

A TEACHER'S GUIDE TO

MAGNUS FIN AND THE OCEAN QUEST

by Janis Mackay



www.florisbooks.co.uk

Themes/issues addressed in this book

Friendship, family, loneliness, bravery, the sea, sea creatures, folklore, lies, being different, being bullied

Book Summary

Winner of the Kelpies Prize 2009. Magnus Fin wants to be more brave and he also wants a friend, for his is a lonely existence next to the sea, in the north of Scotland. His parents have strangely aged prematurely and he is bullied at school because he is different. On his 11th birthday he finds out just how different that is – he is half selkie, and his family under the ocean need his help. The false king – a hideous evil monster – has sent Neptune to sleep and the oceans are dying. Magnus must wake Neptune in order to save the oceans and his selkie family, and make his parents young and happy again. With the support of a new friend, Tarkin, and his selkie family, Magnus learns to be brave, and he learns that being different can be cool. With humour and tremendously likeable characters, this award-winning novel by Janis MacKay will appeal to both boys and girls.

BEFORE READING

Group Activities

- Discussion: what is a selkie? Do you know any tales about them?
- Discussion: do you think it is good to be different? Why? Why not?
- Discussion: how many sea creatures can you name, real and imaginary?

AFTER READING (note, contains spoilers!)

Individual Work

- Write a paragraph on the thoughts and feelings you had when:
 - a) You read Magnus Fin's letter (chapter 1)
 - b) Magnus Fin finds a friend (chapter 8)
 - c) Ragnor tells Magnus Fin his story (chapter 9)
 - d) Magnus Fin wakes up to find himself face-to-face with a shark (chapter 19)
 - e) Aquella appears at school (chapter 28)
- On page 68, Tarkin tells Magnus Fin that he lied about his parents. Can you think of a time that you lied about something? Why did you do it? How did you feel afterwards? Write three paragraphs about this.
- Magnus Fin and Tarkin both write a letter and throw it into the sea in a bottle. Write your own letter about what you badly want, but don't throw it into the sea – keep it and reread it from time to time. Think about why you want these things.
- Reread the description of the monster in chapter 20, and then draw or paint what you think he looks like. Compare your picture with others in the class.

Group Activities

- Class project: the Titanic. Magnus Fin thinks he has a sign from the wreck of the Titanic. Find out all you can about this ship. Where was she built? When was she built? What happened to her? What happened to the people who sailed on her? You may use the internet and your library to do your research.
- Group project: sharks. Find out about one of the following sharks: great white shark, tiger shark, basking shark, hammerhead shark, megamouth shark, angel shark, whale shark. What characteristics do they have? In which part of the world might you find them? What do they eat? What is their lifespan? Write a report on this any and other facts you can find out and present it to your class. You may also like to draw a picture of your chosen shark.

(continued overleaf)

Kelpies Series Summary

The award-winning Kelpies series is Scotland's favourite collection of children's fiction. Floris Books took over the list in 2001, republishing classic works by authors such as Kathleen Fidler, Mollie Hunter, George Mackay Brown and Allan Campbell McLean. Since then, we have continued to add to the series with a range of highly successful new Scottish novels for children including books by Gill Arbuthnott, Alex Nye, Lari Don, Anne Forbes, Annemarie Allan, Mike Nicholson and Margaret Forrester.

CURRICULUM REQUIREMENTS COVERED

5–14 Curriculum (Scotland)

Years: P4–P7

Listening:

Listening in Groups
Listening for Information, including instructions and directions

Reading:

Reading for Information
Reading to Reflect
Awareness of Genre

Talking:

Talking in Groups
Talking about Texts
Talking about Experiences, including feelings and opinions

Writing:

Functional
Imaginative

National Curriculum (England, Wales, Northern Ireland)

Key Stage 2

English: Reading

Reading Strategies
Response to Texts, including analysing and evaluating
Reading for Information

National Literacy Strategy:

Text-Level Reading
Text-Level Writing
Vocabulary

- Class discussion: sea pollution. Do you think the sea is polluted? Do we have evidence of this? What things pollute the sea? How might you help to reduce sea pollution?

Vocabulary

- Check you know what the following words mean (page numbers of example words in brackets):

Affliction (11)	Animated (182)	Anticipation (66)	Aura (93)	Cavernous (149)
Communist (11)	Cove (9)	Distorted (102)	Fronde (81)	Furrowed (32)
Gratitude (71)	Grotesque (85)	Haggard (22)	Hermit (167)	Impersonation (36)
Inherit (139)	Jutting	Macabre (138)	Majestic (75)	Mercury (133)
Noxious (93)	Organic (11)	Ozone (13)	Periscope (120)	Petrified (59)
Quaked (116)	Quizzically (163)	Resembled (16)	Reveries (147)	Rigid (57)
Sculptor (44)	Senile (61)	Snorkel (48)	Stammered (27)	Strewn (61)
Tentacle (48)	Tinder (60)	Trilled (80)	Unnerving (125)	Writhed (138)