How to Breathe

On Land and Underwater

A poem by Jaqi Holland

GLOUCESTER 400™+

OUR PEOPLE, OUR STORIES

1623 | 2023

400 STORIES PROJECT

How to Breathe on Land and Underwater

Front Beach, Rockport

We are rising from forward fold
and standing in mountain pose when they emerge
en masse, wet black from the sea,
tanks like barnacles, tubes like tentacles.

We bend and breathe, reverent,
watching our teacher
plant her feet and rise up,
moving mindfully without words.

> We sneak peeks at the frogmen
> and picture their guide underwater
> speaking with hands and eyes—
> breath the center of everything.
>
> Teachers, interchangeable,
> review their lessons.

Exhale and fold forward.
> *Sip air if sinking.*

Let your head hang heavy.
> *Release air to descend.*

Breathe in and stand tall.
> *Control your ascent.*

Just you on your mat.
> *Keep your buddy close.*

We stretch out in savasana like starfish.
Just breathe, our teachers tell us—

-Jaqi Holland

COVER PHOTO COURTESY OF SUSAN HIMML YOGA & WELLNESS.
2024 - GLOUCESTER400+™ STORIES PROJECT - PLEASE REQUEST PERMISSION FROM THE AUTHOR TO REPRODUCE.