

Temora and the Wordsnatcher

AUTHOR
KATE GORDON

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RECOMMENDED FOR: Upper Primary



SYNOPSIS

Temora Murphy is eleven years old. She lives in a world where she never really fits. The other girls make fun of her. She's not the 'right' sort of girl for anyone—least of all her mother. On the candles of her birthday cake, she wishes for escape. Like magic, in a black pearl box at the bottom of her garden, books begin to appear. The books help her to leave her world and find another where she belongs.

On her twelfth birthday, Temora makes another wish, a wish that alters her life forever. Temora Tempest is welcomed into a world within a book, where everyone else has been waiting for her. But when some of the other apprentices fall victim to a magical disease that could only be caused by one person—a monster thought long dead—Temora realises that there can be darkness in every story. And that it might be her job to save everyone.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Kate Gordon grew up in a very bookish house, in a small town by the sea in Tasmania. After studying performing arts and realising she was a terrible actor, Kate decided to become a librarian. She never stopped writing and, in 2009, she applied for and won a Varuna fellowship, which led to all sorts of lovely writer things happening. Kate's first book, *Three Things About Daisy Blue*, was published in 2010. Her most recent publications are the middle-grade novels in the Direleafe Hall series, and *Aster's Good, Right Things*, which won the CBCA Book of the Year for Younger Readers.

THEMES

- Self-belief
- Belonging
- Body acceptance
- Friendship
- Self-acceptance
- Courage
- Family neglect
- Trauma
- The power of reading

STUDY NOTES**BEFORE READING**

- Show the cover to the class and ask the students what they think the book might be about.
- Read the back cover blurb. Does this give them more of an idea of what the book could be about?

AFTER READING

- Ask students if Temora reminds them of anyone they know: a friend, a sibling, themselves perhaps.
- What is their first impression of Temora?
- How does Temora change over the course of the story?
- Pick one of Temora's friends. How do they help her in her quest and to begin to believe in herself?
- Did you guess who the villains were? Explain your reasoning. Is there anyone else in the text who you think might not be who they seem?
- Ask students how they perceive Temora's situation. Does she prevail and come out of the events okay? Do you think these events will have lasting consequences?
- Pick one of the creatures in the book. Are they your favourite? Why? Draw a picture of how you imagine they would look.
- If you could draw an alternative cover of Temora, what would it look like?
- What do you think might happen in book two?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**SELF-BELIEF AND SELF-ACCEPTANCE**

- According to Collins Dictionary 'self-belief' is 'confidence in oneself and one's ability' and in the Cambridge Dictionary 'self-acceptance' is 'the ability to accept yourself as you are, including your faults'. Do you have self-belief or self-acceptance? Do you think either of these things is hard to have? Why?
- Talking down to yourself can sometimes be easier than building yourself up. What are some moments in the story where Temora talks herself down? How does that change over time? In what ways does Temora change to allow herself to accept the way she is?
- Find three instances in the text where Temora begins to believe in herself. Why do you think Temora finds a way to trust and have confidence in herself and her abilities.

BELONGING AND FRIENDSHIP

- At the beginning of the book Temora struggles with her peers and having friends. Often the other children are quite mean to her. How does Temora deal with this? What are some coping strategies to help when you're struggling with friendships and peers?
- What does it mean to belong? Can you belong to a group but still be yourself? Discuss how Temora meets new friends at her new school and how she feels a sense of belonging. Does she change at all or does she simply do better with this group of children? Why might she do better in this new environment?
- Discuss how the power of friendship and belonging helps Temora to find self esteem. Is it easier to develop confidence when you are with people who accept you as you are? Why or why not?

BODY ACCEPTANCE

- What is body positivity and body acceptance? Look it up and then discuss your findings in a group of three-four people. What does it mean to be body positive? How can you be body positive yourself?
- What is the difference between body neutrality, body acceptance and body positivity? What are some pros and cons of each approach?
- Find three moments in the story where body positivity is mentioned. How is Temora body positive? How does she learn to accept and love her own body?
- How does the way the characters in the book are described help contribute to body acceptance?
- Find some pictures online who remind you of Temora. Using body positive language, describe these people.

COURAGE

- Can you think of some instances where Temora has to build up her courage to face something in the story? Write down the moments you can think of and then write some ways you might also find your own courage in similar situations.
- Having courage can be important even when you're not in a fantasy story. Why is having courage something good to try and grow? What does it mean to have courage and how might it help you? Discuss in a group some times where having courage can help you in your everyday life.

FAMILY NEGLECT AND TRAUMA

- Temora's mother at the start of the book is not a very good parent. Discuss several ways Temora's mother neglects and traumatises her.
- What makes a good parent? What should Temora's mother be doing to support and care for Temora?
- Temora has some family trauma from living with her mother. How does that affect her? Write down some ways in which the things Temora's mother says and does at the beginning of the story affects the way Temora acts throughout.

THE POWER OF READING

- Stories and books are at the heart of this narrative. They're used as a way to grow and to heal. Think of some ways that stories help the characters and why.
- Throughout the story Temora grows in strength and power. Find three moments in the story where Temora begins to feel powerful.
- Temora gets powers throughout the story that help her on her journey. How do you think Temora's powers resemble finding our own power in the world? While Temora's powers are fantastical they can be metaphors for real life examples.

ACTIVITIES

WRITE A SHORT STORY

- Temora and the other students create stories for the children of the real world. Pretend to be a student at Temora's school and write some stories of our own.
 - Start with free writing: for ten minutes write whatever comes to mind. Go wild with your story and don't stop to think too hard. Things don't have to be perfect! Just write for fun and come up with a little story.
 - Now let's plan a short story. With a piece of paper fold it into three parts. Write Beginning on the top part, Middle on the middle section, and End on the last one. Come up with a beginning, middle and end to your story. Go home and write your story out.

CREATE A BROCHURE OR POSTER

- Temora goes to a new school, Lyfthelm Tower (run by the Literati in the land of Writungeard) where they learn all kinds of new things about magic, stories and dreamers. Create a brochure or an informational poster for prospective parents of new students. Think about what the benefits of the school are, what they achieve, why it might be good for children to go there, what they learn and anything else you can think of, let your imagination run free!