TEACHING NOTES

THE LOST STONE OF SKYCITY

HM WAUGH
ISBN (PB): 9781925815948
YEAR LEVEL: Y4–8

ABOUT THE BOOK

Sunaya's peaceful village life is turned upside down when a simple mountain mission turns into a death-defying quest for survival.

Winter treks to summer pastures, mythical Ice-People that are scarily real, avalanches, ice falls, power plays, mysterious magic and surprising friendships – it seems not everything in life is set in stone ...

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

HM Waugh is an environmental scientist, writer and educator with a long-term love of wild places and high mountains. This has led to icy feet and sunburnt cheeks in magical countries like New Zealand, Nepal, Bolivia and Switzerland. She has studied dolphins in New Zealand and rare plants in the Wheatbelt, and worked in mining and construction projects across Western Australia. When she's not writing, she's teaching school and community groups about science and the environment. This often involves working with children and animals concurrently, and she loves being able to truthfully say she handles dragons for a job.

THEMES

- Bravery
- Family
- Friendship
- Mountaineering

AUSTRALIAN CURRICULUM OUTCOMES

Y4–8 English
Y4–8 History and Geography

USEFUL WEBSITES

- Author's website: https://hmwaugh.com
- Author's Twitter: https://twitter.com/hm_waugh
- Author's Instagram: https://www.instagram.com/hm_waugh

CLASSROOM IDEAS

Discussion questions

1. Why might the author have chosen to use the made-up words 'gotals' and 'yakans'? How does it help to create a sense of the book's fantasy world?
2. Why might the gotals be so valuable to Sunaya's father?
3. How does the author build a sense of foreboding and suspense as Sunaya approaches the border of the legendary Ice-People?
4. What is Sunaya's special power? How is it useful? How does she 'read the slopes' (p. 22)? If you could have any magical power, what would it be and why?
5. What heroic traits does Sunaya demonstrate in the book? Give examples. What is your personal definition of a hero/heroine?
6. The Cloud Dragon tests assess the five ways a Royal Protector needs to act: Courage, Resilience, Compassion, Fortitude, Strength. Which would be the most challenging for you personally and why?

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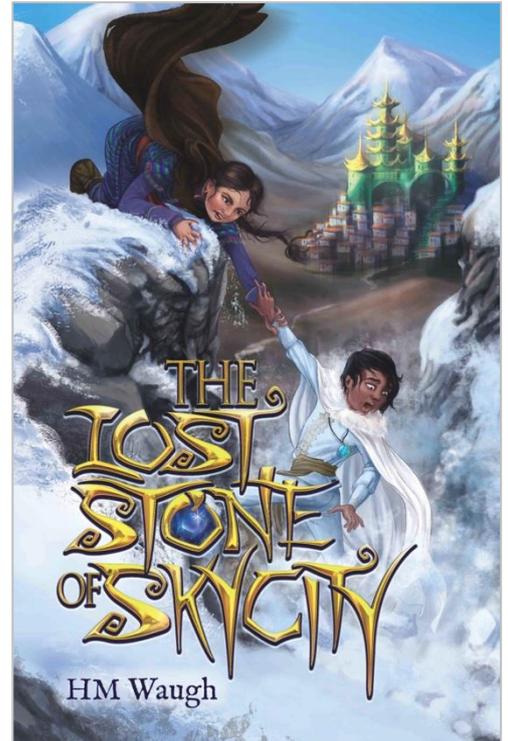
7. Create a list of the obstacles Sunaya must overcome on her epic journey. Plot them in sequence on a piece of A3 paper and add illustrations to create a Story Map.
8. What is a 'prophecy'? What is the 'chosen one' trope? Can you think of other stories that use it (e.g. the Harry Potter series)?
9. Compare and contrast Sunaya and Praseep's relationship at the beginning, middle and end of the story. How do their feelings towards one another change? What experiences prompt this change?
10. What are some of the pros and cons of living in Sunaya's village and in SkyCity (e.g. superior village food, stunning SkyCity architecture)? Where would you rather live and why? How does Praseep's attitude towards Sunaya's village change? What resources might these neighbours trade now the ancient feud is resolved?
11. Would you describe this novel as an adventure? Quest? Mystery? Fantasy? In pairs, brainstorm these genres' characteristics that are present in the story (e.g. the 'chosen one' trope, magical powers, battle of good vs evil, magical objects etc.). Does the novel fit neatly into a single genre? In what ways are genre labels useful? In what ways are they limiting?
12. How do each of the characters grow/change as a result of their experiences? How are the themes of courage, friendship, forgiveness, resilience, strength and the magic of nature portrayed?
13. What message/s do you personally take away from the story? What did you enjoy most about the book and why?

Creative writing
1. *Narrative writing:* Use an A3 narrative planning framework to map the plot of *The Lost Stone of SkyCity* as follows: exposition, conflict, rising action, climax, falling action, resolution. Next, use this framework to plan and draft your own short story inspired by one of the following prompts:
    a. *On a wrongness scale from Bad to Certain Doom, this plan feels right up there.* (p. 7)
    b. If you could have any magic power, what would it be?
2. *Continue the story:* The epilogue hints that Sunaya will return to SkyCity to receive her Cloud Pendant. What do you imagine will happen when she tells her village that the Ice-People really exist? Write the next three chapters.
3. *Point of view:* The novel is narrated solely in the first person from the point of view of Sunaya. Rewrite your favourite scene from the perspective of either Danam, Praseep, Princess Rishala, Aji or Vilpur. How do they feel towards the other characters? How is your scene different to the original when narrated from a new point of view?
4. *Self-esteem:* '*I've never felt freer than since I came up here and found out I wasn't a freak. I say, be who you are, Your Highness, and be proud of it.*' (p. 236) What do you think Sunaya means? What makes you unique? What achievements are you proud of?
5. *Figurative language:* Find examples of personification, simile and metaphor in the following excerpts. How do these literary devices enhance the reading experience? Can you incorporate simile, metaphor and personification into your own creative writing?
    a. *The clouds crouch heavy over our heads, like dragon plumes.* (p. 7)
    b. *With each step, the snow dislodged by my boots spills and tumbles a few paces down to wait precariously. Sometimes it finds friends and they continue to dance further down … I hear the music of their dance, and a part of me rejoices. The rest of me is relieved when it stops. If they keep tumbling, keep finding friends, little spills grow into avalanches. And then we're all dead.* (p. 20)
6. *Nature walk and free verse poetry:* Sunaya demonstrates a profound connection to the natural world and a deep respect and love of the mountains. Do you have a special place where you feel connected to nature? Visit this location and make notes on the following: *I see ... I feel ... I smell ... I hear ... I notice ... I wonder ...* Compose a free-verse poem using simile, metaphor and personification to transport your reader to your special place.

History and geography
1. In pairs, research a famous historical mountain climber using the following subheadings: country of origin, achievements, challenges, tragedies. Create 2–3 PowerPoint slides to present to the class.
2. Sunaya survives an avalanche. Research famous examples of this natural disaster using the following subheadings: description, location/date/time, causes, damage, loss of life.

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3. On her Instagram page, HM Waugh cites Jungfrau in Switzerland as a location that inspired her writing: *This valley inspired my vision of the magical route to SkyCity over The Roof of the World.* Locate Switzerland on a world map. View images of Jungfrau. How tall is it? What range does it belong to? Research Switzerland using the following subheadings*:* geography, climate, language/s, flag, capital, leaders, government, ethnicities and religions, food/clothing/music/holidays, famous historical events.

4. On her Instagram page, HM Waugh cites Chola Pass in Nepal as a location that inspired her writing: *This magical place is what I imagined as I wrote the first chapter.* Locate Nepal on a world map. View images of Chola Pass. Does it match what you imagined? What range does it belong to? Research Nepal using the following subheadings: geography, climate, language/s, flag, capital, leaders, government, ethnicities and religions, food/clothing/music/holidays, famous historical events.

5. What is the name of the tallest mountain in the world and where is it located? Would you like to climb a mountain one day? What sort of training would you need? What is altitude sickness? What other dangers might you face? What specialised equipment will you need?

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