# Barracuda by Christos Tsoilkas

## Synopsis

His whole life, Danny Kelly’s only wanted one thing: to win Olympic gold. Everything he’s ever done-every thought, every dream, every action-takes him closer to that moment of glory, of vindication, when the world will see him for what he is: the fastest, the strongest and the best.

 His life has been a preparation for that moment. His parents struggle to send him to the most prestigious private school with the finest swimming program; Danny loathes it there and is bullied and shunned as an outsider, but his coach is the best and knows Danny is, too, better than all those rich boys, those pretenders.

Danny’s win-at-all-cost ferocity gradually wins favour with the coolest boys-he’s Barracuda, he’s the psycho, he’s everything they want to be but don’t have the guts to get there. He’s going to show them all. He would be first, everything would be alright when he came first, all would be put back in place. When he thought of being the best, only then did he feel calm.

## Discussion questions

1. Throughout the book, issues of class in Australia frequently collide. How do the characters in Barracuda struggle with their own sense of class identification? Particularly consider the class conflicts between Danny and his father, Demet and Clyde, and Danny and his classmates. 
2. What is the role of literature and music in the lives of both Danny and his parents? What do they represent for these characters? 
3. Consider the journey that Danny and his mother take to visit Stephanie’s family. What significance does this experience hold for both the characters? And what do Dan and his mother have to learn and teach each other about the importance of family and forgiveness? 
4. Discuss the significance of Martin Taylor as a figure in Danny’s life. Consider his role in shaping both Danny’s past and future. 
5. What role does Dan’s job assisting persons with brain injuries play in supporting his own recovery? In particular, consider his relationship with his cousin Dennis. 
6. In the final scenes of the book we discover a shared feeling between Coach and Danny that they have failed one another. How does this sense of failure carry them throughout both their lives? Is there any sense of resolution between the two men? 
7. ‘…none of it could settle the question that had mattered most to him since he’d found himself moored on dry land: was he – Danny Kelly, Psycho Kelly, Danny the Greek, Dino, Dan, Barracuda – was he a good man?’ (p.508). This question is posed by Danny in the final pages of the book. Looking back at the life of this character, what is your opinion?

*Synopsis/Discussion questions from https://www.allenandunwin.com/browse/book/Christos-Tsiolkas-Barracuda-9781760291358*