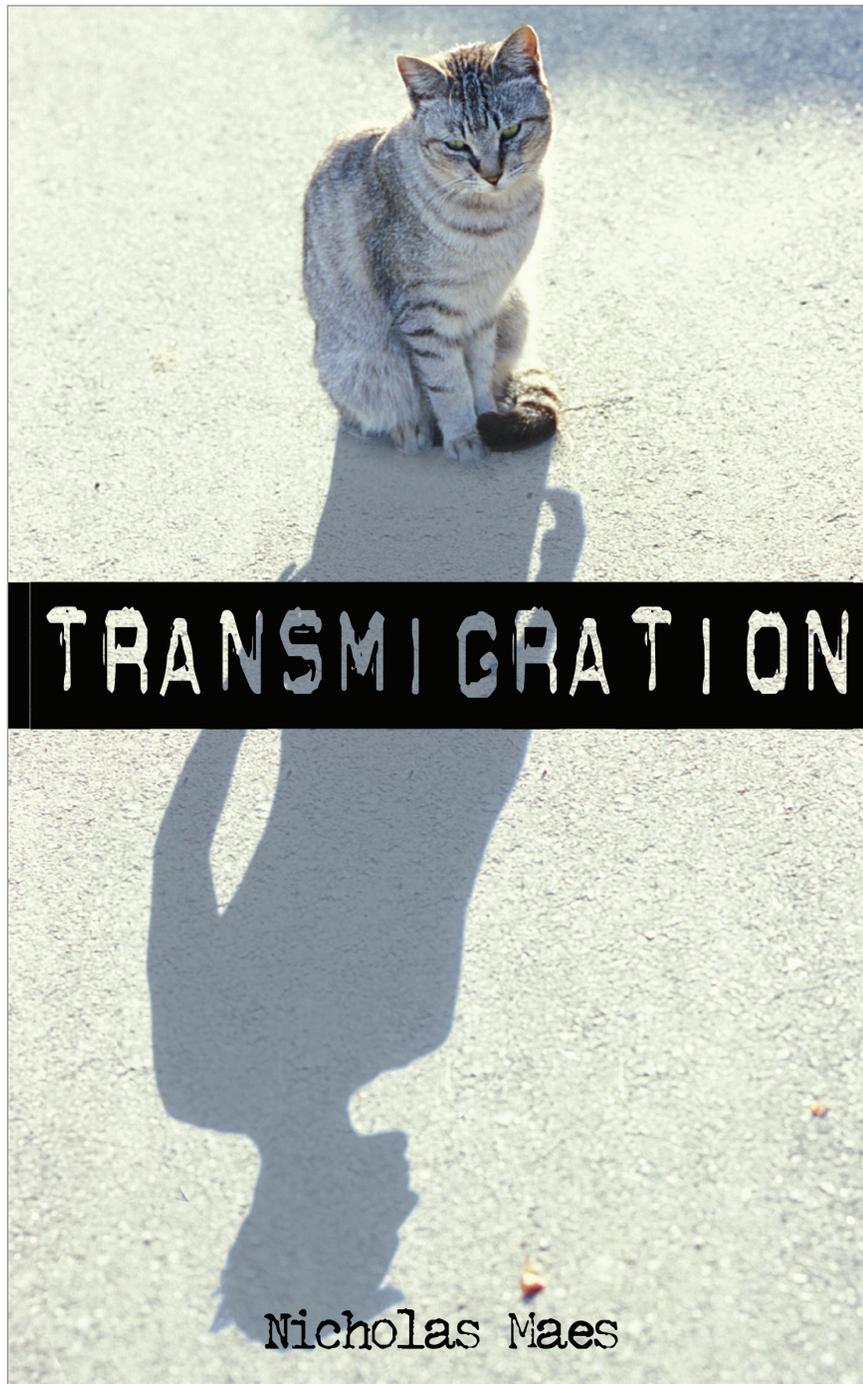


TEACHER'S GUIDE

Grade 9 or Grade 10 English



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I. INTRODUCTION

Simon Carpenter is a 16 year old living in Vancouver, and he thinks he's going crazy. He is hypersensitive to his environment and unable to focus. Music pains him. At one point he believes he sees out of the eyes of a homeless alcoholic. Then, at the local pet shop he hears a rabbit talking.

When he brings the rabbit home he discovers that it is possessed by a hostile spirit, one of an entire race of spirits engaged in a long standing vendetta against the human race.

When Simon makes the mistake of listening to the spirit, he is launched on a deadly race to discover what these creatures are and how he connects to them. An army of ancient, embittered souls stands poised to fulfill their plans, and time is running out.

About the Author

Born in Montreal, Nicholas Maes is a career educator, with experience teaching high school history and classical studies at the University of Waterloo. His previous novels for young people are *Crescent Star*, *Locksmith*, and *Laughing Wolf*, which was nominated for the Snow Willow Award. Maes is also the author of one adult fiction novel *Dead Man's Float* and the biography *Robertson Davies: Magician of Words*. He lives in Toronto.

II. TOPICS AND THEMES

Transmigration is a young adult fantasy novel that explores concepts of morality, necessity, and accountability in relation to the actions of individuals and species.

Morality for Individuals

Morality vs. Necessity

Simon, the protagonist of *Transmigration* is repeatedly presented with situations in which he is required to go against his sense of right and wrong in order to ensure his own survival or the well being of his relatives. Simon and other characters can and do make strong cases for the necessity of their actions given the situations that they face. Simon still questions whether he is, in fact, justified.

Accountability without Consequences

The bolkh, the primary antagonists in *Transmigration* are all gifted with the ability to possess the bodies of animals and vulnerable humans. Simon develops similar abilities. However, in contrast to Simon, the bolkh are cavalier with the bodies they possess, using them without regard. When they are done with a body they move on, leaving the body to suffer any consequences of their actions. As such they act without a sense of accountability for their behaviour, demonstrating the close relationship between morality on the one hand and accountability on the other.

Morality for Species

Neanderthals and Homo Sapiens

The larger conflict in *Transmigration* is premised on the real history of interactions between Homo sapiens, our own species, and Homo neanderthalensis. The Neanderthals were another species, or perhaps subspecies, of humanity common in Eurasia from about 600,000 BCE. The last Neanderthal went extinct in about 24,500 BCE, somewhere in Europe, possibly Gibraltar. Genetic evidence has demonstrated that some Neanderthals interbred with our own ancestors before that point, making them a minority contributor to the human genome as it is today. The reason for the extinction of the Neanderthals is currently unclear. The possibility that they may have been driven to extinction by Homo Sapiens is one of the top contending theories.

In *Transmigration* Mr. Maes proposes a continuation of that historical conflict as the central conflict in which his characters become involved. This raises the question whether the bodiless remnant of the Neanderthals who survived, the “bolkh,” can or should be held morally accountable for their actions in the same regard that a human might be? Mr. Maes frames this as an evolutionary conflict between two competing species. Exactly what do members of two species in conflict for survival owe to each other?

Natural Selection

References to natural selection are a recurring motif in *Transmigration*. Natural Selection is one element of the theory of evolution, first proposed in Charles Darwin’s *On the Origin of Species*. Natural selection is the mechanism by which evolution occurs over long periods of time. Minor variation between individual members of a species make some individuals more likely to survive and breed. These individuals are more fit. Over time small variations add up to large differences, until species diverge.

The same concept of fitness can apply between two competing species. For instance, a cuckoo replacing another bird’s eggs with its own is neither right or wrong to do so, but merely acting in accordance with its own survival instincts.

Despite the recognition by characters within *Transmigration* that this concept of “Survival of the Fittest” applies to their situation, it is a difficult concept for them to apply clinically. Characters repeatedly interpret this conflict in a moral light, lashing out in response to grievances or striving to avoid wrongdoing.

Isolation

Isolation is a concept that occurs regularly within *Transmigration*. Simon begins the story strongly isolated from his family and peers. Clara, despite being internally powerful, is isolated from the world around her by presumed autism. Simon and the bolkh are so extremely isolated they have no bodies of their own, and must borrow others bodies in order to interact. Isolation is a problematic state for individuals, leading to distress. It can sometimes be the cause for psychological issues. Maes novel can be seen as a thought experiment taking isolation to extremes.

III. CURRICULUM EXPECTATIONS

Ontario Curriculum English Grade 9 and 10

Reading

- 1.2 Using reading comprehension strategies
- 1.3 Demonstrating understanding of content
- 1.4 Making inferences
- 1.5 Extending understanding of texts
- 1.6 Analysing texts
- 1.8 Critical literacy

- 2.2 Text features
- 2.3 Elements of style

- 3.1 Reading familiar words
- 3.2 Reading unfamiliar words
- 3.3 Developing vocabulary

Writing

- 1.2 Generating and Developing Ideas
- 1.3 Research
- 1.4 Organizing Ideas

- 2.2 Voice
- 2.3 Diction
- 2.4 Sentence Craft and Fluency

- 3.2 Vocabulary

IV. PRE-READING ACTIVITIES

1. Hold a class discussion regarding the title *Transmigration*. Break the word down into its constituent parts. Have students work in small groups to define the parts and the full word.

prefix: trans (usually “across,” “beyond,” or “through,”)

root: migrate (“to move from place to place”)

suffix: tion (“the state of”)

Have students share their possible definitions with the class, and make predictions about the subject of the book.

- Have students read about or research the phrase “Transmigration of Souls”. Some possible connections to suggest: metempsychosis, Pythagoras, reincarnation, Hinduism, Jainism, Sikhism.

Have students share ideas and connections in class. Record students ideas on chart paper for future reference.

- Have students deconstruct the cover of the book. Ask students what the significance of the cat and the cat’s shadow might be? What significance might there be to the hollow lettering design? What significance might there be to the relative emptiness of the cover?
- Ask students to read the back cover of the book. Point out the use of the phrases “creatures plotting” “foreign “presence” and “army of souls.” Ask students to discuss in small groups their personal conceptions of these creatures. Have students share their ideas with the class. Ask students how their conceptions would have been different if they had only been given the phrase “army of souls.”

V. CHAPTERS 1 TO 3

Summary:

1. Simon visits a pet store with his brother Ian, where he has difficulty coping with distractions, especially music. He is confronted by two bullies from his high school, Winston and Peter. Before leaving the store Simon observes a rabbit which seems to be talking, and which asks Simon to rescue it.
2. Simon and Ian walk past Henry, a homeless alcoholic living in their area. Simon briefly experiences a perception shift, seeing himself from Henry’s point of view. The boys arrive home and meet Emma, the family’s live-in nanny, who had helped Simon’s mother deliver Simon prematurely in the wake of a car accident. Simon has an out of body experience.
3. Simon has trouble focusing in biology class and has another run in with Winston at school. This is interrupted by Jenny, an older teen with a tough reputation. Simon accompanies Emma to visit Clara, Emma’s severely autistic daughter. Clara gives Simon three drawings, including one of a rabbit with fangs.

Activities:

- Have students read chapters 1, 2 and 3.

Reading for Meaning

- Have students begin a story map, story board or timeline of events in the first three chapters. Make sure students leave room for the remainder of the book.
- Ask students to participate in a class debate about the genre of *Transmigration*. Discuss the relative

qualities of fiction, speculative fiction, fantasy fiction, and science fiction. Ask students to predict what sorts of events they expect to have happen based on the identification.

- Have students examine pages 26 and 27. Simon describes this experience as a dream. Ask students to explain, if it is not a dream, what is happening on these pages? (Simon is having an out of body experience).

Critical Reading

- Have students make T-Charts. Have students list reasons for agreeing and disagreeing that Simon is “possibly psycho”. (Page 10) Ask students to brainstorm reasons why the author may have initially made this point ambiguous for readers. (To help readers suspend disbelief; to make Simon easier to identify with; to provide initial dramatic tension).
- Have students examine the incident with the dog, on pages 19 and 20. The author describes this event in two ways. Ask students what the author would like us to infer about Simon from this incident.
- On pages 27 and 28 the author has Simon attend a class lecture on the topic of “Survival of the Fittest?” Ask students to consider why the author has chosen to do so. (Foreshadowing for later developments; explanation of the concept of ‘environmental fitness’).
- Have students research and present a short report on another case that exemplifies environmental fitness as well as the peppered moth. (E.g., Australian rabbits, Neanderthal and Cro-Magnon competition, Polynesian rats, jumping carp, zebra mussels, garlic mustard weed, long versus short limbed eastern fence lizards, urban coyotes, etc.).

Elements of Text

- Have students read the description of the rabbit on Page 13. Ask students to consider reasons why the author may have chosen the vocabulary that he has. (To establish that Simon is repelled by the rabbit; to establish the rabbit as an antagonist.)
- Ask students to rewrite the description to make the rabbit appealing.
- On Page 17 the author uses analogy to describe Simon’s feelings about Winston. “When he compared himself to Winston, say, he felt like an outdated piece of equipment. If Winston was the newest 4G cellphone, Simon was the rotary model, clumsy immobile and no longer in use.” Ask students to explain what this analogy shows us about Simon.
- Ask students to discuss the use of repetition in a story. On Pages 23, 31 and 34 the author describes Emma, Jenny and Clara in very similar language. This is an example of the use of repetition. What does the author want us to suspect about these characters? (That Jenny is related to Clara and Emma; that Emma, Jenny or Clara may know something about what is going on.)

VI. CHAPTERS 4 TO 7

Summary:

1. Simon returns to the pet shop, buys the rabbit and takes it home. He learns it is not the rabbit whose voice he has been hearing but Cletho, a spirit inhabiting the rabbit. Cletho explains that he is one of a large group of similar spirits, called “bolkh,” who swap bodies at will, occupying animals or people impaired by various causes. Cletho coaches Simon in leaving Simon’s body then takes it over himself, shutting Simon out.
2. Disembodied, Simon takes refuge inside Henry and attempts to inform his family about Cletho’s imposture. The attempt fails, he is unable to control Henry’s body finely enough. His family call the police, forcing Simon and Henry to flee.
3. Simon and Henry escape a police sweep. In order to keep Henry intoxicated enough to be a good host for Simon, Simon assists Henry in shoplifting whisky.
4. Henry shares the stolen whisky with a group of other homeless men. Simon eavesdrops on two bolkh, who are waiting to take advantage of the intoxicated men. Simon learns that the leader of the bolkh, Tarhlo is expected to arrive soon. Cletho has made Simon a person of interest to the bolkhs as a “woplh”, connected to a “hamax”. When Henry reveals the presence of Simon, the two spirits attack, causing Simon to flee.

Activities:

- Have students read chapters 4 to 7.

Reading for Meaning

- Have students add to their story maps, story boards or timelines.
- Have students create Venn diagrams to explore similarities and differences between the properties of a “kaba” and traditional concepts regarding souls.
- Have students examine pages 53 and 54. Ask student to determine what Simon’s feelings and attitude about occupying Henry are.
- Ask students to determine how Simon’s attitude about occupying other bodies changes by the end of chapter 7.

Critical Reading

- Several times the author has Simon express distaste for actions he takes, including occupying Henry, on page 54, and helping Henry to get alcohol, on page 67. What purpose does the author have for sharing these reflections with the readers?

- The author also describes how various occupied individuals react to being occupied. Henry is frightened on page 62, and he complains and struggles on page 66. The kaba of the mouse is described as “so tiny and frail that it moved aside”, on page 68. How does the author want readers to feel about these act of occupation? Is the use of the word “Hijacking” on page 69, significant?
- Have students discuss the following. Kabas need bodies to survive. Are Simon’s actions after Cletho takes over his body justifiable? Were Cletho’s actions justifiable? If there is a distinction between Cletho and Simon, what is that distinction?

Elements of Text

- Define the word neologism for students.
- Have students create word webs of the neologism’s used in chapter 4, and in the glossary on pages 245-246.
- Hold an open discussion about the purposes authors have for creating new words. (To establish authenticity for an invented culture, like the bolkh; to establish mood or atmosphere, as in Carroll’s *Jabberwocky*; to put into words a new concept such as laser).
- Discuss the basis for forming neologisms. (Combining words; making words of people’s names or book titles; creating acronyms; adding new prefixes or suffixes to existing words).
- Create a class list of well known Neologisms. (E.g., yahoo, robot, mcjob, cyberspace).
- Have students speculate in pairs regarding the basis for some of the author’s neologisms in *Transmigration*.
- Have students invent a neologism relevant to them.
- In these chapters the author has some dialogue indicated with quotation marks, and some dialogue indicated with italicization as well as quotation marks. Have students explain why the author has made this choice. (To differentiate between speech between “shatls” and speech between “kabas”).
- On pages 66 and 67 the author has some dialogue between Henry and Simon, both of whom are occupying the same body. Henry’s dialogue is consistently written in nonstandard English. Discuss what purpose this serves. (To differentiate the two speakers, to establish Henry’s voice as a character). Have students explain what assumptions about Henry the author is inviting the reader to make, based on his way of speaking.
- Have students write a page of dialogue between two different characters, demonstrating the characters’ identity and voice in their word choices for each.

VII. CHAPTERS 8 TO 10

Summary:

1. Simon experiments with his new ability to switch bodies and occupy animals. He occupies a cat at his high school to follow Cletho. He observes Cletho be confronted by Winston and Peter, and then rescued by Jenny. Simon uses the cat to intimidate Winston and Peter, then researches the location for the planned bolkh meeting.
2. Simon eavesdrops on the bolkh meeting, observing Tarhlo. He learns that the bolkh's goal is "incarnation," replacing the human race; that the hamax is central to this goal; and that Clara is the hamax.
3. Simon occupies Henry and succeeds in using Henry to get into his family's home while Cletho is asleep and vulnerable. After a brief struggle, Simon is able to reclaim his body. He demonstrates his body switching abilities to his family.

Activities:

- Have students read chapters 8 to 10.

Reading for Meaning

- Have students add to their story maps, story boards or timelines.
- Ask students to decide on the meaning of Simon's ability to take over a beetle or a snail on page 83 (either that Simon is very powerful, or Cletho lied at least partly).
- On Page 83 Simon speculates, "Who was Simon Carpenter exactly? What was his relation to Cletho?" Ask students to discuss their own speculations about these questions.
- In chapter 10 Simon hijacks Henry again. Ask students to reread pages 104 and 105 and determine how Simon's character has changed since he first did this?

Critical Reading

- On Page 93, in chapter 9 the author has Simon feel sorry for getting a fly killed. He asks; "its life had value surely?" What conclusions about the bolkh habit of occupying vadh – animals - is the author directing readers to make by asking this question?
- The setting for this chapter is a meat processing plant. Given that our attention is being drawn to bolkh attitudes to animals, is this significant? What is the parallel we are invited to draw?
- In chapter 9, Tarhlo is presented wearing a corpse, he kills a little girl a bolkh is occupying, and then kills the bolkh. What conclusions about Tarhlo does the author want readers to make?

- Ask students to debate the following; When Tarhlo says to Dohl, “I am a Kahlkon, you are a Threedh. Threedhs must yield to Kahlkons as nature has ordained.” He is essentially saying that he is justified in killing Dohl because he can. Is this true? If it is not true, why is it not true?

Elements of Text

- On page 103 the bolkh the word “incarnation,” is clearly significant. It is repeated, and it is a one word sentence. Discuss the use of short versus long sentences to establish significance.
- Ask students to find the dictionary definition of “incarnation.” Discuss the distinction between incarnation and reincarnation. Ask students to speculate why the author chose to use incarnation.
- Ask students to add “incarnation” “threedh” and “khalkon” to their previously created word webs.
- On page 86 the author also uses one word sentences to describe some of the sensory impressions Simon has while occupying the cat. Ask students to discuss if they consider this a successful or unsuccessful technique for writing description.
- Ask students to write a one page descriptive piece from the point of view of an animal, and using a variety of sentence lengths, including one word sentences.
- Foreshadowing is a literary technique where the author makes suggestions about elements that will be significant later in the book. On page 87 there is a reference to Cletho’s knowledge about cavemen. Ask students to speculate what that might foreshadow. (That Cletho is a ‘caveman’).
- On pages 87 and 88 Jenny intervenes between Winston and Simon for the second time. On Page 88 she looks at Cletho in Simon’s body, goes pale and she hurries off. Ask students to speculate what this might mean about Jenny. (That she can recognize the real Simon; that she will be important later).
- On pages 99 and 100 Tarhlo makes a list of several allusions to historical events. This demonstrates that the bolkh are very old. Ask students to identify each specific allusion. Discuss with students why the author includes a list, and not simply the allusion to the occasion when “Iuras of the desert warred”.
- A good speculative fiction novel needs to be internally self consistent. There are rules that consistently govern how the magic works. Ask students to work in groups and determine a list of rules for magic in *Transmigration*.

VIII. CHAPTERS 11 TO 14

Summary:

1. Simon, his friends and family take various measures to escape from the bolkh. Simon's parents and brother leave Vancouver by car. Simon, Emma, Clara and Jenny meet at the airport, intending to journey to Europe to meet up with Emma's brother.
2. On the plane, we learn that Simon has abandoned his body and is hiding inside Clara. On accomplishing this, another spirit transferred back into Simon's body. Emma reveals that Simon is in fact her son, the disembodied twin of Clara, while the spirit now in his body is the actual child of his parents. She had affected the transfer at the moment of his birth in order to hide Simon and Clara from her former husband, Tarhlo. She had escaped Tarhlo and gone into hiding shortly after the birth of Clara. Her brother, Earl had gone into hiding at the same time, as had Earl's daughter, Jenny.
3. Simon, Clara, Emma and Jenny meet Earl in Holland. They stop at a hospital to allow Simon to transfer to a comatose body. Earl then stops the group at a casino to raise funds for further travel.
4. The group attempts to keep a vigil for sign of bolkh. A road block causes them to stop briefly, and Simon begins experiencing an ongoing itching sensation. A small group of bolkh attempt to jump Simon, but Earl fights them off. They continue to travel by car across Holland, then Belgium and into France.

Activities:

- Have students read chapters 11 to 14.

Reading for Meaning

- Have students add to their story maps, story boards or timelines.
- In Chapter 12 previously established ideas about Simon, Clara, Emma and Jenny are revealed to be incorrect. Ask students to create a new time line showing events from Tarhlo and Emma's first meeting, up to the incident when Simon was attacked by Thor.
- Ask students to explain what they now know about Clara's character and role as the "hamax".
- Review with students what they now know about "vrindh" and how they relate to bolkh and lura.
- If students made word webs previously, they may now need to make modifications or additions.

Critical Reading

- Ask students to infer why the author has included another class lecture about evolution, this time focusing on the development of hominid species? What is the implication for the clandestine struggle between bolkh and humans?

- Ask students to infer why the author has chosen to break this lecture up with Simon’s retrospective recollections of his families’ intended escape from the bolkh. (To highlight the distinction between the unemotional, scientific, long view of interspecies competition on the one hand, and the emotional, personal, short view of individuals on the other). Ask students to discuss which they think is the more appropriate way to view the struggle between bolkh and lura.
- Ask students to write a one paragraph personal response about the ideas presented in this lecture, and the implications for the human race in the long term.
- On page 141, while discussing Crispjin’s occupation, Simon asks, “Is this fair?” Earl replies, “Our need is greater than his.” Earl is claiming that this action is justified because the group is threatened. Ask students to decide if Earl is correct.
- On Page 158 the author has Simon review the actions of the past day. He asks, “Were these actions truly justified? How far could they go to ensure their own safety?” Ask students to decide if these actions were justified.
- Stage a classroom debate. Argue the limits of morality versus necessity.
- Ask students to speculate why the author has Simon save the bee sting victim’s life on page 142 and 143.
- In chapter 13 the author has Earl raise money for the group by gambling. As a vrindh he clearly has some advantages, and he never loses. Ask students whether they think Earl should or should not refrain from gambling.
- Ask students to explain the analogy the author is making between having an advantage gambling and having an evolutionary advantage. (E.g. a bigger brain, sharper teeth, etc.)

Elements of Text

- In Chapter 11 the author temporarily abandons the present tense, and has Simon recollect how his family planned to leave. In chapter 12 Simon recollects abandoning his body at the airport. Discuss with students the reasons that an author might mix tenses. (To set up a contrast; to have a narrator or character provide more interpretation about an event; to condense less significant elements of the story).
- Ask students to write a one page piece that mixes past and present tense (E.g., a short story about boy winning a race and remembering training for it).
- “We can’t be squeamish.” (Page 141). Ask students to use the context of this word to determine its meaning.
- “– but he did hear the guy ululate with pain.” (Page 143). Ask students to use the context of this word to determine its meaning.
- “Their precautions had paid off.” (Page 150). Ask students to use the context of this word to determine its meaning.
- On page 155 the word “Zsst” is used. This is an example of onomatopoeia – a word based on the sound an object or action makes. Ask students to list other onomatopoeia
- Ask students to create a short, descriptive writing piece about an event. (E.g, getting up, skateboarding, shooting a basketball). Students should use as many onomatopoeia as possible.

IX. CHAPTERS 15 TO 18

Summary:

1. In Paris Jenny has Simon try to occupy her, so that he will be able to trace her if necessary. Simon learns more about his family history from Earl. Earl and Simon go to meet Michel, a distant cousin of Earl's who identifies the bolkh as the spirits of the last Neanderthal, disembodied when their species went extinct. Michel also explains the significance of a hamax as a person who can house many spirits at once. He tells Simon to stay close to Clara, for her safety.
2. Simon and Earl journey back to the safe house where they left Emma, Clara and Jenny. There they discover the women missing and a large number of bolkh waiting, including Cletho. Cletho explains that the bolkh have been tracking Simon consistently since the road block, using lice. The women have already been taken to Tarhlo. Cletho forces Simon to transfer to a bird. Simon and Cletho fly to "the Domh," the last home of the bolkh.
3. Cletho and Simon arrive at the Domh, in Gibraltar. Simon is forced to transfer into a dead body as a test of ability. He meets Tarhlo, who welcomes Simon as his son. Simon witnesses a speech by Tarhlo and Simon questions whether Tarhlo and the bolkh might have some justification for their actions. He witnesses Tarhlo directing the occupation of Clara by five thousand bolkh. Simon is drugged by the bolkh and loses consciousness.
4. Simon wakes up and talks with Cletho, discovering he has been unconscious for 18 hours. Tarhlo, his confederate bolkh, Clara, Emma and Jenny have left. Cletho reveals that Tarhlo intends to take Clara into maternity wards, to permanently replace the souls of as many babies as possible, thereby incarnating the bolkh. Cletho allows Simon to leave, believing that Simon will not be able to locate the group. Simon manages to trace Jenny to Gibraltar airport, and discover a message she has left behind, identifying New York City as Tarhlo's first target. Simon, stows away on the next flight to New York.

Activities:

- Have students read chapters 15 to 18.

Reading for Meaning

- Have students add to their story maps, story boards or timelines.
- On page 170 Marcel shows three photographs to Simon. Ask students to speculate on what each could possibly foreshadow in the story.
- On page 190 and 191 Tarhlo quotes a song or poem. Authors will sometimes put a poem into the action of a story as a way to high light a central belief of a person or culture within a story, or to highlight a key theme of the book. Ask students to speculate what this poem indicates about the bolkh?

- Ask students to formulate a short list of core values and then to create a similar poem exemplifying their list.
- Ask students to explain how Simon was able to track Jenny and locate a clue to Tarhlo's intended destination, in chapter 18.
- If students made word webs previously, they may now need to make modifications or additions.

Critical Reading

- Have students research and present a short report on the term hominid.
- On page 186, Simon speculates about Tarhlo, "With a start, Simon realized he was witnessing greatness. Never mind that Tarhlo was a force of destruction. Simon sensed his authoritarian will." Ask students to decide if they would agree that Tarhlo is a great leader?
- On page 187 Tarhlo says, "It is sad that nature delights in competition, but we can't be blamed if, like all living kabas, we fight and destroy to protect our own." Ask students to decide if what Tarhlo is saying is correct.
- Ask students to speculate why the author has Simon question whose side he is on, in chapter 17.
- Stage a classroom debate. Argue the value of evolutionary fitness versus moral standards.

Elements of Text

- In page 169 Marcel explains the development of the vrindh to Simon. This is an example of the author using real events or knowledge to provide verisimilitude. Ask students to reread this chapter and also to read the following Globe and Mail article. Discuss with students how the author has evidently made use of this information, and how he has changed it to suit the purposes of his story. (Yes, Neanderthals really did interbreed with humans. However, 1-4% DNA is unlikely to be enough to explain why vrindh and limnl are cross fertile, if limnl and humans are not, so the author does not mention the specific figures).

Humans' Carry Neanderthal DNA, Anne Mcilroy. <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/technology/science/humans-carry-neanderthal-dna-researchers-find/article1559142/>

- On page 179, Simon occupies a swallow and uses it to travel from Paris to Zaragoza, Spain. Ask students to research swallows and determine if this is another example of author-researched verisimilitude? (It is, some swallows have been tracked migrating much greater distances).
- Have students research the location and history of Gibraltar. Ask students to determine if this is another example of author-researched verisimilitude? (It is, Gibraltar was the last location known to have a Neanderthal population.)
- Ask students to use Google Streetview or another internet tool to research a location and write a short descriptive piece about walking in that location.

X. CHAPTERS 19 TO 22

Summary:

1. In New York, Simon looks for Tarhlo, Clara Emma and Jenny, and traces them to several hospitals, learning that in each Tarhlo has successfully replaced the souls of the available newborn infants. Using the body of a dead jogger, Simon calls his family.
2. Arriving at the Downtown Hospital Maternity Ward he ambushes Tarhlo and his confederates in the process of occupying newborns. He ambushes them using a portable cassette player and music. A fight breaks out between himself and the bolkh, with Jenny and Emma's assistance. Before the bolkh overpower them, Simon is able to provide an antidote to the drug keeping Clara compliant, and she forcibly ousts the many bolkh inside her.
3. Tarhlo leaves off the fight in order to create an escape route for his disembodied followers. Simon discovers that he can mentally push away Tarhlo's confederates as long as he is physically in contact with Clara. The freed bolkh, now occupying available animals and homeless, return. Simon, Clara, Emma and Jenny commandeer an ambulance and attempt to escape, driving it through Central Park. Tarhlo uses a bus to block their escape, forcing the group to continue on foot. Simon and Clara are able together to push through increasing numbers of bolkh onto Brooklyn bridge, but are stymied from further progress. Tarhlo exhorts them to give up. Clara jumps off the bridge, followed by Simon, who is able to protect her dying, but not injury.
4. Simon is with Clara in hospital. Clara is in a coma, but healing. It is revealed that Clara is also hosting the spirits of the newborns ousted by the bolkh Emma and Jenny visited. Simon recognizes that the bolkh, while stymied during Clara's recovery, will certainly try again.

Activities:

- Have students read chapters 19 to 22.

Reading for Meaning

- Have students complete their story maps, story boards or timelines.
- On page 214 Simon feels very tired. On page 216 he claims to be ready to fight an army. Ask students to explain the cause of this change.
- Define the term social isolation for students, highlighting the problems that social isolation can cause. Have an open discussion about how this concept might relate to Simon during chapter 19.
- How might social isolation explain some things about the bolkh?
- Discuss: Why did Clara's jump off of Brooklyn Bridge cause the stalemate at the end of chapter 21 to be broken?

- Chapter 22 ends without a final resolution. Ask students to predict what events they think are likely to occur next.

Critical Reading

- Have students discuss: How does the author's choice to have the bolkh target newborn infants, affect readers?

Elements of Text

- On pages 222 and 223 the author describes the effects of the protective bubble that surround Simon and Clara when they are together, for the first time. The author takes his time to describe this event in detail. Discuss with students why the author would choose to do so. (Because it is a novel event for readers, unlike anything that has occurred before in this book).
- Have students imagine they gain a superpower and use it in class. Have students write a paragraph describing in detail how it works and what happens.
- Ask student to reexamine page 236, then ask students to determine a scene in the first three chapters of the book that foreshadowed the importance of Simon and Clara as a unit.
- Ask students to discuss whether they are satisfied with this ending. Why or why not? Discuss the differences between story arcs in single novels and in serial novels.

XI. SUGGESTED POST-READING ACTIVITIES

Canadian Science Fiction.

Share the following quotation from the author's website.

"I've spent most of my life in Canada, have been formed by the 'Canadian Spirit' (for want of a better term) and, overall, believe this novel, which at first sight has more of an American veneer than a Canadian one, should find a place for itself on the Canadian literary firmament."
 - on the topic of the novel, *Dead Man's Float*.
<http://nicholasmaes.com/index.php?page=interview>

Have students write a 2-3 page essay on the following topic.

Is *Transmigration* a good example of Canadian Speculative Fiction? Why or why not?

Students may find any of the following resources useful in defining either Canadian speculative fiction, or Canadian literature.

- *Preface: Canadian Science Fiction and Fantasy-Is There Any?* in *Other Canadas: An Anthology of Science Fiction and Fantasy*. Colombo, John Robert (Ed.) McGraw-Hill Ryerson Ltd., Toronto, 1979.
- *Canadian Science Fiction*. Robert J Sawyer. 2003.

<http://www.sfwriter.com/egcanadi.htm>

- *Canadian Literature*. Wikipedia. February, 2012. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Canadian_literature

The Defining Qualities of Canadian Speculative Fiction

John Robert Colombo, the famous collector and editor, claimed that Canadian Science Fiction had 4 qualities.¹

- **The Polar World.** Canadian speculative fiction is often concerned with characters who journey north and discover lost civilizations, fabulous monsters, aliens or other fantastic things in the Arctic. The distance and remoteness of the polar regions creates a plausible reason for readers to suspend disbelief, and Canadian writers have often taken advantage of this fact.
- **The National Disaster Scenario.** Canadian speculative fiction is often concerned with an impending invasion or disaster that must be prevented.
- **The Alienated Outsider.** Canadian speculative fiction is often concerned with a sense of being on the outside and looking in. Main characters are estranged from society or the world and struggle to enter or belong.
- **Prevalence of Fantasy over Science Fiction.** Canadians write a lot more fantasy than science fiction.

The Defining Qualities of Canadian Literature

Many qualities have been identified in Canadian Literature. Four qualities are most frequently listed.²

- **Nature**
- **Frontier Life**
- **Canada's position in the world**
- **A reflection of Canada's ethnic and cultural diversity**

1. Narrative:

One of the elements that is most novel in *Transmigration* is the ability of many of the characters to jump bodies. This is both a benefit and a curse. (They can survive experiences that would kill others and they are very, very long lived. However, they are estranged from the physical selves they occupy, scattered as a people, and forced to scavenge for bodies constantly).

Ask students to write a 2-3 page short story, written from the point of view of a bolkh, like Cletho. The story should demonstrate a unique voice, and explore the character's thoughts and feelings about having to live without a body.

Alternately, invite students to write and record an interview on the same topic.

2. The basis for morality.

What is the basis for moral behaviour? In *Transmigration*, Simon continually struggles with his own understanding of what constitutes good behaviour. This understanding conflicts with the actions he, his friends and his antagonists undertake. *Transmigration* has examples where strength, vengeance, natural selection and necessity are all used as justifications. In some cases Mr Maes withholds judgment but none of these categories are ultimately licensed as a good basis for moral behaviour.

What would constitute a good basis for moral behaviour? Have students compare and contrast at least two of the following concepts. They could write a 2-3 page essay, make a poster display, or create dramatic sketches to exemplify the pluses and minuses of these concepts.

- Civil rights
- The common good
- Cultural norms
- Religion

3. Themes

Have students write a 2-3 page essay on one of the following themes in *Transmigration*

- Natural Selection
- Evolution
- Morality versus Necessity
- Accountability
- Isolation

4. Cave Art

Have students read the New Scientist article “First Neanderthal Cave Paintings” discovered in Spain” at <http://www.newscientist.com/article/dn21458-first-neanderthal-cave-paintings-discovered-in-spain.html>.

This represents the best evidence found to date that Neanderthals did make cave art similar to that made by early Cro-Magnon men. Discuss with students the use of symbolism and narrative evident in this painting. This implies Neanderthals may have had equivalent mental abilities to our own.

Examine other cave art examples. Discuss and define “petroglyphs,” “petroforms” and “pictographs.” Have students create a “cave painting.”

5. The Stolen Child

In western European folklore, faeries or elves were sometimes feared to replace young children with an elf or sometimes with a piece of wood enchanted to look like a baby for a short time, until it sickened and died.

This may have been, in the pre-scientific era, a cultural explanation for understanding crib death, mental retardation, mental disorders or other afflictions.

There are many good examples of the use of the changeling legend in literature. One of the best is *The Stolen Child*, by William Butler Yeats.

Provide students with a copy of the *Stolen Child*. Compare and contrast the motives of the faerie in the poem with the motives of the bolkh in *Transmigration*.

Ask students to write a 1 page poem in Yeats’ style from the point of view of a bolkh occupying a newborn child, or a parent whose newborn has been occupied.

THE STOLEN CHILD

By W.B. Yeats

Where dips the rocky highland
Of Sleuth Wood in the lake
There lies a leafy island
Where flapping herons wake
The drowsy water-rats;
There we've hid our faery vats
Full of berries
And the reddest stolen cherries.
Come away, O human child!
To the waters and the wild
With a faery hand in hand,
For the world's more full of weeping than you can understand.

Where the wave of moonlight glosses
The dim grey sands with light,
Far off by furthest Rosses
We foot it all the night,
Weaving olden dances,
Mingling hands and mingling glances
Till the moon has taken flight;
To and fro we leap
And chase the frothy bubbles,
While the world is full of troubles
And is anxious in its sleep.
Come away, O human child!
To the waters of the wild
With a faery hand in hand,
For the world's more full of weeping than you can understand.

Where the wandering water gushes
From the hills above Glen-Car,
In pools among the rushes
That scarce could bathe a star,

We seek for slumbering trout
And whispering in their ears
Give them unquiet dreams;
Leaning softly out
From ferns that drop their tears
Over the young streams.
Come away, O human child!
To the waters and the wild
With a faery hand in hand,
For the world's more full of weeping than you can understand.

Away with us he's going,
The solemn-eyed:
He'll hear no more the lowing
Of the calves on the warm hillside
Or the kettle on the hob
Sing peace into his breast,
Or see the brown mice bob
Round and round the oatmeal-chest.
For he comes, the human child,
To the waters and the wild
With a faery hand in hand,
From a world more full of weeping than he can understand.

XI. FURTHER READING

1. *Odd John*, Olaf Stapledon
Science fiction novel. John Wainright, the first of a new species of superhumans feels no obligation to live by human moral law. The superhuman colony he founds inevitably finds itself in conflict with humanity.
2. *The Ugly Little Boy*, Isaac Asimov.
Science fiction novel. A neanderthal boy is brought forward to the present via time travel. Expanded from an earlier short story of the same name.
3. *The Neanderthal Parallax*, Robert J Sawyer.
Science fiction trilogy. Explores the societal differences between two parallel worlds making contact with each other; our human world, and an alternate Earth where Neanderthals became the dominant hominid species.
4. *Joe the Barbarian*, Grant Morrisson and Sean Murphy.
Graphic novel. Parallels the uncertainty of Simon's experiences at the outset of *Transmigration*. Joe is a teenager with Type 1 Diabetes. When he enters a fantastic world populated with familiar figures he becomes embroiled in a war with King Death. At the same time, in the real world he searches for a soda to fix his blood sugar.
5. *The Lord of the Rings*, J.R.R. Tolkien
Fantasy Trilogy. Tolkien's epic fantasy work, exemplifies the author as creator of subcultures and languages.
6. *The Hobbit*, J.R.R. Tolkien
Fantasy Novel. Exemplifies the use of poetry in a novel.
7. *Evolution: How We and All Living Things Came to Be*, Daniel Loxton.
Non Fiction. Explains the theory of evolution in student friendly language.
8. *The Humans Who Went Extinct: Why Neandertals died out and we survived*.
Non Fiction. A broad look at the circumstances of the Neanderthal extinction.