—one that I hope will resonate with all who read it...It is a good way to talk about climate change and show how just one degree increase in temperature at a time can go unnoticed and have disastrous results. We are on our own to solve the world's environmental problems and we must not listen to nay-sayers who will only realize our plight when the sky comes falling down.

—*Tom Vandel, Owner, Les Overhead Advertising  
(SERVING THE ENTIRE UNIVERSE)*

All throughout I interpreted the book to be about oil consumption and global warming. I think it would be a nice tool around Earth Day to get students thinking about these issues...I think the book's message is many-fold: moral, ethical, practical. I liked the way the problems in the aquarium flowed naturally, as did the solutions that developed. So one message of the book is certainly hope and the beauty of human ingenuity...I enjoyed the book, thought it flowed well, and especially appreciated the tension in the narrative.

—*Susan Buhlman, Court Stenographer*

Reading FISH TANK I was repeatedly reminded of how we wrestle satisfying both personal and community goals; and how the details of human nature influence—for good or bad—complex issues like climate change.

—*Chris Mehl, City Commissioner, City of Bozeman Montana*

By peer pressure, misleading scientific data, fear, and our own stubborn nature to change, [FISH TANK] clearly shows why most people choose not to believe we have a real problem on our hands.

—*Bob Eichenberger, Business Manager, BOZEMAN DAILY CHRONICLE*

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I see glimpses of oil executives, or even commercial fishermen who are the biggest nay-sayers on depleting fish stocks even as it is harder and harder for them to catch their limit. People are quite shortsighted about climate change, huh? But then you have a winter like we did this year with 80 inches of snow, and everyone is quite ready to chalk it up to climate change! Al Gore surely appears, but I wondered if he was the lovely turtle or the Doc. Also, Celia thinks the animals would not be so altruistic to not eventually eat the shrimp when times got tough. I hope that doesn't happen in our world, but have you seen Mad Max?

Again, we enjoyed reading the story...Thanks for sharing!

—*Chris Slater, 7<sup>th</sup> grade English Teacher, and Celia, student, age 14*

I finally had a chance to sit down today and finish my thoughts on FISH TANK...I really liked it. You laid out the dynamics of making decisions in the face of uncertainty and how power plays and denial can make the decisions so much harder. And there was a real emotional impact...For me it worked well both as an allegory and a story.

—*Kathy Brewer, Hewlett-Packard Environmental Engineer*

For older audiences, FISH TANK will read like an updated version of ANIMAL FARM ....

—*Linda Ashkenas, Ecologist*

Thanks for letting Janet and me read FISH TANK. We both thought it was well written and a good story with a message—don't believe everything you are told and think for yourself! We are all in this boat, tank, universe together!

—*Stuart Vandell, Federal Reserve Bank examiner and Dr. Janet Lindsley, Professor of Biochemistry, University of Utah*

I really enjoyed the book's fast pace, interesting characters, and story. I like that it is short, fun, and easy to read. I think FISH TANK tells us that we need to make changes in our lifestyles to protect our planet. We need to stand up to the naysayer crowd or we will end up like this.

—*Deb Davidson, Environmental Policy Consultant and Lucy, age 2 (comments made in the margins!)*

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An entertaining and enlightening tale, FISH TANK is especially pertinent in this age of global climate change. FISH TANK offers an insightful commentary on the way politics, policies, and our social structures combine to create the world in which we live. The reader finds himself wondering, "Is this the world we want to live in, to leave for our children? Can't we do better than this?" FISH TANK is a must read for anyone who cares about the future health of our planet...hopefully that's everyone!

—*Susie and Dennis Iverson, Education Specialist  
and Hewlett-Packard Manager*

FISH TANK is so much more than a fable. It is a call to action to everyone who loves life and feels compassion in their hearts. It is a call to action to the privileged and powerful to act on the good within.... It is a call to action to the unions, to the workers, to the masses, who together can stand up to the corruption of the powerful. It is a call to action to the experts and our climate leaders to tell it straight and spread the solutions far and wide. It is a call to action to everyone, not to bury our heads in the sand and ignore what is right in front of our eyes while hoping for that Hollywood ending. It is a reminder to governments not to abuse the trust in which we have placed the well-being of this generation and the next. And it is a reminder, that when inspired and with timely action and a bit of personal sacrifice, we all can make a difference and change our fate, but only if we beat the tipping points. Scott Bischke opens floodgates of feeling for humanity and other species in this important book.

—*Julia Olson, mother and Executive Director, Our Children's Trust*

Although found in the fiction section, FISH TANK is truly a non-fiction story of our times with the [xxx] playing the part of the one percent. We can't be as foolish or complacent as the fishes. We can't be in denial like the fishes. Just as the "Occupy" movement has shouted its intolerance for corporate greed and corruption, it's time we do the same when it comes to climate. We need a revelation. FISH TANK forces you to realize just that.

—*Kelly Matheson, Program Manager for the Americas,  
WITNESS, New York City*



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I loved FISH TANK; I read it in one day! The message is at once hopeful while realizing its impending tragedy. It is regretful that everything must be so polarized, good versus evil with no room for cooperation. Perhaps the children of the 21st century will usher in a renewed sense of collaboration between environmentalists and industry.

—*Hattie Baker, Climate Change and Sustainability Consultant*

I enjoyed [FISH TANK]. It was well written and that made for easy, interesting reading...Prof. Brown showed his ineptitude from the beginning by putting his cherished aquarium in the hands of a bungler like Augustus to go halfway 'round the world to keep the oil company baddies from messing up the sea horses. Sea horses? Hey, they're not even good to eat while the baddies produce a product that is used to make medicines, equipment (like tires), building materials, and, oh, yes, fossil fuels, too—the bane of environmental "engineers" everywhere except when they're using it get from A to B or warm their footsies on a cold winter night....

I read an article about a week ago that a group of scientists showed that global warming happened back in geological time way before fossil fuels came into play. But I say (not the scientists) that global warming back then was directly caused by the dinosaurs. As their population expanded and they grew bigger and bigger, tooting proportionately to their size. A lot of hot dinosaur gases enveloped the earth melting both poles and drying up all water everywhere. And that's a lot of dino toot.

...Anyway...I thoroughly enjoyed reading the book, and I do think it would make an interesting assignment for high-schoolers—maybe even get some of them to thinking.

—*Bill Bert Baker, Petroleum Engineer (retired), age 80*

FISH TANK is exactly the type of book that I love to read and discuss. On one level, it is an enchanting story that draws the reader in...I can read it purely for entertainment value. But, there is also a deeper side...that captures the reader's attention and challenges them to think about their own role in contributing to the health and well-being of this planet that we all call our home.

—*Jody Ouradnik, Education Curriculum Content Designer*

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Fables have been part of human history since we began sharing stories around a campfire. The modern world, with instant communication and based on facts, offers little room for creative storytelling, especially ones that have a moral or lesson attached to them. FISH TANK is a throwback to the times of Aesop with a very modern and imminently relevant message. Children and adults alike will understand the predicament of the denizens of the aquarium and the parallel to humanity as we power ourselves into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Take it as a great story, but know that it is real. If FISH TANK gets 10 people to adjust their life style it will have made a difference.

—*Conrad Anker, elite mountaineer and author of  
THE LOST EXPLORER: FINDING MALLORY ON MOUNT EVEREST*

Frank and sometimes brutally honest, this is a tale of oppression of the group by the few who benefit without consequence.

—*Dr. Robert Gresswell, USGS Fisheries Ecologist*

This story of life in the aquarium is eerily similar to contemporary events outside the tank. FISH TANK is a good read, but more than that, it is a story about the forces of greed against the power of determination and collaboration.

—*Dr. Cathy Whitlock, Director of the Montana Institute on  
Ecosystems, Montana State University*

In FISH TANK, the author represents planet Earth as a fish tank, and humanity as a bunch of talking fish of different species, interests and motivations engulfed in a very peculiar situation. What results is a clever and fascinating fable that provides an insightful mirror on the folly of current human attitudes concerning climate change and global degradation. Some people like graphs and data, the IPCC reports are written for them. But others connect better with concepts, imagery and storytelling, and for them FISH TANK should be compelling. It's hard not to contemplate if the human species is reaching some similar decision points, and a happy face outcome is not guaranteed.

—*Dr. Steven W. Running, Nobel Laureate as a member of the  
Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, Department of  
Ecosystem and Conservation Sciences, University of Montana*