

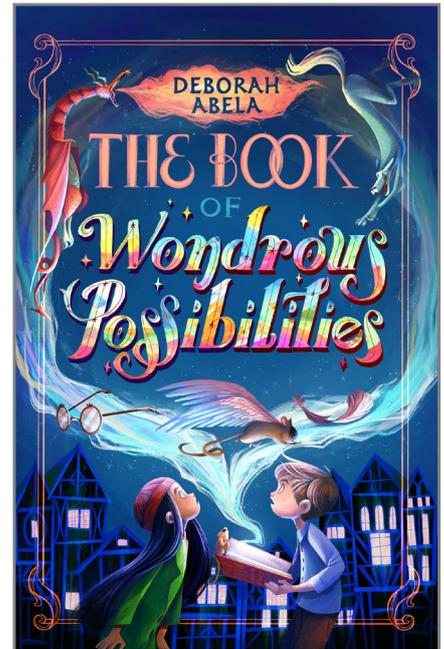
The Book of Wondrous Possibilities

AUTHOR
DEBORAH ABELA

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RECOMMENDED FOR: Mid Primary



SYNOPSIS

Arlo Goodman lives with his Uncle Avery in a run-down flat above their bookshop. He has no friends, except for his pet mouse, Herbert.

But when a girl called Lisette bursts into the shop and begs him to hide her from a murderer, Arlo's life changes forever.

He's swept up into an adventure involving kidnappers, car chases and a story in *The Book of Wondrous Possibilities*, where Arlo and his skymouse battle dragons. But can Arlo find the courage to battle an even greater enemy, who threatens to destroy everything he loves?

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

After training as a teacher, Deb travelled to Africa where she was harassed by monkeys, caught in a desert sandstorm and thrown in jail . . . twice! She's worked as a child wrangler and a rides operator at Luna Park, but her first real job was as writer/producer of a national children's TV show at Network TEN.

She has since become an internationally published and awarded author of twenty-eight books including her climate change trilogy.

Deb's won awards for her work but mostly hopes to be as brave as her characters. She's a proud ambassador for the charities, Room to Read and Books in Homes.

The Book of Wondrous Possibilities is her love letter to books, booksellers, librarians and readers. Find out more about Deb at deborahabela.com.

STUDY NOTES

BEFORE READING

- Before reading the book, look at the cover. What do you think the story will be about? What does the design tell you about the book? (For example, think about the colours, the characters and objects, the font choice, the use of light and shade.)
- What genre do you think this book will fall into? Are there any unusual objects on the cover? What do you think might be their role in the story?
- How many characters can you see? What kind of personalities do you think they might have and how do you think

they might fit into the story?

- Who do you think the book is aimed at? Why?
- What do you think the main story elements will be? What about the cover makes you think this?
- Before reading the blurb on the back cover, write your own blurb, based on the cover. Give a location for the novel, the characters' names and tell the reader what problems they are going to face in the story.
- Write a first paragraph that you think would match the cover and your blurb. Would you start with a quiet opening paragraph or would you have something exciting happen straightaway? Remember, it's important to intrigue your reader as soon as you can.

WRITING STYLE

- How would you describe Deborah Abela's writing style? Do you think her writing style suits this type of story?
- There are two parts to the narrative in *The Book of Wondrous Possibilities*: the regular story and then the excerpts from the grimoire called *The Book of Wondrous Possibilities*. Do you think there are differences in the writing style between these two sections? How has the author made these sections look and feel different when designing the book?
- The narrative changes points of view between Arlo, Benedict and Viola. Why do you think the author decided to give space in the narrative for their voices as well as Arlo's? Are there things that the reader needs to know that we couldn't get from Arlo's point of view?
- Write a scene from Lisette's point of view. Don't forget to include how she is feeling and what she is thinking within the scene.
- Write a scene from Herbert's point of view. How does writing from an animal's point of view differ from that of a human? What different things do you have to take into consideration when writing from the point of view of an animal? Especially a very small one like Herbert!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS AND ACTIVITIES

- Can you think of other stories that involve a particular book (or books in general) within the plot? For example, *The Neverending Story* by Michael Ende, *Matilda* by Roald Dahl, *Inkheart* by Cornelia Funke. Why do you think these types of stories are so popular?
- What do you think books mean to the characters in the novel? Do you think books mean the same thing to Arlo as they do to Silas? Does Uncle Avery love books the same way that Benedict does?
- In the novel, Lisette's book, *The Book of Wondrous Possibilities*, is a grimoire. Did grimoires exist in real life? Or is this something the author has made up for the story?
- Why do you think the author has decided not to include the story Lisette wrote for Marcellus? Do you think including 'The Legend of Queen Viola and Sir Muttly' would change the climax of the story? How do you think it would have affected pace and tension?
- Choose a section from the climax of 'The Courageous Adventure of Arlo Goodman' (pp 272–275) and draw a picture of that scene. Include a brief description of what would happen if you looked at the picture using the pink glasses from the back of *The Book of Wondrous Possibilities*. Think of all the senses, including touch, taste and smell!
- Create a timeline to show how the events in the narrative reflect the events in 'The Courageous Adventure of Arlo Goodman'. Do events often overlap?
- Write your version of 'The Legend of Queen Viola and Sir Muttly'. Once you have finished, swap with a classmate and read their version. Are there places where you wrote similar things? Why do you think that is? (Or isn't!)
- Research the grimoires mentioned on p 14 of the novel. What part did they play in changing the landscape of printing and book making at the time?
- There are many ways an author can help to build a well-rounded character: background, description, voice, dialogue style. But are there others that the author can employ?
- Do you think a character's name can affect what the reader thinks of them? For example, what impression do you get when you find out the main character's name is Arlo Goodman? Compared to finding out the villain is named Silas

Gray?

- Can you think of other books you have read where the name of a character reflected their personality? Some examples you might explore include Roald Dahl's books, or the Harry Potter series.
- Can you find examples of a character suiting their name in *The Book of Wondrous Possibilities*? (They don't have to be main characters either!)
 - Find two examples of names reflecting the character's personality and draw a mind map showing why you think this might be so. For example, why do you think the author named one of the main 'villains' Silas Gray? How does his name reflect his personality and his status within the story?
- Why do you think the author gave Jonathan Wolf his name? How does his name build on the narrative and help create tension? Can you find other examples of this type of use throughout the text? To create either more tension or humour?
- Go back through the book and find out what Griselda's and Uncle Avery's 'theatrical' names are. What is it about these names that makes them theatrical?
- Why do you think the author has used so many descriptions of food in the story? Do you think it adds to the narrative or to the character building?
- Look at the food that Griselda, Avery, Arlo and Lisette eat on p 72 and compare it to the meals Benedict eats on p 183. How does their choice of food reflect on their character and the tone of the story at the time? If the meals were swapped—if Griselda, Avery, Arlo and Lisette ate the pheasant pie, etc, and Benedict ate cheese toasties—how would the scene be different? Would it be a big enough difference to change the narrative and effect events in the story? Why or why not?
- What are your favourite recipes that remind you of home, family or a special memory?
- Although Lisette's fondness for banana cake can be read as humorous, is there another side to her passion for this particular cake? Find evidence in the text for your reasoning.
- Write a list of other novels you have read where food is important, or a major feature of the story.
- Take a look at the description of banana cake that Lisette gives on p 8. Try to write up the recipe starting with the ingredients Lisette mentions, and try to fill in the rest yourself. Then research the recipe for banana cake. How many ingredients did you have right? Does it match the description Lisette gives in the book?
- Does the story of 'The Courageous Adventure of Arlo Goodman' in the grimoire help Arlo become more brave, or does he become brave for other reasons?
- How does Herbert help Arlo to overcome his fears? Do you have a pet who helps to comfort you and make you feel safe?
- Why is it so important to Lisette to stand up against bullies?
- Make a list of instances of bravery and courage in the story.
- Research real-life people who have stood up against bullies or unfair laws or systems, or overcome challenges in their lives, and what they did to initiate change in the world or to show great courage in their lives. Some people you could choose for your research include:
 - Malala Yousafzai
 - Greta Thunberg
 - Marley Dias
 - Mick Dodson
 - Mahatma Gandhi
 - Martin Luther King, Jr
 - Rosa Parks
 - Turia Pitt
 - Mary Mackillop.
- What does 'home' mean to Arlo? What does it mean to Lisette? What does it mean to you?
- What things do Uncle Avery and Arlo do to help Lisette feel safe and comfortable in their home above the bookshop?
- Is 'home' about a place or about people?

- Lisette is determined to get her grandmother's bookshop back and feels that it is the only thing that will make her happy. What changes her mind?
- Draw a mind map with yourself in the centre and all the different things that make up your feeling of 'home' around you. Make sure to include people, places, pets and objects!