Camryn Diagonale is originally from North Carolina and currently attends school in D.C. She began writing poetry in high school, and her work tends to focus on experiences from her childhood and the wonderful cruxes of youth. In this poem, a speaker describes encounters with a shark and an alligator. As you read, take notes on how the speaker reacts to the animals she encounters in the poem.

One summer we found a dead baby shark washed up on the beach, cut it open with a dinner knife from the house, and performed an outdoor autopsy.\(^1\) As we marveled\(^2\) at its miniature anatomy, revealed\(^3\) in the smallness of each little organ, seagulls circled overhead. The ocean was quiet, barely making waves.\(^4\) It kept vigil for its tiny causality.

The spring prior, an alligator wandered onto the beach during my uncle’s second wedding. It was far enough away to merit an absence of fear, but nobody took photos or said a word— we just stared as it settled itself in the surf, hoping to be cleansed.

\(^1\) to examine something to find the cause of death
\(^2\) Marvel (verb): to be filled with wonder or astonishment
\(^3\) Revel (verb): to enjoy oneself in a lively and noisy way
\(^4\) a period of time when a person or group of people stay in a place and quietly wait, usually while praying
Text-Dependent Questions

Directions: For the following questions, choose the best answer or respond in complete sentences.

1. PART A: Which statement expresses the main theme of the poem?
   A. Examining ancient creatures can help us better understand the past.
   B. It's important to never let your curiosity about the world fade.
   C. Studying Earth's creatures can inspire a sense of wonder.
   D. Humans often hurt creatures in their quest to better understand them.

2. PART B: Which TWO details from the text best support the answer to Part A?
   A. “One summer we found / a dead baby shark” (Lines 1-2)
   B. “and performed an / outdoor autopsy.” (Lines 6-7)
   C. “As we marveled at its / miniature anatomy,” (Lines 8-9)
   D. “barely making waves. / It kept vigil for its tiny causality.” (Lines 14-15)
   E. “an alligator wandered / onto the beach during my / uncle's second wedding.”
      (Lines 17-19)
   F. “nobody took photos or said / a word— we just stared” (Lines 22-23)

3. How does observing the shark and the alligator affect the speaker?
   A. It causes her to develop a sense of admiration for the creatures.
   B. It prompts the speaker to fear these creatures and what they're capable of.
   C. It makes the speaker want to protect these species from humans.
   D. It inspires the speaker to learn more about animals and their anatomies.

4. What does the speaker's description of the ocean reveal about her point of view toward the natural world?
   A. The speaker views the ocean as being mysterious and full of interesting creatures.
   B. The speaker is surprised that the ocean was the home of these animals.
   C. The speaker views the ocean as being a difficult place for animals to survive.
   D. The speaker views the ocean as caring about the living things that come from it.

5. How do the words used to describe the speaker's examination and reaction to the shark contribute to the tone of the passage?
Discussion Questions

Directions: Brainstorm your answers to the following questions in the space provided. Be prepared to share your original ideas in a class discussion.

1. This poem presents two animal encounters from the speaker’s childhood. How does the poem depict the relationship between humans and animals? Have you ever encountered an animal that inspired a sense of wonder in you? If so, what kind of animal was it and why did you find it interesting?

2. In the context of the poem, how do humans learn about the natural world around them? What do you think could be the benefit of learning more about animals? Describe a time when you watched an animal in its natural habitat. What do you learn about it?

3. This poem is titled “Twice I Walked with Dinosaurs”. Why do you think the poet used that title when describing encounters with a baby shark and an alligator? How does the title add to the tone of the poem? How does it help show the speaker’s attitude toward her encounters with these animals?