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OCEAN
AND the
BONES
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Ages 8+

Discussion Notes & Activities



The Ocean and the Bones

By Genevieve Carver

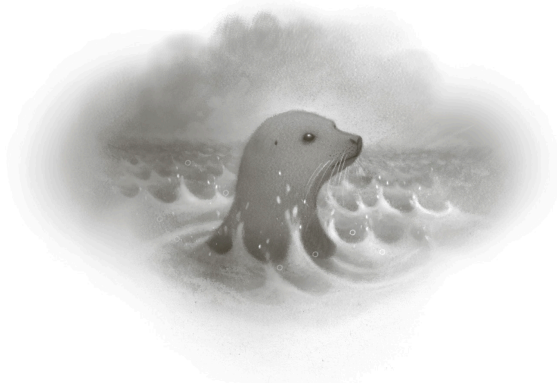


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This resource pack provides discussion prompts, activities and creative tasks designed to support reading *The Ocean and the Bones* in the classroom, school library or book group.

It is suitable for UKS2 and KS3 and supports cross-curricular links with English, History, Science, Art and PSHE.

Read this book for the following themes:

- Stone Age Life – survival, shelter, tools and daily life
- Nature and Survival – the power of the ocean and the struggle to stay alive
- Friendship and Trust – building trust across differences
- Belonging and Acceptance – listening to and accepting outsiders
- Belief and Ritual – how people in the story understand nature, death and the unknown
- Grief and Letting Go – how characters deal with loss



Before Reading...



Book Cover Clues

Look closely at the cover and answer:

- What people, animals or objects can you see on the cover? What might they tell us about the story?
- Where do you think the story takes place? What clues help you decide?
- Does the cover feel calm, dangerous or both? What makes you think this?
- Are there any clues that suggest when the story is set (e.g. clothing, tools, landscape)?
- What kind of journey might the characters be going on. Is it physical, emotional or both?

Quick Activity: Predicting Life in Meg's World

These words appear in Chapter One. Predict their meanings and group them into the categories below.

Key Terms:

- Sunhealer
- Sunhealer's Shadow
- Blackstone pendant
- Water Spirits
- Long Mound
- Clay bowls
- Greenstone axe
- Kinfolk
- Crops
- Earthen huts
- Chant
- Knapping flint
- Twine
- Grain
- The Evernight

Catagories:

<p>People/Roles</p>	<p>Objects/Tools</p>
<p>Places/Environment</p>	<p>Beliefs/Actions</p>

Discussion Questions

- Which words seem part of everyday life?
- Which seem mystical or imaginary?
- What kind of world might this be?

Extension: As a class, create a Word Wall. Add definitions as you read and update your predictions.

During Reading...

1. Beliefs Log

Track how beliefs about nature, spirits and rituals shape the world and characters. As you read, look out for moments that show what people in Meg's community believe about the world.

Complete the log with evidence from the text. An example from the first chapter, 'Bones', has been done for you.

Belief or Ritual	What do people believe?	Evidence (quote or detail)
That if the kinsfolk give bones to the Water Spirits, they will behave more kindly towards them.	Giving bones to the Water Spirits to mark the passing of a leader.	"We offer you these gifts, so you may look more kindly on us."

Things to consider as you read:

- What do people in Meg's community believe about:
 - Death?
 - Nature (water/earth/sun/moon)?
 - Spirits or ancestors?
 - Outsiders or strangers?
- Are these beliefs based on fear, respect or tradition?
- How do beliefs influence what people do?
- Are there any times in the story when beliefs are challenged – by events or by other characters' perspectives?

2. Reading Questions

Challenge: Try to add your own questions or notes under each category as you read.

Stone Age Life & Survival

- What challenges do Little Meg and her village face?
- How do people find food, shelter and safety? What are the main threats to survival?

Nature & the Ocean

- How is the ocean shown in the story – calm, dangerous or both?
- How does nature shape Little Meg's journey and choices?

The Journey

- Why does Little Meg go on this journey? What is she trying to achieve?
- What obstacles does she face and how do they test her?

Community, Friendship & Trust

- How does Little Meg's community react to Kalø as an outsider?
- How does the relationship between Little Meg and Kalø change over time?
- What helps Meg and Kalø trust one another?

Belonging & Acceptance

- What does the story suggest about accepting someone who is different?
- When do characters show openness – or resistance – to change?

Danger & Belief

- What dangers threaten Meg and her community?
- How do people explain these dangers (e.g. spirits or rituals)?
- How does Kalø's arrival threaten some of these beliefs?
- What motivates some of the characters – for example Duggleby?

Grief & Letting Go

- How does grief influence Little Meg's decisions and actions?
- What does she learn about letting go?

Courage & Growth

- When does Little Meg feel afraid? How does she respond?
- How does she change by the end of the story? What has she learned?

After Reading...

Complete these creative classroom activities to explore the key themes of the book.

Activity 1: A Day in Chalk Howe (Stone Age Life)

Read the extract taken from the chapter entitled 'The Bones':

Chalk Howe nestles at the foot of the Rolling Hills, on the edge of the grasslands that stretch all the way to the sea. The huts of the dwelling-place are scattered around our common yard, always busy with folk cooking, chatting, snapping flint, making twine or grinding grain. Tonight we gather in the yard and feast on smoked pigmeat with garlic leaf and honey. The elders drink dandelion wine, while the youngers slurp raspberry juice. Monzie and other dogs sniff about the beaten earth for scraps or gnaw on bones. Grey Wethers, Clara and I sit among the kinfolk, tearing into strips of meat.

In different colours, highlight or underline the following examples of Stone Age life:

- Food and drink
- Jobs or activities
- Tools or materials
- Social life (how people interact)

Task 1: Create a map or model of a Stone Age village.

Make sure you include:

- Earthen huts
- Common yard
- Work areas (flint knapping, grain grinding)
- Food preparation space
- Animals

Add labels like:

- "Here we grind grain for bread"
- "This is where we feast together"

Extension:

Add a new feature (e.g. ritual space, storage pit) and explain it.

Task 2: In groups, create a soundscape performance of the village.

Recreate:

- Grinding grain (rubbing sounds)
- Knapping flint (tapping)
- Dogs sniffing
- People chatting/feasting

Then perform it while one student reads the extract.

Extension: recreate the scene when the storm hits.

Task 3: Choose a role in the village:

- Child
- Elder
- Toolmaker
- Food preparer

Write a diary entry:

“Today in Chalk Howe...”

Include:

- Sensory detail (see, hear, smell)
- At least 3 activities from the extract
- One personal feeling or problem

Task 3: Imagine you are part of the Chalk Howe community. Your job is to create a Survival Guide to help others prepare for dangers.

Choose or invent at least 2 threats, such as:

- A violent storm
- Illness spreading through the village
- Strangers arriving
- Food shortage
- Dangerous animals

For each threat, complete the guide:

Threat: What is the danger?

Warning Signs: How do you know it is coming?

What Happens: What might go wrong?

How to Survive: What should people do to stay safe?

Who Leads: Who takes charge and why?

Activity 2: Choose your Dyr

Kalø's Dyr is a seal – she describes it as “like a heartbeat, always underneath everything.”

- Why might a seal be a powerful symbol?
- What does “underneath everything” suggest?

Task 1: Create your own Dyr.

- Choose an animal to be your Dyr
- It can be from the:
 - Sea (like Kalø's)
 - Land
 - Sky

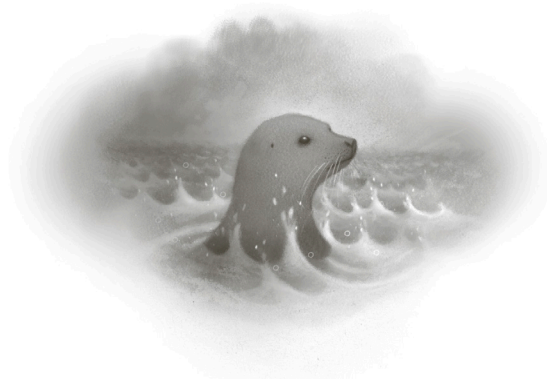
Consider: What does your Dyr represent?
(Choose at least 2 ideas or come up with your own)

- Strength
- Fear
- Protection
- Freedom
- Anger
- Survival
- Mystery

Task 2: Sketch your Dyr.

You can make it:

- Realistic
- Symbolic
- Or inspired by the world of the novel



Activity 3: Competing Beliefs

In *The Ocean and the Bones*, characters sometimes understand the same event in different ways.

Little Meg and Kalø do not always see the world in the same way, especially when it comes to nature, spirits and belief.

Task 1: Are there any examples in the story where the same event or idea is understood differently?

- What happens?
- What is one character's view (belief, tradition or story)?
- What is the competing view (a different way of understanding)?

Discuss:

- Does one perspective seem more "right" or do both have value?
- How does listening to a different point of view change the characters involved?

Task 2: Imagine an event in the story's world (e.g. a storm, illness, animal behaviour).

Now explain it in two different ways:

1. Belief/Story Version:

- What do people believe is happening?
- Is there a spirit, ritual or tradition involved?

2. Another Way of Seeing:

- How else could this be understood?
- What clues or observations might explain it?

Present your idea as:

- A split-page drawing (one side for each view)
- OR a short dialogue between two characters

Extension:

How does this link to the idea of accepting an outsider?

- What can people learn by listening to different ways of seeing the world?