

A TEACHER'S GUIDE TO

WITCH SILVER BY Anne Forbes



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Themes/issues addressed in this book

Magic, the Borders, friendship, family, death, trust, growing-up, boarding school, deception, forgiveness, recklessness, moving home, going to a new school

Book Summary

When Aunt Muriel dies, the MacLean Family inherit Craiglaw House in the Borders, and leave Edinburgh and all their magical friends with some reluctance. However, magic does not take long to find them in their new home. Unknown to them, Aunt Muriel was actually Merial, estranged daughter of the wizard, Lord Jezail, and she has left a powerful talisman to Clara. All Clara has to do is decipher a riddle in order to find it. Unfortunately, the Wind, Earth, and Snow Witches covet it, and Lord Jezail also wants it. The MacLeans, aided and abetted by the MacArthurs, and Arthur, the mighty dragon, begin a desperate hunt to find the talisman before it falls into the wrong hands. This is the fifth enjoyable instalment in the 'Dragonfire' series, largely set in the Borders.

BEFORE READING

Group Activities

- Discussion: where are the Borders? Can you find this area on a map? Have you ever been there?
- Discussion: do you think ghosts exist? Why? Why not?
- Discussion: what do you think it would be like to go to boarding school? Do you think you'd enjoy it? Why? Why not? (If in boarding school, ask question about day school.)
- Discussion: what is a talisman? What properties are talismans supposed to have?

AFTER READING

Individual Work

- Write a paragraph on the thoughts and feelings you had when:
 - a) Lady Merial contemplates her own death (chapter 1)
 - b) Neil and Clara sneak into the earth witches' castle (chapter 14)
 - c) Clara finds the talisman and the witches spring into action (chapter 18)
 - d) Clara call up the daemons (chapter 22)
 - e) The Lords of the North save Prince Kalman (chapter 32)
- Starting school: try to think back to your first day at school, can you remember it? Who did you meet? What did you do? What was your teacher called? Did you want to go back the following day? Write three paragraphs on your memories.
- 'As the crow flies' – this expression is used in chapter 13, and it means to travel in a straight line, taking the quickest route between two points. Using a map of your local area, try to find out how far it is from your home to school 'as the crow flies'. You may ask a parent, grandparent or sibling to help you out if you get stuck. Compare with your classmates to see who has the shortest and longest distance to travel to school, as the crow flies.

Group Activities

- Group activity: riddles. What is a riddle? Look at the riddle in chapter 9 then divide into groups and come up with a riddle of your own. Take it in turns to present your riddle to the class and ask them to solve it if they can.
- Class discussion: moving from the city into the countryside. What do you think this would be like for children like Neil and Clara? They were born and raised in Edinburgh and move to an old house in the countryside. What do you think they'd miss about the city? What do you think they'd enjoy about the countryside? What are the 'pros' and 'cons' of moving home? Do the pros outweigh the cons? Is the countryside a better place to live in than the city? Give reasons for your answers.

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 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. Of these, *Chill* by Alex Nye won a Royal Mail Award in 2007, *Hox* by Annemarie Allan was nominated for a Royal Mail Award in 2008, and *First Aid for Fairies and Other Fabled Beasts* by Lari Don won a Royal Mail Award in 2009.

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

- Class activity: have a crop circle competition. Do some research into crop circles, and then create your own crop circle design. You may use the Internet to help you with your research. Compare your design with your classmates and decide whose is best. Try to be as original as possible, but follow the general crop circle idea, i.e. round not square!

Vocabulary

- Check you know what the following words mean:

adorned (150)	dais (215)	formidable (154)	momentarily (49)	retaliate (62)
aisle (73)	decrepit (141)	gesticulating (161)	muster (185)	rivalries (10)
arrogantly (45)	despair (15)	gesture (204)	neutralized (169)	rueful (229)
assertion (117)	disdainfully (190)	horde (215)	octaves (182)	shrewd (19)
auditorium (153)	dismissively (65)	instinctively (55)	oppressive (124)	speculatively (45)
blight (15)	dismounted (97)	interspersed (174)	ornate (152)	steeped (66)
chintz (27)	distraught (156)	intricate (41)	parchment (152)	unrepentantly (24)
citadel (44)	enmity (163)	intriguing (114)	pentagram (246)	vast (43)
climate (87)	enormity (20)	irregular (100)	pestilence (11)	vigour (127)
composure (229)	exasperation (107)	luminous (36)	petrified (139)	withered (169)
consternation (246)	famine (22)	magnetism (238)	plight (176)	
copious (101)	floundered (139)	malevolently (87)	reluctant (65)	
counteract (191)	formality (226)	mirth (160)	respite (166)	