

Educator Discussion Guide

BEYOND THE BRIGHT SEA

By Lauren Wolk

Louisiana Young Readers' Choice Nominee 2019-2020

Grades 6 - 8

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ABOUT THE BOOK

Twelve-year-old Crow has lived her whole life on an isolated area of the Elizabeth Islands off the coast of Massachusetts. Although she is content to live on the isolated island, she is filled with curiosity. Where did she come from? Why was she sent away? What is her real name? She knows that she was found by Osh, her island father, when she was an infant wrapped inside a blanket and floating in a small basket. Osh found her and had taken care of her ever since. But now Crow explains she “had a nagging need to know what I didn’t know.”

Being a brave and determined girl, Crow sets out to unravel the mystery of her. Along the way she discovers an abandoned island that was once a hospital for leprosy patients. Using clues from letters and town folks she comes to discover that she didn’t want to solve the mystery at all. But the unknown does not deter her persistence. Her island family does not know that she has traveled alone to look for answers. A cryptic note explains that something has been left for her. But what is it and will she find it before the evil Mr. Kendall? It is not long before her search sets up a dangerous chain of events that will lead her to answers. But are they the answers she was hoping for?

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Lauren Wolk is an award-winning poet, visualist, and author. She is the Associate Director of the Cultural Center of Cape Cod. Wolk has taught poetry and fiction to writers of all ages and abilities. She focuses on the use of keen observation and fresh language; the creation of strong characters, dialogue, and a sense of place; how to get started and how to complete a work; how to be inspired and energized by one’s own work; and the importance of “twoness” in any written work—layers beneath the surface and surprises around the corner, for both writer and reader. She lives with her family in Cape Cod, Massachusetts.

Biographical information taken from the author’s website at:

<http://www.laurenwolk.com/>

Accessed 30 September 2018.

BOOK AWARDS

Winner of the 2018 Scott O'Dell Award for Historical Fiction
2017 Goodreads Choice Award Winner for Middle Grades and Children
2018 Carnegie Medal Nominee

PREREADING ACTIVITIES

Hansen's Disease

An interesting prereading activity for students is the study of Hansen's Disease, or leprosy. The Center for Disease Control and Prevention defines Hansen's Disease as an infection caused by slow-growing bacteria called *Mycobacterium leprae*. It can affect the nerves, skin, eyes, and lining of the nose. With early diagnosis and treatment, the disease can be cured. People with Hansen's disease can continue to work and lead an active life during and after treatment. Lead the students through the history of Hansen's Disease including the story of The Miracle at Carville by Betty Martin that tells about the discovery of the drug, Plutome, that was developed and discovered at the leprosy colony in Carville, Louisiana. Students should locate Carville, Louisiana on a map. Higher order thinking questions may include collaborative activities such as asking groups to list situations that may isolate people from others. How would a family manage day to day tasks if they were separated from the rest of the world?

Books of Interest:

- Carville Remembering Leprosy in America by Marcia Gaudet
- In the Sanctuary of Outcasts by Neil White

Treasure Hunters

In the story of Crow, treasure hunters flock to the island of Pekinese searching for valuable relics left behind. Ask students where should hunters look for buried treasure? What would happen if you found a chest full of treasures? Give a little 'tease' that in this book someone will find a buried treasure. Will it be the rightful owner or a crooked thief? Teachers may consider offering a story of Blackbeard the pirate and his search for lost treasure. Here are 2 examples of treasures found:

1. Blackbeard the Pirate facts:
<https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/last-days-blackbeard-180949440/>
2. Lost Treasures: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_missing_treasures

Students can be divided into collaborative groups to discover the origin of treasures that are still lost today.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What impact did Crow's decision to search out her birth parents have on her found family, Osh and Miss Maggie? Give examples from the book.
2. Do you believe Crow had the right to know facts about her family of origin? Why or why not?
3. Why did visitors flock to the Island of Pekinese?
4. Why did Miss Maggie always tell Crow the truth? Is it important to always know the truth? Discuss why "knowing the truth" can be a positive or a negative.
5. What type of special skills do you need to be able to survive on an isolated island?
6. Have you ever wondered what your parents were like when they were young? Make a list

- of questions to ask parents in an interview style about their memories of childhood.
7. In the story there are people who travel to the island in search of buried treasure. If you found a buried treasure what would you do with it?
 8. What happened in the story with the found treasure?
 9. Locate Carville, Louisiana on a map. What is leprosy? How did this plantation become a hospital for patients?
 10. How do you think Osh and Miss Maggie came to live on the island of Cuttyhunk?
 11. Crow takes a dangerous trip alone. Was this a wise decision of Crow's? Why or why not?
 12. Crow's parents left a treasure for her to find. Where did they get the treasure themselves?
 13. How did Mr. Kendall know about the treasure? Why didn't he search the graveyard?
 14. Crow did not find her brother, Jason. Why did Crow so desperately want to find him?
 15. Do you think Jason is real?
 16. What was the treasure Osh found? How did Crow feel when he told her of the treasure?
 17. Osh explained to Crow that "what you do is who you are." What does that mean? What labels do people assign to themselves and others? Brainstorm and discuss labels that define a person. Are they negative or positive?

CLASSROOM CONNECTIONS

Language Arts:

Divide students into pairs or small groups. The teacher will read aloud a passage from the book. After, students must work together to develop a "why" question about the passage. One student from each group will print the question on chart paper. When each group has chosen a question for their chart, they will do a gallery walk, reading the questions as a group and adding their answers to the chart. Each group, then, will present their question and read the answers. Students will be required to answer with complete sentences and to use information from the text to back up answers.

This website offers lesson plans for teaching how to ask a question.

https://www.wayland.k12.ma.us/UserFiles/Servers/Server_1036352/File/Curriculum/Units%20of%20Study/Unit%20of%20Study%20-%20Asking%20Questions.pdf

Social Studies:

Imagine living on an island. Look up information about islands and resources found on that island. Make a list of items found and items that will have to be imported. Compare and contrast life on an island with life on the mainland. What are the benefits of living on an island? What would be the more difficult situations?

- Go to Google Maps and look up "Islands on Earth." An interactive globe will appear marked with island locations. Students may click on a marked point and be given necessary information about the island.
- <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/devon-island>
- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chichagof_Island

Art:

In the story, Crow looks into the distance and watches a fire blaze on Cuttyhunk. Provide students with media to draw using dimension. Objects in the distance will appear smaller. Show various photographs and illustrations, pointing out this point of view.

Vocabulary:

Calamity	Leprosarium	Hoisted
Inheritance	Dissatisfied	Headstone
Consumed	Leprosy	Skiff
Island	Harbor	Solitude
Contagious	Orphanage	Tuft

RELATED WEBSITES

Islands of the USA

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_islands_of_the_Northeast_United_States

A virtual tour of islands in the northeast United States. Includes photographs.

An Interview with Author Lauren Wolk

<https://youtu.be/bDSYxazxyWw>

A video of Lauren Wolk answering question about her life as a writer. She specifically discusses the characters and story of Beyond the Bright Sea.

Encyclopedia Britannica

<https://www.britannica.com/place/Elizabeth-Islands>

A website featuring the Elizabeth Islands