

## pH

**Nancy Lord**

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*From fishermen-crowded bars to Inuit heritage, Nancy Lord brings alive her Alaskan setting.*

The lives of a group of scientists—and one artist—are altered by an oceanography research trip in Nancy Lord's insightful novel, *pH*. Stubborn minds begin to appreciate the beauty that lies outside their comfort zones, and those who find their patience tested learn to balance logic with creativity. Whether approached with or without a science background, *pH* offers wisdom on how we learn and grow as people.

Upon returning from a weeks-long marine expedition, Ray Berringer, his grad-student team, and environmental artist Annabel begin the process of analyzing and interpreting their findings.

Ray, who researches pteropods (sea snails), resents his co-leader, Jackson Oakley, for his success in presenting his climate change discoveries; meanwhile, chemistry student Helen sees Oakley, her secret lover, distancing himself as his fame grows. Ray's flaws work against him to amp up both the suspense of the story and the realism of its progression.

When Helen and Ray stumble upon evidence that the elusive chemistry professor has betrayed his work, the team (including Annabel) unites in the name of loyalty to science, working against a hidden trend of academic corruption that extends beyond just Oakley.

The multilayered plot and myriad characters converge on the important themes of integrity and collaboration. Lord's dynamic language does it all. From fishermen-crowded bars to Helen's Inuit heritage, she brings alive the Alaskan setting within each character's arc of emotional development. Her writing reveals thorough research and literary skill.

Both art and science require "creative minds, speculation and hypothesizing, experimenting, sometimes-tedious detail work, a willingness to fail and try again," Annabel discerns. The characters in this novel exhibit all of these traits, making *pH* a wonderful success.

AIMEE JODOIN (September/October 2017)

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