

## We're not Afraid to Die – Important Questions

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**Q. What preparations did the author and his wife make for their round-the-world sea voyage?**

**Ans.** The narrator planned to go on a round-the-world sea voyage on the same pattern as Captain James Cook had done 200 years earlier. For the past 16 years, he and his wife had spent all their leisure time developing and improving their skills with work related to travel on the sea. They had tested their boat 'Wavewalker' in the roughest weather also.

**Q. Give a brief description of the narrator's boat. How had the narrator equipped and tested it?**

**Ans.** The narrator's boat was called 'wave-walker'. It was a beautiful 23 meter long, 30 ton wooden hulled ship. It had been professionally built. They had spent months fitting it out and testing in the roughest weather they could find.

**Q. When did the narrator set sail for his round the-world voyage and how did it pass in the beginning?**

**Ans.** The narrator set sail from Plymouth, England in July 1976 with his wife Mary, son Jonathan 6, daughter Suzanne 7. The voyage passed pleasantly from the west coast of Africa to Cape Town.

**Q. How did they celebrate their Christmas holidays?**

**Ans.** They celebrated their Christmas 3,500 km east of Cape Town on 25th December. The weather was very bad. Still they had a wonderful holiday, complete with a Christmas tree. New Year's Day saw no improvement in weather.

**Q. What happened on January 2nd? What did the narrator do to face the strong and high waves?**

**Ans.** At dawn on January 2nd, the waves were very huge. As their ship rose on the top of each wave, they saw huge seas rolling towards them. The waves screamed and sprayed water. The narrator dropped the storm jib to slow the boat down and lashed heavy mooring rope across the stern. Then they double lashed everything and went through their life raft drill.

**Q. What happened on the second day of Cape Town?**

**Ans.** On the second day they faced strong gales. For the next few weeks they blew continuously. What worried the narrator was the size of the waves. They rose alarmingly up to 15 meters, as high as their main mast.

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**Q. What was the first indication of the impending disaster?**

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**Ans.** The first indication of the impending disaster was the ominous silence. The sky grew dark. A huge cloud appeared over the ship. But it was not a cloud. It was a wave. It appeared vertically over the boat. It was almost twice the height of the other waves.

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**Q. What sort of wave hit the ship? How did the narrator react?**

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**Ans.** It was a mighty and huge wave. It appeared perfectly vertical. It was almost twice the height of the other waves. It had a very unpleasant breaking crest. The narrator had never seen such an enormous wave, so he was filled with horror.

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**Q. “The roar increased to thunder.” What happened then?**

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**Ans.** The roar increased to a thunder. Then a tremendous explosion shook the deck. A torrent of green sea water broke over the ship. The narrator’s head smashed into the wheel and he started losing consciousness. He accepted his approaching death.

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**Q. How did the narrator manage to survive through the attacks of subsequent waves?**

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**Ans.** One of the waves threw the ship upright. The narrator was able to reach its main boom. Subsequent waves tossed him around the deck like a rag doll. His left ribs cracked. His mouth was filled with blood and broken teeth. Somehow, he found the wheel, lined up the stern for the next wave and remained firm.

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**Q. What was the impact of the torrent on the narrator and Wavewalker?**

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**Ans.** A tremendous explosion shook the deck. The narrator’s head struck the wheel and he flew over board and started sinking below the waves. Unexpectedly, his head came out of water. Wavewalker was almost capsizing. Its masts were almost horizontal.

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**Q. How did the narrator and the other members react to the presence of water in the ship?**

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**Ans.** The narrator could not leave the wheel to examine the damaged parts. Mary shouted that the decks were broken and they were sinking. Larry and Herb were pumping out water like madmen. Sue had a big bump over her eyes but the children said that they were all right.

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**Q. The narrator says “more problems arose”. What were those problems?**

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**Ans.** The hand pumps started blocking up with the debris floating around the cabins. The electric pumps short circuited. The water level rose dangerously. Two spare hand pumps stood wrenched along with the forestry sail, the jib, dinghies and the main anchor.

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**Q. What was the position on January 3rd?**

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**Ans.** By this date, they had brought the water level under control. But there was leakage below the waterline. The boat's main rib frames had been smashed to the keel. There was nothing holding up a whole section of the starboard hull.

**Q. How did the narrator react to the problems? What does it reveal?**

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**Ans.** The narrator did not lose his calm or courage in facing the problems. He thought calmly. Then he remembered that they had another electric pump under the chartroom floor. He found it in working order. They were not getting any reply to their distress radio signals. He was not surprised as they were in a remote corner of the world.

**Q. How did things ease on January 4th after 36 hours of continuous pumping?**

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**Ans.** The narrator says that the water had almost been drained out. They could not set sail on the main mast. The pressure on the rigging would pull the damaged section of the hull apart. They hoisted the storm jib and headed for the island.

**Q. What was the scene before the narrator when the huge wave had broken over the boat?**

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**Ans.** The boat had water everywhere. Larry and Herb were pumping like madmen. Broken timbers, clothes, crockery, charts, tins and toys were floating here and there.

**Q. How did Jonathan behave when the narrator went to comfort the children?**

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**Ans.** When the narrator went to comfort the children, Jonathan asked him if they were going to die. But he added that they were not afraid of dying if they all are together. Q. 19. "I didn't want to worry you when you were trying to save us all." Said sue. What has happened to her? **Ans.** Sue had a bump over her eye. It had swollen alarmingly. She had two enormous black eyes, she also had a deep cut on her arm. She didn't bother her daddy about her injuries as he was busy in more important task.

**Q. How did the children cheer up the narrator when they saw an island named Ile Amsterdam?**

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**Ans.** Jonathan asked his father, the narrator, if he could have a hug. When the narrator asked why, he said that he was the best daddy and the best captain in the whole world. Sue said that he had found the island which was in front of them then.

**Q. How did Suzanne try to lighten the gloomy atmosphere?**

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**Ans.** Wavewalker was hit by a huge wave. As a consequence Suzanne got injury on her forehead. Yet, she was not scared. She prepared a funny card showing caricatures of her loving and hard working parents. She just wanted to lighten the gloomy atmosphere.

**Q. When do you think, Mary and the narrator feel the end was near? Why did they feel so?**

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**Ans.** On the evening of January 5th, 1977, Mary and the narrator felt that the end was very near. They sat together holding hands. The motion of the ship brought in more and more water through the broken planks.

**Q. Why did the narrator call Amsterdam the most beautiful island in the world?**

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**Ans.** The narrator called Amsterdam the most beautiful island in the world not because of its natural beauty as it was only a bleak piece of volcanic rock with little vegetation but because they had reached an island when they had lost all hope of survival.

**Q. How were the narrator and others received at the island? What did the narrator think then?**

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**Ans.** The narrator and the party were cheered at the island by all 28 inhabitants of the island the next morning. The narrator thought of Larry and Herb, Mary and children who remained cheerful and optimistic.

**Q. How can you say Suzanne's injuries were serious?**

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**Ans.** Sue had a bump. It was quite swollen. Her blackened eyes narrowed to slits. Her head injury took six minor operations to remove a recurring blood clot between skin and skull. This shows that her injuries were serious.

**Q. Explain the title, "We are not afraid to die—if we can all be together." What lesson does it teach?**

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**Ans.** The title means that if they all can be together, they are never afraid to die. The narrator and his party face the worst times of their life. But they face it boldly and come out successfully. The lesson is clear: we must face the odds of life with courage and they won't harm us.

**Q. What made the narrator set sail from Plymouth, England in July 1976? How did he prepare for his voyage?**

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**Ans.** The narrator had dreamt of sailing in the wake of Captain James Cook, the famous explorer. 200 years earlier Captain Cook had made the round-the-world voyage. The narrator wanted to duplicate the voyage of Captain James Cook. For this purpose he had got made his boat Wavewalker. It was a 23 meter, 30 ton wooden hulled beauty, professionally built. They had spent months fitting it out and testing it in the roughest weather. As regards the seafaring skills the narrator had spent all his leisure time for the past 16 years in knowing those skills. So, he set sail in July 1976 with his wife Mary, son Jonathan, 6 and daughter Suzanne, 7 in his Wavewalker. He took two crewmen, one American Larry Vigil and the other Swiss Herb Seigler to tackle the world's roughest sea the Southern Indian Ocean.

**Q. Describe the boat 'Wavewalker' which set sail from Plymouth, England in July 1976 for going round the world.**

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**Ans.** The narrator had dreamt of sailing in the wake of Captain James Cook, the famous explorer, 200 years earlier. Captain Cook had made the round-the-world voyage. The narrator wanted to duplicate the voyage of Captain James Cook. For this purpose he had made his boat Wavewalker. It was a 23 meter, 30 ton wooden hulled beauty, which was professionally built. They had spent months fitting it out and testing it in the roughest weather. As regards the seafaring skills the narrator had spent all his leisure time for the past 16 years in knowing those skills. So he set sail in July 1976 with his wife Mary, son Jonathan, 6 and daughter Suzanne, 7 in his Wavewalker.

**Q. Everyone on board did contribute to save Wavewalker. Justify.**

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**Ans.** Coming out of a challenging assignment can be done only if every member of team works for his or her best cause. Same happened when Wavewalker which was struck hard with a huge wave in the Southern Indian Ocean. The narrator was thrown out by giant wave but he managed to get back to Wavewalker and started rescue work. While he was trying to block water from pouring in. Mary, his wife took over to wheel and steered the ship bravely without getting panicked about safety of her children. Larry Vigil and Herbert Seigler worked hard and continued pumping out water till all leaking gaps were plugged, repaired or covered. Little Jonathan and Suzanne who were on upper bank also got injured but they did not create any panic Rather they bore isolation and pain in such a manner that their parents and other two sailors had no problem in and best efforts of all on board to save the Wavewalker.

**Q. Describe the voyage of the narrator after the disaster.**

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**Ans.** The disaster had damaged greatly the narrator's ship. But he and his team fought bravely against the wave. They worked on the hand pumps to take out the water. They had survived for 15 hours since the wave hit. But the 'Wavewalker' was not in a position to take them to Australia because of its broken condition. The narrator checked the charts and found that there were two small islands a few hundred kilometer to the east. But unless the wind and seas abated and they hoisted sail, their chances were slim. On 4th January, the situation eased they took their first meal in almost two days with corned beef and cracker biscuits. The narrator asked Larry to steer a course of 185 degrees. Then they reached 'Ile Amsterdam' island. All the 28 inhabitants cheered them ashore the next morning.