

Miss Mary-Kate Martin's Guide to Monsters #2: The Trouble with the Two-Headed Hydra

AUTHOR

KAREN FOXLEE

ILLUSTRATOR

FREDA CHIU

SCIS: 5425657

ISBN: 9781760526634

RECOMMENDED FOR: Mid Primary



SYNOPSIS

Mary-Kate and her mother are visiting Galinios, an idyllic Greek Island filled with history and surrounded by the shimmering Aegean Sea. An ancient mosaic has been unearthed at the local sardine processing plant and Professor Martin must investigate, leaving Mary-Kate to enjoy a few days of sunshine and antiquity.

But a message asking for help changes everything. A wrecked boat and smashed jetty have recently disrupted life on this tranquil island and point to a monster-sized mystery. Could the local legend of the Two-Headed Hydra be more than a story? If so, what could make this historically serene sea creature so angry?

Armed with her glitter pens and strawberry-scented notebook, Miss Mary-Kate Martin is determined to find answers. She might be scared of heights, but there is no problem too big for her to solve.

The second mystery story in this delightful fantasy-adventure series.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Karen Foxlee is an Australian author who writes for both kids and young adults. She grew up in the Australian outback mining town Mount Isa and still frequently dreams she is walking barefoot along the dry Leichhardt River. *Ophelia and the Marvellous Boy*, Karen's first novel for children, was published internationally to much acclaim while her second novel for younger readers, *A Most Magical Girl*, won the Readings Children's Fiction Prize and was shortlisted for the CBCA Awards. Her next book was the internationally successful *Lenny's Book of Everything*, which won multiple awards including the NSW Premier's Literary Awards, the Queensland Literary Awards, the Indies Book Award, was a CBCA Honour Book and was nominated for the Carnegie Medal. Her latest middle-grade novel, *Dragon Skin*, was a CBCA Honour Book, winner of the Aurealis Awards and was shortlisted for the NSW Premier's Literary Awards, the Indie Book Awards and the ABIA Awards.

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Freda Chiu is an author and illustrator from Sydney. As well as illustrating children's books, her work spans comics, editorial and retail graphics. Outside her art practice, Freda lectures in Illustration at the University of Technology Sydney. Her debut picture book, *A Trip to the Hospital*, was shortlisted for the CBCA Award for New Illustrator and the IBBY Australia Ena Noël Awards.

STUDY NOTES

- Before reading, examine the front cover and look for clues in the title, font, illustrations and colours to help you answer the following questions:
 - What is the name of the girl in the story?
 - What sort of person do you think she might be?
 - What is a hydra?
 - Where does it live: on the land or in the sea?
 - What genre are you expecting this book to be?
 - Do you think this story will be dark and terrifying?
 - What is it about the colours used on the cover, the images and the font that helped you answer the last question?
- What sort of story might you expect when you first open the book and see the map of Galinios? Do you think dark and scary things might happen on an island like that? What was it about the illustration that made you feel this way?
- Move on to the first page of text describing the 'monster' under the surface of the sea. Look at the language used here and carefully note the words that stood out to you. How did words such as slid, writhed and lurked make you feel? How did the idea of a monster lurking underneath while people above go about their business unaware make you feel? Why do you think the author mentions the name of the island—and its translation in English—here?
- Turning the page, how did the language of the next section—the excerpt from P.K. Mayberry's *A Brief Guide to Monsters and Monster Hunters*—compare with the earlier scene? Did the decorative flourishes above and below the excerpt, along with the striped effect behind it, contribute to how you felt reading this section? How did the changes in tone from map to creature to excerpt make you feel about the story ahead?
- 'Brand new sparkly red shoes, blue shorts and a blue and white striped T-shirt. She wondered what she needed to balance the stripes. Her red sparkly backpack had helped, but she needed something else ... If everything in her suitcase matched, nothing terrible could possibly happen, only she didn't own nearly enough nautical type clothes.' (p 3) Clothes and accessories tell us a lot about some characters in the story. What do they tell us about:
 - Mary-Kate's personality
 - Mary-Kate's grandmother
 - Katarina
 - Eva Nikolaou?
- 'Her granny always said, Mary-Kate, you have trouble with beginnings and endings, but you're very good with in-betweens. Sometimes all you have to do is start.' (p 38) What do you think Mary-Kate's grandmother meant when she said this about her? How do Mary-Kate's adventures on the island of Galinios support this statement?
- Many seemingly trivial things make Mary-Kate feel anxious, including mismatching clothes. When she is anxious she begins to imagine the worst possible outcome for her situation, such as avalanches and volcanoes. When people do this it is called catastrophising. What are some of Mary-Kate's coping mechanisms for controlling her thoughts? Can you suggest any other ways she might be able to control them? Does she learn to control them better by the end of the story? What does she do or say in the story that led you to think this? What sort of people at school or in the community might Mary-Kate approach to help her deal with her anxiety and catastrophising?
- Foreshadowing is when readers are given a hint about what will happen next. Can you see a pattern emerge between the excerpts from P.K. Mayberry's book and what happens in the chapter that follows? Make a list of each excerpt and match it with at least one event in its accompanying chapter. How did the excerpts make you feel as you began each chapter? Why do you think the author, Karen Foxlee, wanted you to feel that way?
- The Kyrios Famous Sardines Processing Plant is both a key plot point and a symbol for something relating to our modern society. If a symbol is something that represents an idea, emotion or state of mind—for instance white is both a colour and something that represents purity and innocence—then what do you think the processing plant's operations say about our attitudes to the environment?
- What is the significance of Mary-Kate's postcard to her granny at the end of the story?
- Although trying to achieve a good thing, should Georgios Nikolaou be punished for what he did?
- In what way is Mary-Kate's world like ours and in what important way is it different? [Answer: it has mobile phones,

grand hotels, fishing villages, monsters and books about how to catch monsters.]

- What are some of your favourite worlds in books and movies?
- Write a short story in which you wake up in a world that is only slightly different to your own, but where the differences make it very scary.