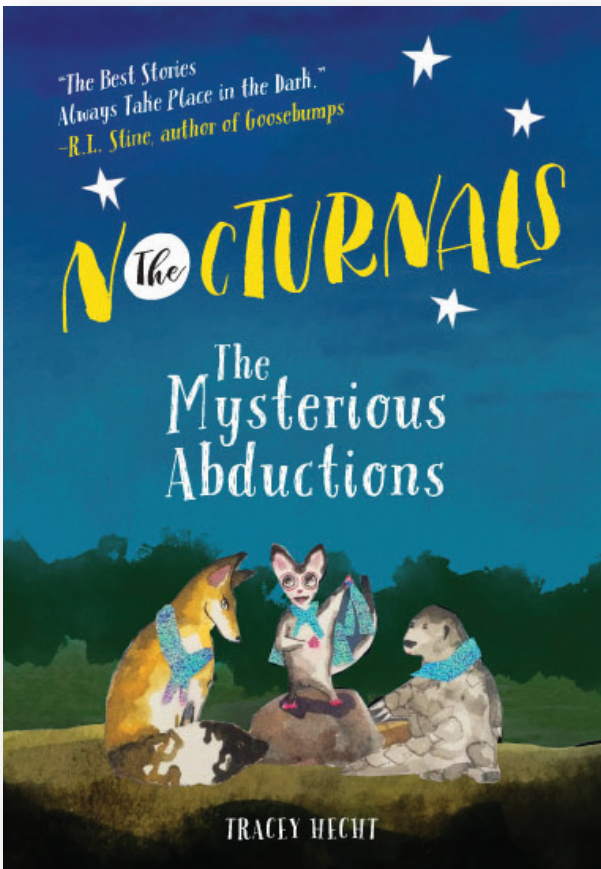


EDUCATOR'S GUIDE

The Nocturnals: The Mysterious Abductions



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ABOUT THE BOOK

In *The Mysterious Abductions*, the first novel in the middle grade series, animals are disappearing without a trace—and it's up to Dawn, a serious fox, Tobin, a sweet pangolin, and Bismark, a pint-sized sugar glider, to find out why. With the help of a gentle wombat, a jittery jerboa, a band of coyotes, and some kooky bats, the Nocturnals journey to the depths of the earth and play a wacky, high-stakes game that will determine their survival.

SERIES OVERVIEW

The Nocturnals is a fun-filled chapter book series about three unlikely animals who solve unpredictable mysteries with friendship, teamwork, and humor. *The Nocturnals Explore: Unique Adaptations of Nighttime Animals* is a companion nonfiction book that connects readers to the animal science in the fiction books. (PB ISBN: 978-1-944020-72-9)

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Tracey Hecht is the author of *The Nocturnals*. In partnership with the New York Public Library, she created a Read Aloud Writing Program that has since been conducted in hundreds of schools and libraries nationwide. Tracey currently splits her time between New York City and Oquossoc, Maine, with her husband and four children.

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Kate Liebman is an artist who lives and works in New York City. she graduated from Yale University and received her MFA from Columbia. Kate contributes to the Brooklyn Rail and has shown her work at multiple galleries. She grew up in Santa Monica, California.

EDUCATOR GUIDE WRITER

The discussion questions and activities in this guide were written by Pat Scales, Children's Literature consultant and retired school librarian.

COMMON CORE ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS STANDARDS

The Common Core State Standards addressed by the discussion questions and activities in this guide are noted throughout. For more information on the Common Core, visit corestandards.org.

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For more information visit NocturnalsWorld.com



I. PRE-READING ACTIVITY

Discuss the purpose of a prologue. Read aloud the Prologue to the novel. Who are the three main characters? What do they have in common? How are they different? The Prologue suggests that an adventure is about to begin. Have students think about possible conflicts and write a one-page paper that imagines the adventure for the Nocturnal Brigade.

Correlates to Common Core Language Arts Standards in Reading Literature: Key Ideas & Details RL. 3-5.1; Writing: Text Types & Purposes W. 3-5.3.

II. CLASSROOM DISCUSSION

These discussion questions ask students to think critically about plot, character and theme to ensure an understanding of how these elements combine to form a work of literature.

Tobin, Bismark and Dawn form a brigade at the beginning of the book. What is the purpose of the brigade? How does a brigade require teamwork? Discuss the personalities of the animals in the brigade.

Every brigade requires a leader. Which animal is the natural leader? Discuss whether the leader of the brigade is an effective leader. Explain why Dawn insists on meeting Ciro, the leader of the coyotes, alone. How does this show bravery and leadership?

Nocturnal animals are active at night. How does the night setting add to the suspense of the story?

What type of animal is Cora? What happened to her brother Joe? How does the brigade try to help her? Identify other animals they are called upon to help as the plot develops.

Explain how Tobin, Bismark and Dawn fend off the snake.

What does Bismark mean when he says the brigade has “instinct?” Trace how they use instinct to solve the mystery of the missing animals.

Fear is an underlying theme in the book. How do the members of the brigade reveal and deal with fear? Explain how they try to calm the fears of the animals they are helping.

Trust is another underlying theme. Why doesn't Dawn trust Jerry, the jerboa? Explain Bismark's demand that Jerry proves his innocence. How do the animals continue to distrust Jerry as the adventure moves forward? Explain how he eventually earns their trust and helps them.

Bismark is determined to distinguish himself from the bats. Why is that important to him? How does the story reveal the distinct differences between sugar gliders and bats?

Bismark questions whether the brigade and the other animals they collect are in danger. Tobin says that Dawn “has a plan to keep us safe” (p. 64). What is Dawn's plan?

Cliffhanger is a plot device where each chapter ends in suspense. What is the cliffhanger at the end of each chapter? How does this suspense make readers want to continue reading?

How does the illustration at the beginning of each chapter introduce a new animal and give a hint about the substance of the chapter?

Explain the hockey sports analogy in the final showdown. What is the purpose of the game? Which animal serves as the puck? Discuss the actions of the offense and defense. How does the game add to the action and resolution of the story?

The book's characters are eventually led into underground caves. How does this location help build the action in the story? Discuss why the author chooses to set such an important part of the plot in a cave.

Correlates to Common Core Language Arts Standards in Reading Literature: Key Ideas & Details RL. 3-5.1, RL. 3-5.3; Craft & Structure RL. 3-5.4, RL. 3-5.5, RL. 3-5.6; Integration of Knowledge & Ideas RL. 3-5; Speaking & Listening: Comprehension & Collaboration SL. 3-5.1, SL. 3-5.3; Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas SL. 3-5.6; Language: Conventions of Standard English L. 3-5.1; Knowledge of Language L. 3-5.3.

III. CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

A successful mystery has many elements: motive, clues, hunches, evidence, suspects, and witnesses. Ask students to outline each of these elements, and identify key players in *Nocturnals: The Mysterious Abductions*. Then have them write an opinion paper that draws a conclusion about why the book belongs to the mystery genre. Encourage peer editing for clarity, spelling and grammar.

Correlates to Common Core Language Arts Standards in Reading Literature: Key Ideas & Details RL. 3-5.1, RL. 4-5.3; Writing: Text Types & Purposes W. 3-5.1; Production & Distribution of Writing W. 3-5.5

The author uses various types of figurative language to create certain images, and add interest to the story. Review the following:

Simile: Compares one object or idea to another, usually using “like” or “as.”

Example: “Fuming and famished, the snake reared its head, its yellow eyes blazing like flames.” (p. 14)

Metaphor: Makes a direct comparison

Example: “The egg has cracked. Totally scrambled.” (p. 92)

Personification: Gives human characteristics to animals or objects

Example: “He puffed out his chest with pride.” (p. 11)

Instruct students to find other examples of simile, metaphor and personification in the novel. Then have them rewrite the sentence in literal language. How do these changes alter the mental images and richness of language?

Correlates to Common Core Language Arts Standards in Language: Vocabulary Acquisition & Use L. 3-5.5.

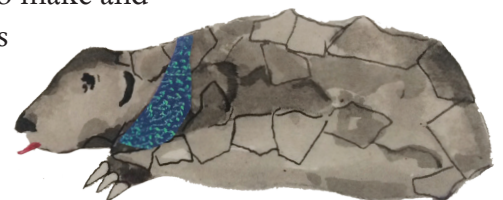
The two exercises below have a corresponding activity sheet to share with your students on page five.

Bismark says to Tobin, “We can be bold in adventure...we can be brave in challenge...we can be –” Divide the class into small groups and ask them to write and perform a rap about the Nocturnal Brigade that reveals the characteristics expressed by Bismark.

“The bleachers were boiling with anticipation and excitement ” (p. 191). Divide students in groups and ask them to use information from the text to write a cheer for each side in the sporting event in the final showdown.

Correlates to Common Core Language Arts Standards in Writing: Text Types & Purposes W. 3-5.3; Research to Build & Present Knowledge W. 4-5.9.

The novel is filled with lively dialogue, which makes it perfect to be performed. Divide the class into groups, and assign them several chapters to write as scenes in a play. Then combine the scenes into a full play and have students perform it for another class. Encourage them to make and wear animal masks to differentiate the various characters.



Correlates to Common Core Language Arts Standards in Writing: Text Types & Purposes W. 3-5.3; Language: Conventions of Standard English L. 3-5.1; Knowledge of Language L. 3-5.3.

At the end of the book, Boris thinks “coachers” took his family, but he really means “poachers.” Read about poachers on the following website: <http://www.eoearth.org/view/article/155274/>. Have students research one of the animals that are endangered because of poachers, and prepare a speech about why poachers must be stopped, and what U.S. citizens can do to save animals from extinction.

Correlates to Common Core Language Arts Standards in Writing: Research to Build & Present Knowledge W. 3-5.7, W. 3-5.8; Speaking & Listening: Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas SL. 3-5.4; Language: Conventions of Standard English L. 4-5.1; Knowledge of Language L. 3-5.3.

IV. VOCABULARY/USE OF LANGUAGE

There may be unfamiliar words in the novel, and students should be encouraged to try to define these words, taking clues from context. Such words may include:

foraging (p. 9), elongated (p. 10), vigilant (p. 20), ominous (p. 21), precarious (p. 26), pestilence (p. 30), diabolical (p. 32), alliance (p. 89), lamented (p. 93), accomplice (p. 141), mockery (p. 159), petulant (p. 160), hypnotic (p. 183), composure (p. 185), marshaled (p. 201), proposition (p. 212), and miniscule (p. 214).

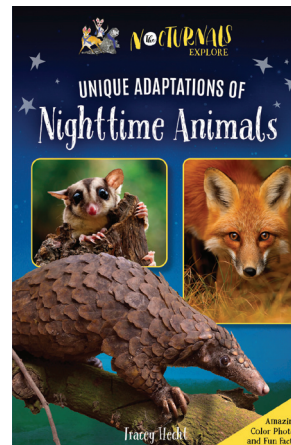
Encourage students to use a dictionary to check their definitions. How well did they do?

Divide the class into small groups, and ask them to create a crossword puzzle using vocabulary words. Use definitions, synonyms and antonyms to create clever clues. Refer them to this template: https://crosswordhobbyist.com/create_crossword.

Correlates to Common Core Language Arts Standards in Language: Vocabulary Acquisition & Use L 3-5.4.

V. CONNECT KIDS TO THE SCIENCE BEHIND THE SERIES

Introduce your students to the nocturnal animals featured in *The Mysterious Abductions* with the companion guide *The Nocturnals Explore Unique Nighttime Adaptations of Nighttime Animals* by Tracey Hecht.



Paperback ISBN: 978-1-944020-72-9
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150 four-color Photos
Color Illustrations throughout
by Kate Liebman
Lexile 930L • Fountas & Pinnell: S
Available in HC and ebook

Curriculum Connections Activity Sheet

WRITE A RAP FOR BISMARCK

View a picture of Bismark doing something silly.

Bismark says to Tobin, “We can be bold in adventure...we can be brave in challenge...we can be—”

Write and perform a rap about the Nocturnal Brigade that reveals the characteristics expressed by Bismark.

GIVE A CHEER FOR THE NOCTURNALS OR THE ROCODILES!

View a picture of the animals at the game.

“The bleachers were boiling with anticipation and excitement.” (p. 191)

Use information from the text about the players of NOC HOC and write a cheer for each team to use in the final showdown.



Both Activities Correlate to Common Core Language Arts Standards in Writing: Text Types & Purposes W. 3-5.3; Research to Build & Present Knowledge W. 4-5.9.

