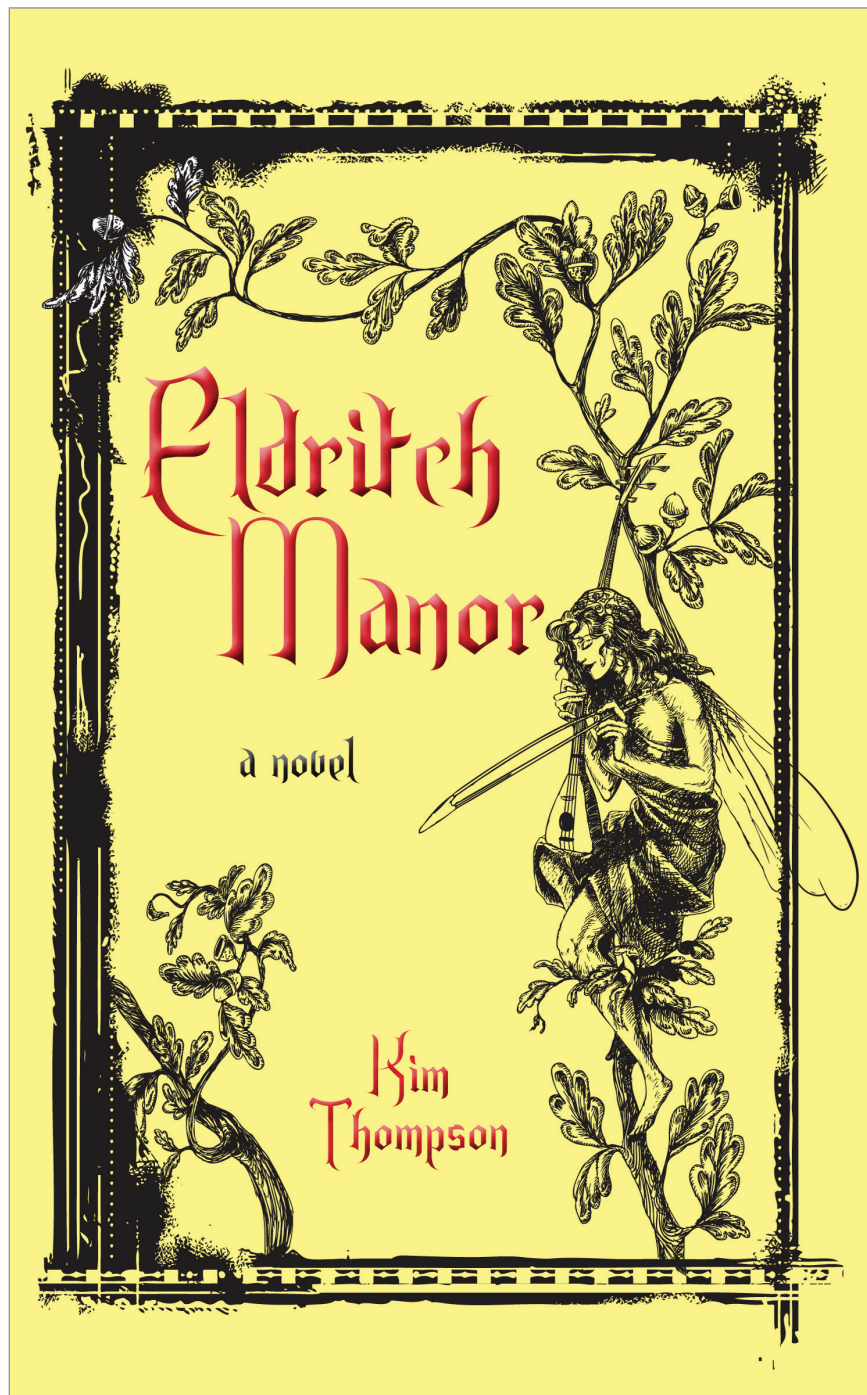


TEACHER'S GUIDE

Grade 5 or 6



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I. INTRODUCTION

Willa Fuller’s dreams of spending the summer next to the ocean with her grandfather are trounced when her mother informs her that she needs to get a summer job. Depressed about the fact that all of her friends will be having an excellent time at their family cottages or the annual band camp, Willa sets off to secure a position with the local newspaper. She soon finds out, however, that selling subscriptions is simply not her calling in life. Most twelve year olds would have thrown in the towel by midday but Willa ploughs through the list of homes she is given to visit and eventually winds up at the creepily cool looking old age home Eldritch Manor. What starts out as a simple attempt to sell a subscription soon turns into a wild adventure for Willa as she gets caught up in an otherworldly mystery, troublesome magical pensioners, an attempt to destroy the mortal realm, and some pretty weird family secrets. It’s a summer she’ll never forget.

Grade Level:

Eldritch Manor and the accompanying Teacher’s Resource Guide are ideal for students in grades 5-6.

About the Author:

Eldritch Manor is Kim Thompson’s first foray into the world of children’s literature but her background in script writing for children’s cartoons has given her a strong foundation from which to grow. A former Torontonian, she has recently moved to Saltspring Island with her daughter.

II. THEMES

Coming of Age:

Willa grows considerably throughout the telling of the story. From her beginnings as a clumsy, snooping child she shoulders the burdens that the adults in her world place upon her and emerges from the struggle as a confident and responsible girl on the way to adulthood. We see Willa begin to take on challenges that most pre-teens should not have to worry about; the financial woes of her parents and quickly followed by saving the world. It is her need for a job to help her parents tackle the bills that leads her to her role as housekeeper and, eventually, caretaker for a household of magical retirees. When the ‘superintendent’, Miss Trang, has to leave the Manor it is Willa who she leaves in charge. Under normal circumstances, leaving the running of a house to a child would be foolhardy at best but Willa’s world is now magical and when the Dark Forces come to call the others look to her as the leader of the resistance. She quickly adapts to her new role and not only takes care of those left in her charge but fights valiantly to protect them and her world from that which would see it destroyed.

Mystery/Adventure

Despite the majority of the story taking place within Eldritch Manor there is no lack of adventure for Willa. Her mystery begins with the two strange old ladies and the magical coins that find their way back to the house. With the introduction of each new character a little bit more of the mystery is revealed. When Willa finally discovers that the occupants of the Manor are actually magical creatures who have retired from the immortal realm she thinks that the mystery has been solved. It's not long after, however, that a new problem presents itself: the Dark Forces. Why are they after Eldritch Manor and its people? Willa's battle against the Dark Forces will prove to be the adventure of a lifetime but it is the revelation of her family history that turns out to be the biggest mystery of all.

Magic

Magic is mostly implied throughout the story and is only occasionally seen directly. Most of the inhabitants of the Manor can no longer do magic in their own right since they've been retired for so long, but they themselves are creatures of myth and magic nonetheless. Only Baz, the cat woman, seems to be able to do actual spells any more though the usefulness of these spells is called into question until she helps save the day and employ them against the Dark Forces. Horace reads the augury but this is again an indirect use of magic. Mab is revealed to be the one who maintains the magic of the time talisman though this is not something that anyone realizes until the end.

III. CHAPTER INFORMATION AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Chapter One

Summary:

Twelve year old Willa Fuller is told by her mother that, instead of spending the summer with her Grandfather by the ocean, she must get a job to help out with the family expenses. Her Aunt Hattie, a journalist, agrees to help her find a job. She ends up at Eldritch Manor and tries to get the old ladies there to sign up for a subscription, but they are very strange and give Willa the impression that they're insane. Finally Miss Trang, the caretaker of the house, comes out and tells her that they do not want any newspapers. Before Willa leaves, one of the old ladies gives her a handful of change. These coins turn out to defy gravity and roll uphill when Willa takes a tumble from her bike.

Terms / Colloquialisms:

"slough of despond"

Offing

Vaguely

Gabled windows

Turrets

Widow's walk

Bungalow

Discussion Questions:

1. What does Willa mean when she says "something grim is in the offing"? Can you think of an 'old fashion' phrase or word that you like to use?
2. What do you think about Willa's mom asking her to get a job to help out? Is it reasonable for her mom to expect this from her or is she still too young?
3. Willa describes Eldritch Manor as having a kind of 'weary dignity'. What do you think this means? How do you picture the house?
4. What is your first impression of Belle and Baz? Are they good, bad, or something in between? Explain your answer.

Chapter Two

Summary:

Willa lets the coins out of her pocket and follows them as they lead her back to Eldritch Manor. When she gets there, however, Miss Trang answers the door and attempts to shoo her off. She tells Willa that the coins are a joke and that they are magnetic, not magical. When Willa goes home she decides that instead of working for the local newspaper she would put up flyers to do odd jobs around town. She also decides to do some 'detective work' on Eldritch Manor. While she is spying on the place she meets Tengu, an old man who lives there and seems to enjoy challenging people to bouts of strength. Willa is determined to 'save' the old people from Miss Trang, whom she thinks is keeping them there, but when she tells the occupants of the house this they laugh at her. Unfortunately, Willa's curiosity gets the best of her while she's inside the house leading to a bit of snooping and getting caught by Miss Trang.

Terms/ Colloquialisms:

Runes

Hallucinate

Gumption

Wily

Doilies

Pompous

Shrew

Odin

Zeus

Brownie

Discussion Questions:

1. Look over the first part of Chapter Two (18-20). Do you see any foreshadowing? Any hints that Miss Trang is lying and there is magic being used?
2. What do you think of Miss Trang? Is she a good or a bad character? She seems rather frightening but is it possible that that is a result of her anger towards Willa's actions?
3. Why does Willa seem to find the cans of cat food so important?

Chapter Three

Summary:

Willa is offered a job part time at Eldritch Manor as a cleaning/housekeeper since she chased away their brownie and they are desperate. She is not particularly happy doing the job since everyone stays away from her but she keeps at it. It is on one of these days that she has an interesting conversation with Horace where he gives her hints about the true nature of the occupants of the Manor. She also discovers that Belle is a mermaid by accident.

Terms/ Colloquialisms:

Wing-backed chair

Hibiscus

Discussion Questions:

1. Do you think that, outside the confines of a fictional story, it would be safe for a 12 year old girl to pick up random jobs with strangers? Are there any other aspects of this story, besides the magic, that strike you as unrealistic?
2. If you were Willa, would you take the job? Why or why not? Take into consideration all the things that Willa doesn't know about the house and its inhabitants as well as the hints at magic and mystery.
3. Belle is revealed to be a mermaid in this chapter. Based on the little hints we've had so far, what do you think the other occupants of the house are? Make a guess for each.

Chapter Four

Summary:

Willa has dinner with her grandfather and he reacts oddly when she asks him about mermaids. That night she receives a note on her pillow saying that she doesn't have to come in to work at the Manor but that she's

invited to dinner. She attends the dinner, worried that she will get in trouble for finding out about Belle, but Miss Trang informs her that this meal will be a test and if she passes she can continue being their housekeeper. The dinner turns out to be 'imaginary' but Willa plays along and passes the test. The occupants of the house reveal to her their true forms and she is told by Miss Trang that though she may have many questions about the house/occupants she is only allowed one per day.

Terms/ Colloquialisms:

Centaur

Discussion Questions:

1. "Willa the Whisp" is a play on words. Willa's grandfather is referring to a mythical creature called a "will-o'-the-wisp" that is said to lead travellers astray, especially at night. They are most frequently found in forests or swamps and appear as a lantern being held by a person. When the poor traveller approaches, the will-o'-the-wisp moves farther away and thus leads the traveller off the path. Why do you think Willa's grandfather gives her this nickname? Does this say anything about her character or is it a coincidence?
2. Why do you think Willa's grandfather reacted oddly to her question about mermaids? Do you think this reaction has anything to do with his 'bad luck'?
3. What would you have asked Miss Trang as your first question?

Chapter Five

Summary:

Willa becomes the full time housekeeper and she talks with the Manor residents, getting to know each of them and their histories. Belle, however, avoids Willa and refuses to speak much to her. Willa also avoids Miss Trang because she fears upsetting her and losing her job. One morning Willa runs into Mab who wants to show her trinkets. This turns into a sort of show and tell with Mab, Robert and Belle and for a little bit Willa gets Belle to open up to her. Unfortunately, the old mermaid shuts down quickly and makes mysterious accusations about Willa knowing all about her misfortunes that Willa does not understand.

Terms/ Colloquialisms:

Androsphinx

Pharaoh

Basilisk

Mandrake

Gallows

Discussion Questions:

1. Do you think it's realistic that Willa's now full-time job has solved all of her parents' money worries?
2. Which of the magical creatures/items in the story are you already familiar with? Is the author's description

of them different from what you have heard? How so?

3. Do you have any theories about what happened to Belle? Come up with at least one guess as to how Belle ended up in Eldritch Manor.

Chapter Six

Summary:

After her discussion with Belle the old mermaid retreats into herself even more, ignoring Willa completely. The house seems withdrawn and quiet, with the occupants not acting like their usual selves. Willa goes to Horace, confused and a bit worried, and he tells her that an old enemy is coming and that they can feel it the way Willa can feel a rainstorm in the air. One night Willa wakes up from a nightmare and sees a black horse with red eyes running down the street on two legs. The horse stops and stares at her for a moment before running on. When Willa tells Miss Trang and the others about this occurrence it is decided by Miss Trang that she will leave Willa in charge of the house while she goes off on a mysterious but extremely important mission.

Terms/ Colloquialisms:

Augury

Discussion Questions:

1. What does a black horse with red eyes that runs on its hind legs make you think of?
2. Why do you think the horse stopped and looked at Willa? Could this be why Miss Trang wants Willa to stay at Eldritch Manor?

Chapter Seven

Summary:

Willa's parents insist on seeing the Manor before agreeing to let her stay over while Miss Trang is away and Baz invites them over for dinner. Unfortunately for Willa, everything goes wrong. Baz is revealed to be a cat like creature and accidentally ruins dinner when Willa's mom brings over a catnip toy. Robert, who is not supposed to drink, is given a bottle of Scotch by Willa's father. Belle and Willa's mom seem to instantly hate each other even though they don't say anything. After talking it over later that evening, Willa's parents agree to let her stay over starting the next day. However, Willa's mother warns her daughter not to trust Belle and to stay away from her as much as possible.

Terms/ Colloquialisms:

Scotch

Discussion Questions:

1. What do you think is the issue with Belle and Willa's mother? Why do they instantly hate each other? Does this have anything to do with what Belle said to Willa in the previous chapter about her 'mistake'? Come up with at least one theory to explain the hostility between the two women.
2. What kind of creature do you think Baz is? Do you think she's like Horace, who transforms, or something else?

Chapter Eight

Summary:

Willa sleeps horribly and finds this sentiment echoed by Tengu when she arrives at the Manor the next morning. She finds Robert in the backyard with the wood nymphs, all of whom are nursing hangovers, and struggles to get him back in the house without the neighbours noticing. She and the other occupants notice that they continue to sleep poorly, not dreaming, and wake feeling groggy. Only looking at Fadiyah helps Willa clear her head. Willa discovers a dinosaur in the swimming pool behind the house.

Terms/ Colloquialisms:

Wood Nymphs

Discussion Questions:

1. What do you think is happening to everyone? Why are they so tired?

Chapter Nine

Summary:

The occupants of the house continue to be extremely exhausted and unable to do much as a result. Willa constructs a sort of tent/lean-to over the dinosaur to hide her from the view of the neighbours but she worries that when she gains more strength that she will lift her head and expose herself. Willa discovers that the reason why they are all so tired is because of Mab who is still irritated with being accidentally forgotten. The Manor's occupants make it up to her and the fairy releases the spell, allowing them to sleep properly but they soon realize that they all dreamt about the black horse with red eyes.

Terms/ Colloquialisms:

Talisman

Vestigial

Discussion Questions:

1. What do you know of fairy magic? What do you think Mab used on the members of the house to disrupt their sleep?
2. The occupants of Eldritch Manor are all magical in some way or another but Willa, as the outsider, is not (that we know of). Why, then, is she having the same dream as everyone else about the horse? What are your theories?

Chapter Ten

Summary:

Horace reveals that the black horse is a scout of sorts, sent by The Other Side to find them. He hadn't been able to find them while they weren't dreaming but when Mab released the spell he was able to locate them. The Manor residents, Belle in particular, are not very forthcoming about what this means for them, however, and Willa is worried. They discover a 'temporal tear' in the house, a rip in time but there is nothing they can do about it. Horace decides to read the augury and Willa takes him to the topmost point of the town to do so. Willa discovers that Horace has Alzheimer's.

Terms/ Colloquialisms:

Bacchantes

Ninny

Alzheimer's

Discussion Questions:

1. What do you think The Other Side is?
2. What did you notice about the temporal tear in the house? What do you think that this means?
3. Do you think that Horace's memory loss is magical or simply a result of his age?

Chapter Eleven

Summary:

Willa and Horace come home to find the house covered in a shroud of fog and dead birds. They discover that the temporal tear has spread. They also discover three weird black cats with human faces that are trying to snoop through Miss Trang's office. When Baz attacks these cat creatures they try to flee only to be replaced by a swarm of spiders which the Manor occupants fight off. During the fight Mab is hurt. Later in the night Willa finds a strange black creature in the office.

Terms/ Colloquialisms:

Harpy

Crone

Discussion Questions:

1. Do you think that it's suspicious that Miss Trang hasn't come back yet?
2. What do you make of all the various black creatures that surround the house? What do they represent/ symbolize?

Chapter Twelve

Summary:

Willa discovers that Horace no longer remembers how to summon Miss Trang; he breaks down and confesses that he sometimes forgets who he is. Horace and Tengu reveal that the 'Dark Forces' from The Other Side are looking for a talisman that Miss Trang would have put in the house to regulate the occupants' 'eternal time' to the 'mortal time'. This talisman would allow the Dark Forces to occupy the mortal realm and take over it. They set out to find it so that they can protect it and discover that it is actually Mab's knitting that was the talisman (a talisman requires movement). Willa has to take up the knitting of the scarf but she's not very good at it. She ends up pulling out all of the stitches of the talisman and time stops.

Terms/ Colloquialisms:

Butcher bird

Discussion Questions:

1. What do you make of Miss Trang's room having no furniture in it? What do you think she is?
2. Why do you think Willa's mom was coming for the house in her pyjamas? How would she know that something is wrong?

Chapter Thirteen

Summary:

Willa and the Manor residents find themselves outside of time but this leaves them exposed and even more vulnerable to the Dark Forces who immediately attack the house. They have to keep the knitting needles, which make up the talisman, safe from the Dark Forces and start knitting again to get back into the mortal realm. They fight against the evil cat-like creatures that try to invade the house and just barely manage to hold their own with the help of Dinah. Willa takes Mab to the wood nymphs to be taken care of and seeks out Dinah. It is while she is in the back yard with the dinosaur that she sees the darkness that has been spreading in the house take the form of a faceless snake with only a mouth and a barbed tongue for features.

Discussion Questions:

1. Why do you think Horace is so easily tired? Is it his old age? Could it be the darkness that weakens him?
2. If you were Willa, how would you proceed? What would be your plan to deal with the Dark Forces?

Chapter Fourteen

Summary:

Willa, Horace and Belle get separated from Baz and Tengu in the effort to evade the black snake. They realize that it cannot actually see anything, rather it is tasting its way around the house and looking for the talisman. Baz and Tengu manage to get up into the library where the other three have barricaded themselves but they cannot stay there for long and they make an escape out the window towards the backyard. That is when Willa realizes that it is not actually the knitting needles that are the talisman but rather the yarn.

Terms/ Colloquialisms:

Hooligan

Discussion Questions:

1. How would you get Willa out of this situation? Write a short paragraph on how you think the rest of the conflict should play out.

Chapter Fifteen

Summary:

Willa goes back to the house for Fadi, the bird, but gets cornered by the snake which now seems to know that she is the one with the talisman. It chases her throughout the remainder of the house and eventually up onto the roof. Once she is on top of the roof she is able to see that Robert has returned to the house with Miss Trang. Miss Trang transforms into a giant dragon and attacks the snake. Willa, however, is attacked by yet another mouth that springs forth from the body of the snake and is saved by Fadi who is revealed to be a phoenix like creature. Willa falls from the roof but is caught by Dinah's head seconds before Dinah loses consciousness from raising her head too high.

Discussion Questions:

1. What kind of creature do you think Fadi is?
2. Did you ever suspect that Miss Trang is a dragon? Does this new information help you make any sense of the fact that she lives in an empty room?

Chapter Sixteen

Summary:

Willa wakes up with the others surrounding her. She's relatively unhurt. The phoenix previously known as Fadiyah rises up from the flames as a young bird and she is given to Willa to guard until it is time for her to burn and start the next generation. Mab is able to start knitting again and time resumes around everyone. Willa finds her mother who is relieved to find her safe but seems dismayed over the fact that Willa now has a streak of white hair. She makes a comment about hiding it with dye and Belle disapproves of this. Willa announces that, despite the fact that the house is burning, they should go to the ocean.

Terms/ Colloquialisms:

phoenix

Discussion Questions:

1. Why do you think Willa has a streak of white hair now? Does this relate to the fact that Willa's mother was dying her hair earlier on in the story? Why does Belle disapprove of dying Willa's hair?
2. Why would Willa suggest to go to the ocean at that very moment?

Chapter Seventeen

Summary:

The whole lot of them go to the ocean where Dinah bids them farewell (in her own silent way) and slips into the ocean to find her way back to her own world. Miss Trang hazards a guess that she somehow got caught up with their time talisman. Belle is in her element in the water and Willa's grandfather is out in his boat, sitting quietly and watching the moon. Belle approaches him and makes a ton of fish fly up and jump into the boat. Willa's mother is also on the beach but does not interact with anyone. Willa acknowledges Belle as her grandmother and walks into the ocean.

Discussion Questions:

1. Was the ending satisfactory for you? Do you have any questions?
2. How would you change the ending if you were the author.

READING COMPREHENSION QUIZ

1. How does Willa start her day in the first chapter?

- a) With her toast being burnt
- b) Falling over her handlebars
- c) Being told to get a job
- d) At Eldritch Manor

2. Where does Willa normally spend her summers?

- a) With her friends
- b) Doing odd jobs around town
- c) With her Grandpa
- d) At home

3. What is the name of the local newspaper?

- a) Hello, Seattle
- b) Tribly Tribune
- c) The Sun
- d) Esquire

4. Who does Willa find on the porch of Eldritch Manor when she first arrives?

- a) Tengu and Robert
- b) Mab and Miss Trang
- c) Miss Trang and Baz
- d) Baz and Belle

5. What does Belle ask that Willa do for her?

- a) Take her to the ocean
- b) Bring her a newspaper
- c) Take out the garbage
- d) Clean up the house

6. How does Miss Trang explain the coins' strange behaviour?

- a) It's done by magic
- b) They were attached to strings
- c) She doesn't explain it at all
- d) It's done by magnets

7. What is the main thing that Tengu likes to do?

- a) Fight and wrestle
- b) Climb trees and throw acorns
- c) Drive the other residents crazy
- d) Crow on the roof

8. What does Willa tell the Eldritch Manor residents when she arrives the second time?

- a) That something dark is coming
- b) That Miss Trang is evil
- c) That she wants to save them
- d) That she's selling newspapers

9. What is it that Willa does wrong in the house?

- a) She breaks things
- b) She scares off the brownie
- c) She discovers Mab
- d) She angers Horace

10. Why does Miss Trang hire Willa part time?

- a) Because she's seen the inside of the house
- b) Because Willa can be trusted
- c) Because Willa scared off the brownie
- d) Because she's a good housekeeper

11. What does Willa nickname the bird in the cage?

- a) Mab
- b) Pretty girl
- c) Belle
- d) Fadi

12. How does Willa discover Belle's secret?

- a) Belle tells her
- b) Baz lets it slip
- c) Willa's mother tells her
- d) She sees her in the bathroom

13. Miss Trang invites Willa over for an imaginary dinner as a test. What does the test prove?

- a) That Willa is just as crazy as the rest of them
- b) That Willa can handle the unusual
- c) That Willa is magical
- d) That Willa has a great imagination

14. What does Tengu pester Miss Trang to buy him?

- a) Weapons
- b) A rooster
- c) Boxing gloves
- d) A new suit

15. What kind of mythical creature is Horace?

- a) A Baslisk
- b) A Shape-Shifter
- c) An Androsphinx
- d) A Centaur

16. What are the two treasures that Mab shows Willa?

- a) A Mandrake root
- b) A white stone and a pearl
- c) A pearl and her half knitted scarf
- d) A letter and a necklace

17. When Willa wakes from a nightmare what does she see outside?

- a) A black horse with red eyes running on two legs
- b) A basilisk chasing a rooster
- c) Tengu practicing his martial arts
- d) Miss Trang as a dragon

18. Why could the Grant not find the Eldritch Manor residents at first?

- a) Because he was looking in the human world
- b) Because the talisman protected them
- c) Because Miss Trang was protecting them
- d) Because Mab had them all under a spell

19. Who does Willa's mother warn her against?

- a) Belle
- b) Robert
- c) Tengu
- d) Baz

20. How does Miss Trang explain Dinah's presence in the backyard pool?

- a) She's just always been there
- b) She got trapped by the time talisman
- c) Miss Trang has no idea how she got there
- d) She's an old friend of Tengu's

21. What do the others give Mab as an apology gift?

- a) Fresh yarn
- b) A new dollhouse
- c) A fairy sized tea set
- d) A toadstool

22. What are the first creatures that the Dark Forces sends to Eldritch Manor?

- a) Cats with human faces
- b) Butcher birds
- c) Spiders
- d) A giant black snake

23. Who does Fadiyah die to save?

- a) Willa
- b) Belle
- c) Miss Trang
- d) Tengu

24. What happens to Willa's appearance after the giant snake is destroyed?

- a) She breaks her arm in the fall from the roof
- b) She's dirty and singed from the fire
- c) She hurts her back
- d) Part of her hair turns silvery white like Belle's

25. What secret is revealed at the very end of the story?

- a) That Dinah is from another world
- b) That Miss Trang is a dragon
- c) That Willa is part mermaid
- d) That Baz is the cat in the house

Answer Key:

1. A	2. C	3. B	4. D	5. A
6. D	7. A	8. C	9. B	10. C
11. D	12. D	13. B	14. A	15. C
16. B	17. C	18. D	19. A	20. B
21. C	22. B	23. A	24. D	25. C

ACTIVITIES

1. Select three of the terms from the word bank below. Use your dictionary and thesaurus to look up these words and answer the following:

- What do each of these words mean? Are they an adjective, noun, or verb?
- What is a synonym for each word?
- Use the original term in a complete sentence.

(Ninny Hooligan Shrew Talisman Vestigial
 Augury Gallows Crone Offing Turrets)

2. On page 9 Willa describes herself as, "...awkward, all bony knees and skinny arms, in second hand clothes that didn't fit properly. Her curly hair stuck out in all directions. And to top it all off she was slouching..." (Thompson). Find a picture of your favourite celebrity and write a description of them as if they were a character in a book you are writing. Make sure you take note of more than what they're wearing; include body shape, hair colour and style, posture, etc.

3. Using the brown paper bag and the magazines provided search out words and images that you think represent Willa at the beginning of the story and then at the end of the story. Glue the words/images that represent early Willa to the outside of the bag and put the rest that represent her at the end of the story inside the bag. Write a paragraph about how Willa changes from the beginning of the story to the end of it; how does it happen? Are all the changes for the better? Do the changes reflect who she really is inside or will she go back to what she was before?

4. A research presentation on any of the following:

- The differences between Greek and Egyptian Sphinxes.
- Mermaids and their human lovers.
- Legends surrounding the phoenix.
- Legends surrounding fairy magic and Queen Mab.

5. Write a short story on one of the following:

- How Belle and Willa's grandfather came together and why Willa's mother and Belle don't seem to get along.
- How Dinah ended up stuck in the pool.
- Miss Trang's point of view during her time away from the Manor. Where did she go? Who did she interact with? What happened there?
- An epilogue on what Willa and the Manor residents will do now that the house has been burnt down. Where will they go? Will Willa go with them?