

Classroom Resources



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The World Between Blinks

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BOOK SUMMARY

Have you ever blinked, and thought you saw something that was gone a moment later? Have you ever turned to pick up an item, only to find it wasn't where you left it?

Jake and Marisol are cousins. Jake's great at leaving things behind – his mum's a diplomat, and he never settles anywhere for long. His latest friends and new favourite places are lost with depressing regularity. Marisol's great at finding things – she's American and she's Bolivian, and this cross-cultural childhood has taught her to pay attention to details. She's got such an eagle eye, and she's so gifted at finding things, that sometimes she even wonders if things find her.

Together, Jake and Marisol are about to discover The World Between Blinks. The place where everything we lose – from the front door keys to ancient cities buried under hot desert sands – eventually appears.

The trick's going to be finding a way home. Before they're lost forever.

KEY LEARNING OUTCOMES

- ACELA1608
- ACELT1611
- ACELT1612

THEMES

- Imagination
- Belonging
- Identity
- Resilience
- Myths and storytelling
- Mystery

Recommended Ages: 8+

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Classroom Resources

Before Reading

Mysteries, myths and the power of storytelling

A key theme in the novel is the power of storytelling to sustain myths and mysteries that otherwise might have been forgotten. By creating an imaginary world where those myths and mysteries from history are abundant, the authors show readers how to expand their imagination and use their favourite stories to inform creative thinking and writing tasks.

The World Between Blinks is a magical place where all kinds of lost things (and people!) end up. Everywhere they turn, Marisol and Jake find real mysteries from history – plus a few they thought were only myths.

The novel makes many intertextual references and travels through periods of time to include all sorts of famous stories, events, places and myths from all over the world, such as the Loch Ness Monster, Amelia Earhart, the fabled city of Atlantis and the Great Mogul Diamond. Examining all the different stories invites students to consider different social, cultural and historical contexts, both in the real world and in fantasy settings.

- Share the myth of the Loch Ness Monster with the class.
 - https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Loch_Ness_Monster
 - <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Loch-Ness-monster-legendary-creature>
- Ask the class whether they believe the myth and why they think so many people have believed for years and years that the myth could be true.
 - What does the story of the Loch Ness Monster tell us about the power of stories and myths?
 - Why do people like myths?
 - What is the appeal of fantasy?
- This Great Mogul Diamond weighed in at 737 carats, the largest ever to be mined in India. Ask the class to research the story.
 - Why is this story so interesting?
 - What is the appeal of the story? Why?

Have a class discussion on why some places and people are more interesting than others. Tease out what are the elements that create an interesting setting or character in a story. Is it about internal conflict, external conflict, an air of mystery, remote location, the promise of a great prize, a problem, hazards, or qualities of a character such as courage and knowledge?

- Ask them to choose a famous person, place or myth to write about.
 - What fantastical elements could they add?
 - What type of mystery could they add?
 - How would this change the shape of the story?

Discuss the title of *The World Between Blinks*. Look at the cover of the book.

- Ask the class to consider what the world between blinks could mean and how might it work.

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During Reading

Where in the world

Using a map of the world, pinpoint all the peoples, places and times mentioned in each chapter of the book and discuss why each one is important. For example, in Chapter Two, Morris Island Light – a lighthouse on Morris Island in South Carolina in the United States – is mentioned, and in Chapter Five, Marisol and Jake find themselves at The Crystal Palace, which was a famous structure in Hyde Park in London that burned down.

- Show the class pictures of some of the people and places mentioned, such as Amelia Earhart and Atlantis, and ask them to work with a partner to create a 300-word news story with pictures about why each person or place would be of interest to a child living in the 2020s.

Words and music

Examine the musicality of language – punctuation, conjunctions, assonance, rhythm and rhyme. Composers shape meaning by using sound devices, which elevate and accentuate the sounds of words. Different forms of punctuation really add to the sound and effect of language.

- Ask each student to read out the below passage aloud. Ask them to pause every time there is a dash, question mark or exclamation mark.
 - How does this impact the audience?

Not hear it?—yes, I hear it, and have heard it. Long—long—long—many minutes, many hours, many days, have I heard it—yet I dared not—oh, pity me, miserable wretch that I am!—I dared not—I dared not speak! We have put her living in the tomb!

'The Fall of the House of Usher' by Edgar Allan Poe

Look at various punctuation devices such as:

Comma ,	A short pause
Colon :	Shows that two parts of a sentence is equal
Semicolon ;	Replaces a conjunction ('and') in a compound sentence; shows in intricate relationship between the two parts of the sentence
Dash —	Indicates added emphasis, an interruption, or an abrupt change of thought

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Assonance is another sound device. This technique is the deliberate repetition of vowel, or A E I O U, sounds, which complements the attitude of the speaker. For example:

- How now brown cow?
- So we'll go no more a-roving - the assonance repeats the 'o' vowel.
- As a class read out:
*She sells sea shells by the sea shore.
The shells she sells are surely seashells.
So if she sells shells on the seashore,
I'm sure she sells seashore shells.*
 - Discuss why the assonance of the e sounds and the sibilance of s – enhances the sound and message of the tongue twister. Ask students to write their own tongue twister using assonance.

Read the first page of *The World Between Blinks* out loud and look at how sound devices are used to shape or enhance meaning:

THE WORLD BETWEEN BLINKS IS ALWAYS THERE.

It is everywhere and it is nowhere.

It is in every wreck, every abandoned lot, every city block, every scraggly patch of woods. It's the place you glimpse out of the corner of your eye, reflected in rain puddles and car windows. Blink. There and gone. Shoved just out of the streetlight's reach.

People see it every day, but they rarely pay attention. The grown-ups are too busy doing grown-up things—like ordering coffee or picking up dry cleaning—to stop and look, really look. Most kids are too distracted to examine it for long. They see the boarded windows and the Danger: Keep Out sign posted by the entrance, and they shrug and go on with their lives.

Most kids.

But there are those who pause a little longer. The daydreamers—kids with burrs on their socks, who name sticks after legendary swords and call out the names of lost cities in their sleep.

They stare into the dark places: blink, blink. They see.

- Using this passage as a model, ask students to write about the place they go to in their imagination. Ask them to write 15 sentences and to use punctuation, assonance, rhyme, rhythm, repetition and short and long sentences to create a composition which evokes a strong emotion or reaction, e.g. beauty, love, fear, anger.

Setting the scene

Setting the scene of a story is very important. Good writers use sensory detail to establish the mood of a setting. Read this passage from *The World Between Blinks* – what senses do the writers appeal to?

MARISOL LOVED THE AIR AROUND THE OCEAN.

It smelled mostly of salt, yes, but there were so many other things happening inside it too. Sunscreen and crying seagulls and driftwood discoveries and waves washing castles back into sand. One breath held all of this.

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- Invite students to create a 150-word scene in a story set by the sea. Encourage them to answer these questions and include the below details in their setting.
 - What can the character observe? Colours, textures, objects?
 - What can the character hear? Sounds – alarm clock, train, baby sleeping?
 - What can the character feel? Touch – fabric? Temperature – hot?
 - What can the character smell? Daffodils, jasmine, sweat, salt?
 - What can the character taste? Basil, pickles, tar, metal, blood?

After Reading

It's a mystery

Have a class discussion about pirates, treasure maps, time travel and mysteries on the following topic – why do people like reading mysteries?

As a class, read this extract from *Treasure Island* by Robert Louis Stevenson, first published in 1882:

I remember him as if it were yesterday, as he came plodding to the inn door, his sea-chest following behind him in a hand-barrow—a tall, strong, heavy, nut-brown man, his tarry pigtail falling over the shoulder of his soiled blue coat, his hands ragged and scarred, with black, broken nails, and the sabre cut across one cheek, a dirty, livid white. I remember him looking round the cover and whistling to himself as he did so, and then breaking out in that old sea-song that he sang so often afterwards:

'Fifteen men on the dead man's chest—

Yo-ho-ho, and a bottle of rum!

in the high, old tottering voice that seemed to have been tuned and broken at the capstan bars. Then he rapped on the door with a bit of stick like a handspike that he carried, and when my father appeared, called roughly for a glass of rum. This, when it was brought to him, he drank slowly, like a connoisseur, lingering on the taste and still looking about him at the cliffs and up at our signboard.

Part 1, Chapter 1

Later, in Part 1, Chapter Six of *Treasure Island*, the narrator Jim, with others, find a treasure map:

The paper had been sealed in several places with a thimble by way of seal; the very thimble, perhaps, that I had found in the captain's pocket. The doctor opened the seals with great care, and there fell out the map of an island, with latitude and longitude, soundings, names of hills and bays and inlets, and every particular that would be needed to bring a ship to a safe anchorage upon its shores. It was about nine miles long and five across, shaped, you might say, like a fat dragon standing up, and had two fine land-locked harbours, and a hill in the centre part marked "The Spy-glass." There were several additions of a later date, but above all, three crosses of red ink—two on the north part of the island, one in the southwest—and beside this last, in the same red ink, and in a small, neat hand, very different from the captain's tottery characters, these words: 'Bulk of treasure here.'

Over on the back the same hand had written this further information:

Tall tree, Spy-glass shoulder, bearing a point to the N. of N.N.E.

Skeleton Island E.S.E. and by E.

Ten feet.

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The bar silver is in the north cache; you can find it by the trend of the east hummock, ten fathoms south of the black crag with the face on it.

The arms are easy found, in the sand-hill, N. point of north inlet cape, bearing E. and a quarter N.
J.F.

- Ask the students if they would like to find such a map, and why.
- What kind of treasure do the students think this map refers to?

Marisol and Jake also find a treasure map:

He studied the map, and she studied him, wondering if she should say something. “Jake?”
“Yeah?”

“I think we should search for Nana’s treasure.” Marisol tapped the X. “Let’s go on an adventure of our own!”

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- What do Marisol and Jake discover about their treasure map?
- What do they learn about treasure and where to find it?
- Through the process of looking for treasure, both Jake and Marisol learn important lessons, which might be considered treasure. What are those lessons?
- What does the reader learn about treasure and where it can be found?
- Is reading a process of finding hidden treasures?

At the very end of the story, Jake says:

Sometimes you hold on to things.
Sometimes you lose them.

And sometimes, just sometimes, you had to let go of something so you could find it again.

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- What do you think Jake means by this?

Ask students to create a multimodal treasure map using realistic and fantasy settings and characters that draw on the worlds represented in the text.

Write a 150-word analytical paragraph about the appeal of mysteries and treasure maps to young readers.

About the Authors

Amie Kaufman and Ryan Graudin are two bestselling, award-winning authors united by their love of history, adventure, magical stories and lost places. Ryan has explored the ruins at Lake Titicaca in Bolivia, and Amie has picnicked in the lost Roman city of Ostia Antica. When they learned about a vanishing island off the coast of South Carolina, and the lighthouse left rising alone from the waves, they knew they had a story to tell. Amie lives in Melbourne, Australia with her husband, daughter and part-dingo dog. Ryan lives in Charleston, South Carolina with her husband, daughter and part-wolf dog. Neither of them have met a Tasmanian Tiger yet ... or have they?

You can find Amie and Ryan online at amiekaufman.com and ryangraudin.com.

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