

# Educator Discussion Guide

**THE VOYAGE TO MAGICAL NORTH: THE ACCIDENTAL PIRATES**

by Claire Fayers

**Louisiana Young Readers' Choice Nominee 2018-2019**

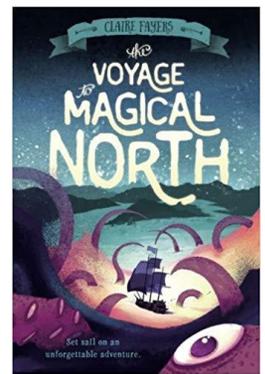
**Grade 3-5**

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## **ABOUT THE BOOK**

Brine Seaborn is a twelve year-old girl with a past, only she doesn't know what it is. Found drifting alone in a boat when only a baby, with only a small piece of the rare magical starshell for company, she has spent the last twelve years as a servant. The situation is only made worse by the fact that she serves a magician and his annoying young apprentice...and she's allergic to magic! So when fate provides her a chance to write her own story, she takes it. Brine sets out on an adventure to find the Magical North, a place of mystery, myth, and legend where one can see to the ends of the world. It is a place where she may find her past and her future.



But the voyage won't be easy. There will be storms, monsters, and dangers of all kinds. Marfak West isn't exactly happy with his status as a prisoner and it's obvious he wants something more...but what? Forced to rely on the legendarily evil magician to reach their destination and caught between magic and pirates, Brine must choose where her allegiance lies. As tensions mount and challenges exceed even her expectations, will she find a new path to discovery?

## **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

Claire Fayers writes comic fantasy featuring swashbuckling pirates, evil magicians, heroic librarians and man-eating penguins. She grew up in South Wales, studied English in Canterbury, and is now back in Wales where she spends a lot of her free time tramping around castles in the rain, looking for dragons. She has worked as church caretaker, a shoe assistant, in accountancy, in health and safety, in IT, and in a library. Only one of these prepared her in any way for life as a full-time author. Her first book came about quite accidentally after she won a writing competition. She was more surprised than anyone. That book, *Voyage to the Magical North*, went on to debut as Waterstone's Children's Book of the Month and was shortlisted for the FCBG Children's Book Award.

Biographical information taken from the author's website at

<http://clairefayers.com/about-me>

Accessed 4 October 2017.

## **BOOK AWARDS**

Barnes and Noble Kids Blog, notable middle grade 2016

Cybil's Award Finalist 2016 (middle grade speculative fiction)

Waterstone's Children's Book of the Month July 2016 (UK)

Federation of Children's Book Groups Children's Book Award Shortlist 2017 (UK)

## **OTHER TITLES IN SERIES**

*Journey to Dragon Island* (2017)

## **PREREADING ACTIVITIES**

### **Great Plots**

Ask your students to think of their favorite movie of all time. Pick two movies that most of the students have seen to use in a comparison chart. Ask them the following questions: What's so great about the movie? What makes it memorable? Is it the characters? Is it the story itself? What are some of the details you remember most? Why do you think they are so memorable? Did the movie make you laugh or cry? What do you think makes a story memorable? List some of the students' ideas for discussion.

Every good story has a plot and it is these elements that make a story one you will remember. Emphasize to students that *all stories are constructed with the same five elements*, from children's board books on up to adult novels. These elements to plot structure are: exposition, rising action, climax, falling action, and denouement.

***Define the following terms with the class:***

***Plot:*** the order of events in the story

***Conflict:*** the problem or tension that moves the story forward,

***Exposition:*** the beginning where the author introduces the characters and places them in a setting

***Rising Action:*** events that take place as a result of the conflict in a story and build tension

***Climax:*** the most exciting point of the action, the "Aha!" moment

***Falling Action/Denouement:*** the author discloses their secrets, "unravels" mysteries, and answers questions

***Conclusion:*** the author closes the story and the story ends.

Writers of all different kinds use these elements to make their stories stick in your mind. Novelists, screenwriters, and even bloggers use these same elements to make their written works memorable. Utilize the Story Chart found at <https://www.writingeducatorssymposium.com/wp-content/uploads/2009/02/andrews-socratic.pdf> or make your own similar to give students a visual organization tool. Discuss the definitions with your students as they fill in their notes.

### **Compare Two Stories/Movies**

Using a two column comparison chart, ask students to compare two popular children's movies or stories. An example of movies might be *Finding Nemo* and/or *Finding Dory*. Stories such as "The Three Little Pigs" and "Jack and the Beanstalk" or any stories previously read by the class could also be utilized. Using the terms defined above, compare the two choices, pointing out the existence of each element in both stories. Discuss student suggestions and compile the information together. After comparing the first two stories/movies, place students in pairs or groups of three/four and provide with a list of possible stories/movies to compare. Give students time to

discuss and write their ideas down. Finally, allow students to share their ideas about plot structure with the class, pointing out the basic similarities in plot structure that run through all the stories.

### **Cover Art Predictions**

Display the cover of the book where all students are able to see it. If you do not have a projector, circulate the book so that all students have an opportunity to see the cover art on the book. Then have students complete a prediction T-chart on paper or online. You can utilize this simple T-chart maker from [http://www.vrml.k12.la.us/cc/gr\\_organ/tchart/tchart.asp](http://www.vrml.k12.la.us/cc/gr_organ/tchart/tchart.asp) . One side of the T-chart will be for predictions. The other side will be used throughout the novel, as well as at the end of the novel to reflect on outcomes. For an extension activity, have the students choose a prediction that did not come true and write an extended version of the story.

### **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

1. The exposition of the story reveals immediate conflicts/problems. Name a main conflict that occurs in the exposition of the story. Cite evidence to support your answer.
2. Irony is defined as the opposite outcome than what is expected. How is Brine's allergy an example of irony?
3. Why do Brine and Peter believe that working for and marrying into Turbill's family is worse than working for Magnus?
4. "Don't underestimate your opponent" is a common saying. How is the feud between Cassie and Marfak West a demonstration of this saying?
5. Peter loses shards of starshell, but finds himself in possession of three pieces. How?
6. Foreshadowing is when the author gives hints or clues about what will happen later in the story. How does the following statement, from pg. 43, demonstrate foreshadowing? "...and finally the bottom deck, which was used for storage and was mostly empty save for the ominous shape of the brig. Trudi assured Peter it had been ages since anyone had occupied the iron cage, but he still kept well away from it."
7. To be deceived means to be tricked or led astray. Give two ways that Marfak West demonstrates deception.
8. Isolation leads Peter to lean towards an unlikely ally. Who is it and what types of things does he admire about this person?
9. Tom Girl was forced to hide her true identity, due to the rules of Barnard's Reach. Ultimately, it was this secret that propelled Tom's joining the crew of the Onion. Do you believe that the history of the people of Barnard's Reach also played a part in Tom's path to the Onion? Why or why not?
10. Once Peter finds out that he has felt so alone due to Cassie's orders, he feels a second betrayal. He also seems to find relief. Why?
11. Marfak West is let out of his cell when the crew sails into the middle of the Sea of Sighs. Why?
12. In a discussion with Peter, Tom says, "Stories are full of people who are the odd ones out when they're growing up but turn into heroes." (p. 172) What do you think he means? Can you give any other examples of stories where this is the case?
13. Ewan Hughes and the crew present Peter with a box for the starshell pieces. This seems to be a turning point for Peter and his feelings toward the crew. How do his feelings change? Why?

14. After facing the Sea of Ghosts, the crew faces a new menace. This new danger comes in a deceptive and somewhat unexpected package. What is it? Describe the threat and the steps the crew must take to survive.
15. According to Aldebaran Boswell's Journal of Strange Adventures in the Year of Discovery, what happened on the thirty-first of Balistes? What impact does this information have on the crew which have traveled so far?
16. When they finally reach Magical North, Cassie and the other pirates decide Brine should be the only one to stand on it and see the world. What reasons did the others give for this decision?
17. Marfak West told Brine the world would appear "as a map spread out before you." However, Brine saw something different. What did she see? She had been wondering who she was. What did she discover?
18. In the belly of a whale, Marfak West tells Peter how he wants to defeat Cassie O'Pia. When does he think he will have won? Why do you think he wants this?
19. For a long time, Brine has felt like she hasn't belonged. In Chapter 28, Cassie does something that changes all that for Brine. What does she do and why does it affect Brine so deeply?
20. Cassie tells Tom "there are three kinds of people in the world..." What are they? Which one is Tom? Which one is Cassie? Brine?
21. Choose 2 of the elements of Plot Structure (exposition, rising action, climax, denouement, and conclusion). List 2 to 3 events for the elements you have chosen.
22. Tom's life has changed drastically since boarding the Onion. What are at least three ways he is changed by leaving the Keep and joining the crew?
23. Ursula, Tom's mother, says that "Maybe if they started treating knowledge as something to be shared and not hoarded...there'd be fewer people like Marfak West around." Do you think this true or not? Give 3 reasons to support your answer.
24. Peter gives his starshell to Brine and asks her to keep it for a while. Brine tries to think of something to say to him, but nothing seems right to her. What if she had said something back to Peter at this moment? Do you think it might have changed his decision? Why or why not? If you were Brine, what might you have said?
25. Pretend you are the author of the book and rewrite the last three sentences of the story.

## **CLASSROOM CONNECTIONS**

### **Social Studies:**

Throughout the novel the author describes various places that characters visit. Create a labeled map of at least one of the locations. Be sure to include a legend, key, and compass rose. As you read the novel, create a class map of the locations in relation to one another.

### **Science:**

In the pursuit of Magical North, the Onion meets many forces that create friction. Create a bubble map to list items that were forces of friction for the Onion.

### **Music:**

Pirates are known to sing songs about great adventures. Create a song about one of the characters from the book that identifies them as either an antagonist or a protagonist.

**Math:**

Assume that the crew of the Onion had 20 people total. Create a word problem to represent how many squids would need to be cooked if each squid fed 3 people. Then create another word problem to show how many more squid would be needed if Brine, Peter, and Tom join the crew.

**Art:**

Marfak West creates a monstrous ship when he magically recreates his ship. Use recycled materials to recreate what you believe his ship looks like.

**Science:**

When Brine stands at Magical North, there is a space of time where it is dark. This is similar to an eclipse. Research solar eclipse and create a T-chart comparing.

**Vocabulary:**

|         |             |          |           |
|---------|-------------|----------|-----------|
| Scowl   | Queasy      | Assume   | Plank     |
| Smirk   | Seascape    | Charred  | Brim      |
| Rubbish | Incompetent | Suppress | Belatedly |
| Clarity | Cutlass     | Hammock  | Rueful    |
| Prow    | Scornful    | Brig     | Mainmast  |

**RELATED WEBSITES**

**The International Brotherhood of Magicians**

<https://www.magician.org/about/history>

Learn about real live magicians and the history of how their organization began in 1922.

**Make a Floating Pirate Ship**

<https://everydaybest.com/pirate-ship-craft-sail-boat/>

This website provides a tutorial on creating a pirate ship from recycled materials.

**Squid Recipes**

<http://www.foodnetwork.com/topics/squid>

Learn about different recipes that can be made with squid.

**Sailing Basics**

<http://firstsail.org/sailing-basics/>

Learn the basics of sailing, watch videos about sailing, and find printable sheets to practice your sailing skills.

**Archimedes Principle and Buoyancy**

<http://mocomi.com/buoyancy/>

Discovered by the Greek scientist Archimedes, the principle of buoyancy is still used by engineers and ship designers today.