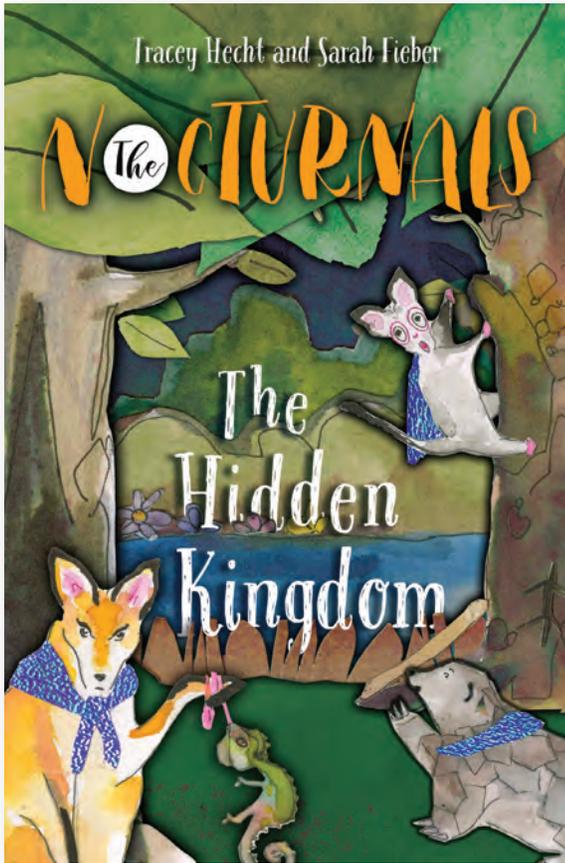


EDUCATOR'S GUIDE

The Nocturnals: *The Hidden Kingdom*

By
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with illustrations by
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A Flabbergastifying Adventure Under the Stars!

About the Book

In *The Hidden Kingdom*, Dawn the fox, Bismark the sugar glider and Tobin the pangolin travel to a distant watering hole because the valley is dry and the animals are desperate for water. Along their journey, very strange things occur: the ground swirls under their feet, bark jumps off trees, huge tumbleweeds chase after them and disembodied voices are heard. Is the forest suddenly alive? Only The Nocturnal Brigade can solve this mystery and unite the forest.

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.

Series Overview

The Nocturnals series features three unlikely friends: Dawn, a serious fox; Tobin, a sweet pangolin; and Bismark, the loudmouthed, pint-sized sugar glider. The stories all play out in their nighttime world with teamwork, friendship, and humor in every adventure.

Bonus Educational Material

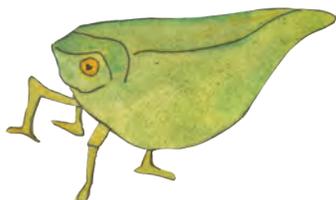
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I. Pre-Reading Activity

Read aloud Chapter 1: The Parched Pangolin. Have students think about what Chapter 1 suggests about the Brigade's next adventure. Ask them to call upon their imagination and write a paragraph about the likely conflict that the Brigade faces. Allow time in class for students to share their writing.

Correlates to Common Core Language Arts Standards in Writing: Text Types & Purposes W. 2-5.1; Language: Conventions of Standard English L. 3-5.1, L. 3-5.2; Knowledge of Language L. 3-5.3.



II. Classroom Discussion

The first chapter indicates that the conflict is person against nature. At what point is it obvious that another animal is the real conflict?

At the beginning of the novel, the Brigade hears a familiar sound, but they aren't sure what it is. Explain why they accuse Tobin of making the sound. How do they determine the source of the sound?

What is Cora's condition when they find her? Dawn thinks she knows where a watering hole is, but Cora doubts that she can make the journey. Explain why Tobin ties the blue snakeskin cape around Cora. At what point does Tobin realize that the cape cannot help Cora?

Dawn is the clear leader of the Brigade. Discuss the animals' loyalty to Dawn. What does such loyalty say about her leadership skills? Cite specific passages that reveal that even Dawn has doubts of finding water.

Strength may refer to one's physical abilities, but it may also be a character trait. How does the drought affect the physical strength of the animals?

Discuss how they call upon strength of character to solve the mystery of the drought. Identify individual strengths of Dawn, Tobin, and Bismark.

Fear is an underlying theme in the entire *Nocturnals* series. Compare and contrast the way the animals deal with fear in *The Hidden Kingdom* with how they deal with it in the previous three novels. How does the personality of each animal explain the way each animal confronts fear?

Bismark says, "My greatness has put me in danger. That's all there is to it." (p. 45) He also says, "With my brilliant powers of detection, I will solve this mystery." (p. 51) Explain what Bismark means by these statements. What do these statements say about Bismark's personality? How does Bismark cause trouble for the Brigade as they attempt to solve the mystery of the drought?

Define "black magic." Why is Bismark so convinced that "sinister sorcerers" are the root of their troubles? Explain what Dawn means when she says, "The drought is more than it seems." (p. 92)

Describe the tumbleweed that Dawn finds. What is the purpose of the tumbleweed as the story advances? What about the mysterious voices, churning ground, vanishing chute, swirling tree bark, and disappearing water? How are these clues that something evil is the cause of the drought?



Discuss the false hope that the animals experience on their quest to solve the mystery. Even Dawn is confused by the strange events. How do the flowers give them hope again?



What is the role of the Lyrebirds in solving the mystery?

How is Bismark his own worst enemy when the Brigade comes face to face with King Kami, a chameleon? What is Tobin's role in saving Bismark?

Bismark says the fight between Tobin and King Kami is a "tongue-of-war." How does such wordplay make the plight of the Brigade humorous? In what other ways do the authors create humor?

Discuss King Kami's explanation for causing the drought. What prompts the chameleon to reveal that his real name is Carl?

What is the moral of the story? King Kami creates havoc in the forest. How does Carl help the Brigade save the animals in the forest?

Correlates to Common Core Language Arts Standards in Reading Literature: Key Ideas & Details RL. 3-5.1, RL. 3-5.2; Craft & Structure RL. 3-5.4, RL. 3-5.5, RL. 3-5.6; Integration of knowledge & Ideas RL. 3-5.9; 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

Bismark tells stories to pass the time on the Brigade's journey. Ask students to write a story, taken from an episode in one of the first three books, from the point of view of Dawn, Bismark, or Tobin. Allow time in class to share the stories.

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, L. 3-5.2; Knowledge of Language L. 3-5.3; Speaking & Listening: Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas SL. 3-5.4.

Bismark really wants to be the maestro. Ask students to select a scene from the novel and rewrite it with Bismark as the leader of the Brigade. Then have them write a paragraph that explains how this change in leadership would change the course of the journey.

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, L. 3-5.2; Knowledge of Language L. 3-5.3.

Remind students that homonyms are words that share pronunciation or spelling but have different meanings. Explain the homonym Bismark uses in the following sentence: "My hide is far too exquisite to hide." (p. 128) Brainstorm other example of homonyms. Then have students write three sentences. Each sentence should include a homonym and should best describe how each member of the Brigade responds to King Kami.



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

Remind the class that Bismark called the battle between Tobin and King Kami a “tongue-of-war.” Allow students to work in small groups, and have them create a five-frame cartoon strip titled “tongue-of-war”.

Correlates to Common Core Language Arts Standards in Writing: Text Types & Purposes W. 3-5.3.

Explain to students that a “colorful character” is someone who is full of life, interesting, and different. Then have them write a brief paper that identifies the most “colorful character” in the Nocturnal Brigade. Instruct them to cite direct quotes and make specific references to scenes to support their opinion.

Correlates to Common Core Language Arts Standards in Writing: Text Types & Purposes W. 3-5.1; Language: Conventions of Standard English L. 3-5.1, L. 3-5.2; Knowledge of Language L. 3-5.3.

The exercise below has a corresponding activity sheet to share with your students on page five.

The chapter titles represent specific episodes of the mystery. Ask students to write three acrostic poems using a chapter title for each poem’s spine word(s). For example: “The Vanishing Chute” may be used as spine words for one poem. (p. 53)

Allow time in class for students to read aloud their poems. Discuss how the poems offer a summary of the chapters.

Correlates to Common Core Language Arts Standards in Writing: Production & Distribution of Writing W. 3-5.4; Speaking & Listening: Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas SL. 3-5.4.

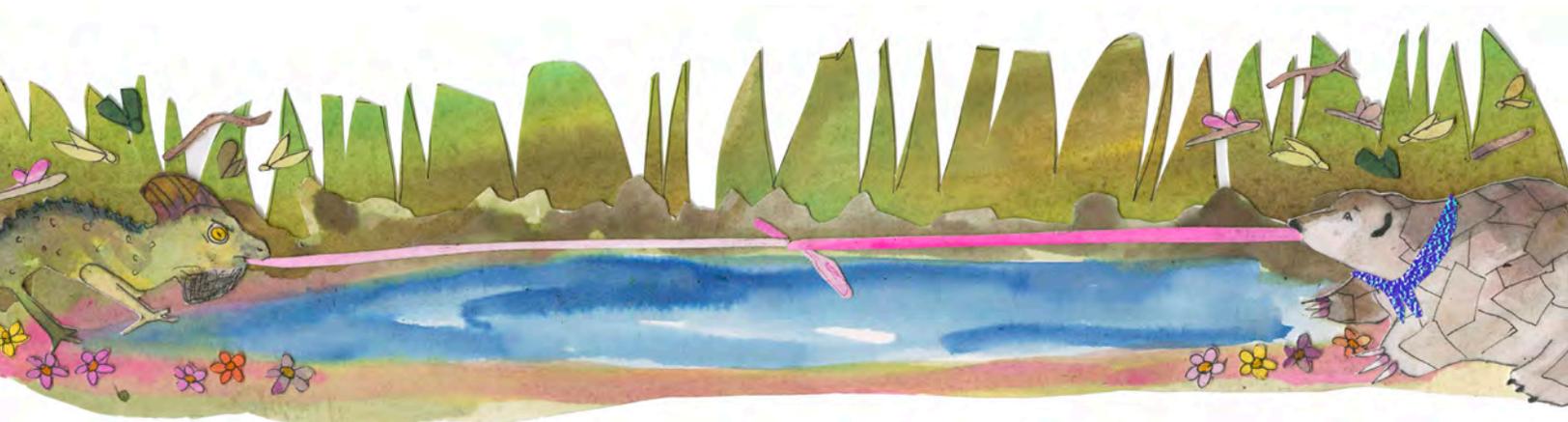
IV. Vocabulary/Use of Language

Students should be encouraged to jot down unfamiliar words and try to define them taking clues from context. Such words may include: bulbous (p. 13), antics (p. 13), despicable (p. 14), emit (p. 16), potent (p. 16), scepter (p. 29), regal (p. 29), lustrous (p. 33), writhe (p. 39), fate (p. 50), pungent (p. 76), agile (p. 81), imbibe (p. 85), gnarled (p. 109), noble (p. 110), cunning (p. 110), orb (p. 116), convulsed (p. 127), camouflage (p. 127), muster (p. 140), cahoots (p. 141), domain (p. 143), treachery (p. 147), finale (p. 154), despair (p. 158), infernal (p. 169), precision (p. 176), and phenomenon (p. 193).

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

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

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



Write an Acrostic Poem

The chapter titles in *The Nocturnals* represent specific episodes of the mystery in each book. Write an acrostic poem using chapter six from *The Hidden Kingdom*. Use “Vanishing Chute” as spine words.

V _____
A _____
N _____
I _____
S _____
H _____
I _____
N _____
G _____
C _____
H _____
U _____
T _____
E _____

