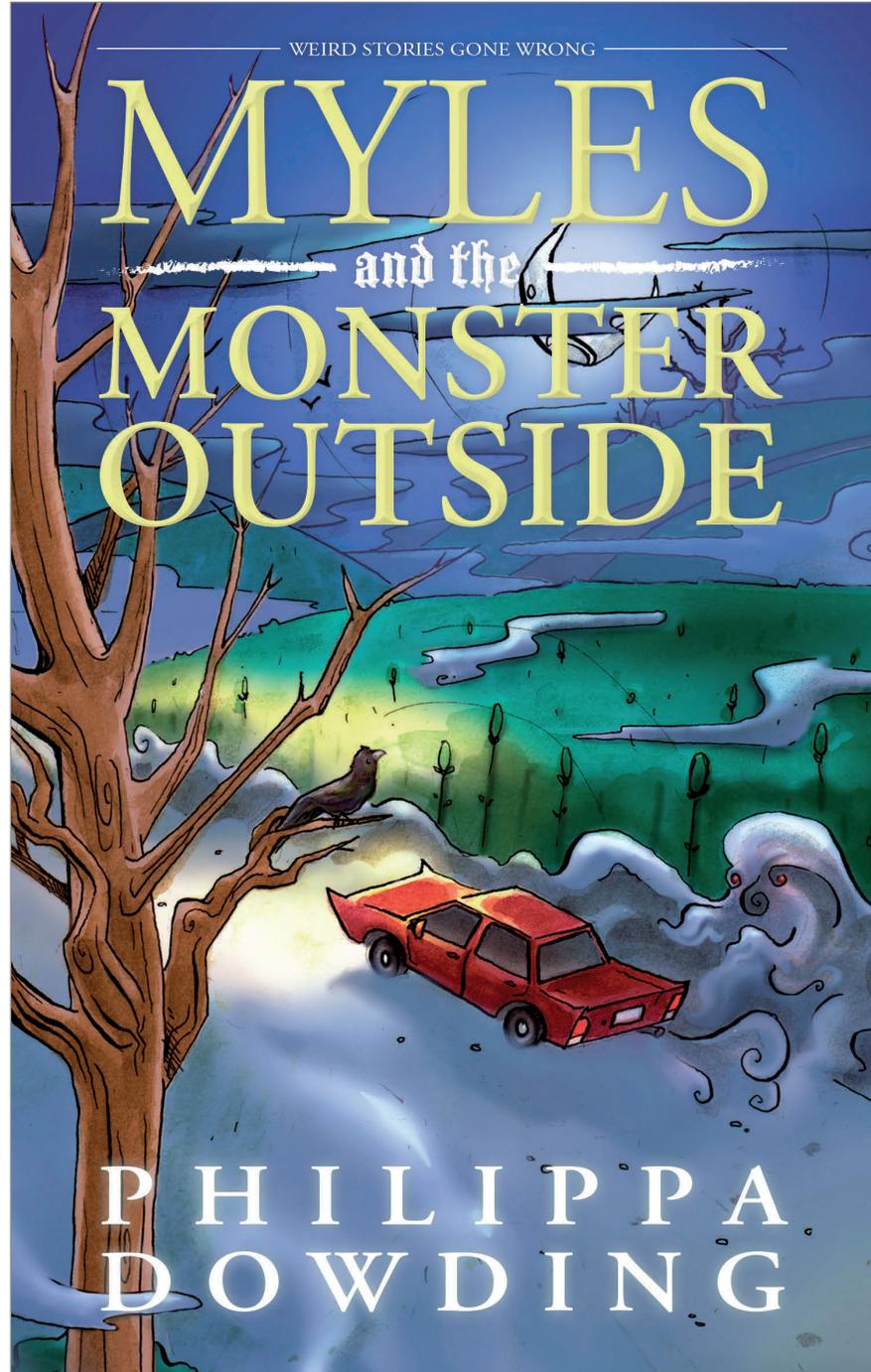


# TEACHERS' GUIDE



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# I. OVERVIEW

## A NOTE TO TEACHERS

*Myles and the Monster Outside* is the second in a series, *Weird Stories Gone Wrong*, by author Philippa Dowding. In this story, Myles is forced to confront his fears during the final night of a lengthy car trip while his family completes their journey to relocate to a new home. A monster plays a large role in this story and Myles's journey to come to terms with both the monster and his fears about his new life are highlighted throughout. Somehow his visions of this monster help Myles begin to cope with his fears about his new home, new friends, etc. Teachers should be aware that the discussion around monsters can be a sensitive one for young children.

In this resource, several activities are suggested as possibilities for working with the novel in grades three, four and five. It would make a great read aloud study for the younger grades especially, but would also be effective as a small group study. The resource was developed in such a way that teachers could choose the activities that would enhance their own students' learning. Many of the suggested activities can be modified depending on the level of the students, their learning abilities and needs, and the depth of exploration chosen by the teacher.

## BOOK SUMMARY

Myles and his family have been driving for four days. It's their final night on the road, but Myles knows they will never arrive at their new house. It will never stop raining. And even if they do get there (which is doubtful), he knows he will never have friends again.

He also knows that something is following them in the dark, rainy fields outside their car.

Something monstrous.

Once the monster arrives, things go very wrong. Myles and his family get lost, their car keeps breaking down, and a strange old man and his dog turn up, again and again. Then things get really weird. Myles is pretty sure it's all his fault: he's the only one who can see the monster. He's the only one who can hear the monster.

And hardest of all? He's the only one who can make it go away.

## AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY

Philippa Dowding is an award-winning copywriter, poet and children's author. Her YA books in the *Lost Gargoyle* series were shortlisted for the Diamond Willow, Hackmatack, and Silver Birch awards, and *The Gargoyle at the Gates* was named a White Raven Book by the International Youth Library in Munich. Philippa lives in Toronto.

## II. SETTING THE PURPOSE: PRE-READING ACTIVITIES

Prior to reading, it is beneficial to predict what might happen in the story. The process of prediction can engage the reader throughout the reading of the text, but especially at the beginning it can help to capture the interest of the reader in proceeding with the story. Following are some possibilities for prediction and helping to set a purpose for reading as the class embarks on a study of *Myles and the Monster Outside*. The questions may be addressed as whole class discussions, small group or individual work.

1. What do you think the book will be about when you read the title *Myles and the Monster Outside*?
2. Examine the illustration on the front cover. What do you see? What does this illustration tell you? When you look at this illustration, what do you think the book will be about?
3. On pages 7, 8 and 9 of the book, there is a prologue. What is a prologue? What is the title of this prologue? Read the prologue and, after reading, discuss again what you think the story will be about.
4. Read the back cover. What do you learn here to confirm or change what you thought after you read the prologue?
5. Based on what you have learned from the title, the illustration, the back cover, and the prologue, complete a KWL chart to discuss your expectations, questions and predictions about the book.

<b>K</b> WHAT I KNOW	<b>W</b> WHAT I WOULD LIKE TO KNOW	<b>L</b> WHAT I LEARNED

At this time, students complete only the first two columns of the chart. Let students know they will be returning to the chart at the end of the study to see if their questions were answered, their expectations were met or their predictions were correct. Students should have an opportunity to share their information orally once it is collected. This particular activity can be worked on by the class as a whole, by small groups, or by individuals. If worked on individually or in small groups, there should be plans for sharing in some way with the larger group. Students might want to learn, for example, who is the old man in the prologue? Why do bad things happen on the family's journey? Is it really all Myles's fault? Is there really a monster? Who is with Myles on this trip? Why is the family moving to a new home? Students may have many questions based on the information obtained from front and back covers of the book and the prologue and this is the time and place to document them.

# III. EXPLORING THE TEXT

## CHAPTER QUESTIONS

Many incidents occur throughout the very long night of the family's journey. These questions have been developed to assist the reader in situating and organizing these happenings. The questions are intended for this purpose only and not to elicit higher order thinking or responses. Other activities in this guide focus on the possibilities of higher order thinking and responses.

### Prologue: This Part is (Mostly) True

- Who are the characters mentioned in the prologue?
- What happened to the man?
- What happened to the dog?

### Chapters One to Three

- Why are Myles, his older sister Bea and younger brother Norman on a ferry as the story begins?
- What is Myles worried about?
- What does Myles see on the island as he looks out from the ferry into the fog?
- What happens when Myles tries to tell his sister about what he saw?
- When Mom tried to start Victor-the-Volvo to drive off the ferry, what happened?
- How did the situation with Victor-the-Volvo get resolved?
- What happened when Mom accidentally turned onto the Go Home Highway?

### Chapters Four to Six

- What happened when Myles's mom tried to turn the car around?
- What did Myles see right after he and Bea fixed the car? What did he think now?
- Why did Myles feel safe in the car?
- What did Myles see after the family got going again? Did any other family members see the same thing?
- Who did Myles, his mom and Bea see next?
- What was strange about the man? What was his name?

### Chapters Seven to Nine

- Who did the family meet when they stopped at Fleshington?
- What was in the pickup truck?

- Who was in the photo at the gas station and when was it taken?
- What did Loretta the waitress tell the family about Pete Fournette and his dog?
- What was Myles the first person to see?
- How many times had the ghost of Pete Fournette been seen?
- What did Bea think was the reason for the ghost story?
- What happened to the chicken truck?
- What did Norman need when he woke up?

### **Chapters Ten to Twelve**

- Why did Myles and his mother get out of the car?
- What did Myles see when they were outside?
- When he was most worried, what did Myles hear?
- What animal did the family see when they resumed driving?
- What happened to the windshield in the final leg of their journey?
- What happened to Victor-the-Volvo after the windshield incident?

### **Chapters Thirteen to Fifteen**

- When Myles got out to help push the car, what did he realize about the monster?
- How long did they have to wait for the tow truck?
- Why did Myles decide to leave the car?
- When Myles saw Courage, what did it help him decide to do?
- What made the monster go away?
- What do you think made the huge footprints around the car?

### **Epilogue: This Part is Also (Mostly) True**

- What happened when Myles and his family made it to their new home?
- What surprise did Dad have for Myles?
- What happened during the rest of his life whenever he was worried about something?
- What did Myles name his dog(s)?

# VOCABULARY

## CROSSWORD PUZZLE

This crossword puzzle highlights a number of words used in *Myles and the Monster Outside*. The puzzle provides an opportunity to study the context and meaning of these words. Each clue is followed by a number in parentheses. This number is the page where the word is found in the novel. Students should check out the word in its context (a small group of two working together would be good for this assignment) and then add it to the puzzle.

### CLUES

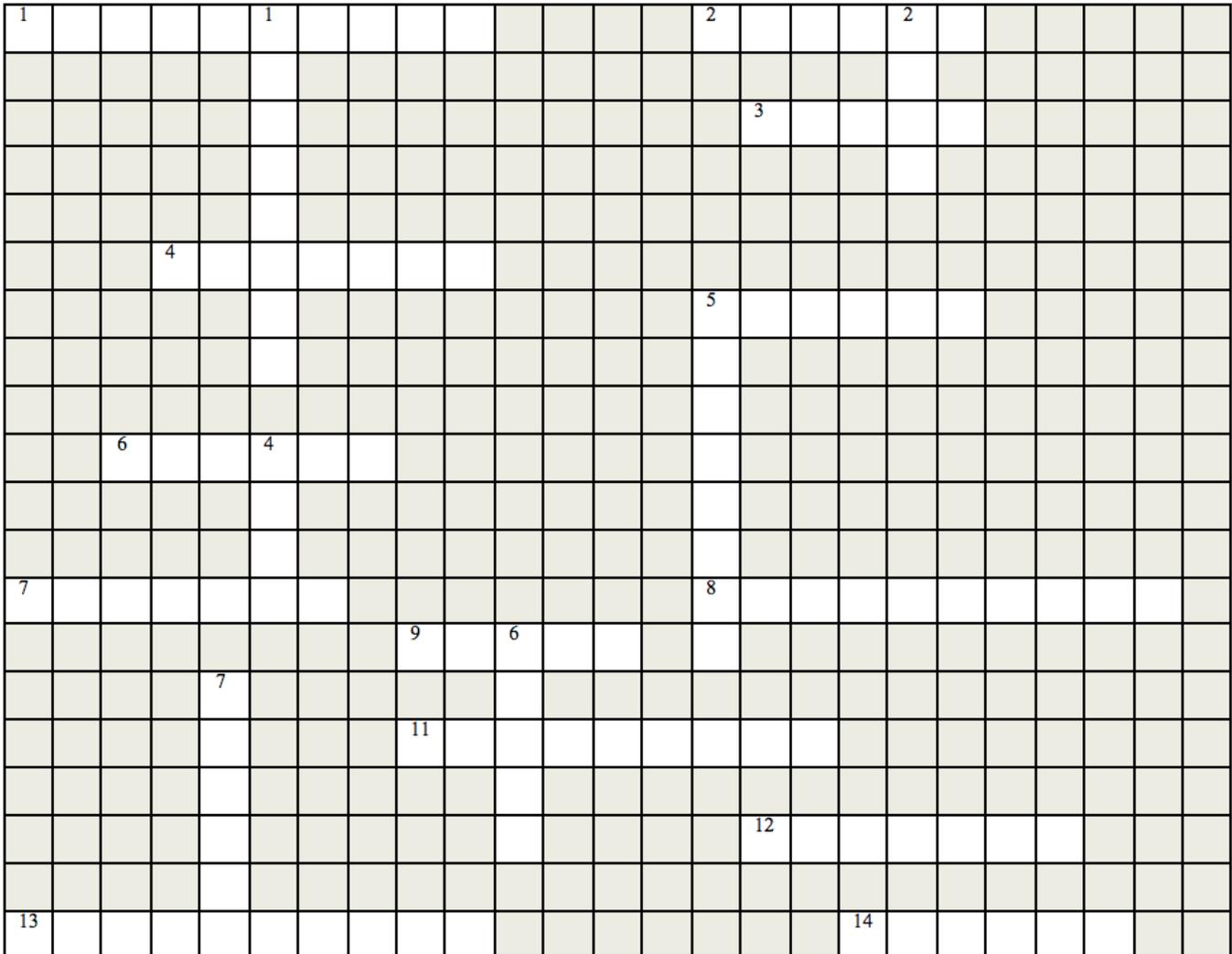
#### Across

1. uncontrollably emotional (103)
2. moved suddenly (116)
3. strange and frightening (106)
4. made a grating or squeaking sound (109)
5. watery, filmy, unable to see clearly (59)
6. appeared as a shadowy form, especially one that was large and threatening (46)
7. rolled or pitched suddenly (93)
8. the process of moving back or away (52)
9. thin or faint streaks, as if of smoke or clouds (119)
11. to strike or land in a dispersed way (48)
12. ugly or disgusting to look at (59)
13. made a series of short explosive spitting or choking sounds (47)
14. hung loosely (45)

#### Down

1. not able to relax or be still (131)
2. heroic, majestic, impressively great (90)
4. temporarily speechless (31)
5. blowy, windy, breezy (17)
6. a ray or beam of light (109)
7. a person who exercises power in a cruel way (24)

# CROSSWORD PUZZLE



## WORDS IN CONTEXT

Being able to decide on the definition of a word from its context (the examination of the parts of the sentence or sentences around the word) is one way to determine meaning. Below are ten sentences from *Myles and the Monster Outside*. The page number on which each appears is in parentheses following the sentence. Read each sentence and then, using the context of the underlined word, make an educated guess about the meaning of the word. Following completion of the exercise, discuss as a class, using a dictionary as required to verify.

1. "Yes!" Bea shouted back, but Myles was mute." (31)

mute means \_\_\_\_\_

2. "Bea's head lolloped gently against the window." (45)

lolloped means \_\_\_\_\_

3. "The rain spattered onto his raincoat and his rich leather shoes." (48-49)

spattered means \_\_\_\_\_

4. "Myles's mother shouted that last sentence at the old man's retreating back." (52)

retreating means \_\_\_\_\_

5. "No wonder the Chicken Truck Man and the waitress kept glancing over at them. Myles and his family were hideous." (59)

hideous means \_\_\_\_\_

6. "His mother stepped on the gas pedal, and the car lurched back onto the dark road." (93)

lurched means \_\_\_\_\_

7. "The rain had stopped but an eerie wind blew across the endless fields." (106)

eerie means \_\_\_\_\_

8. "It creaked a little in the wind." (109)

creaked means \_\_\_\_\_

9. "Then the mist vanished as the early morning sunlight burned away the last wisps of night." (110)

wisps means \_\_\_\_\_

10. "Their mother burst out of her side of the car, sleepy and mussed up." (122)

mussed means \_\_\_\_\_

## SPOOKY WORDS DICTIONARY

Choose several words from the novel that have associations with the general "spooky" theme of *Myles and the Monster Outside*. Ask students to create their own small "spooky" dictionary. Remind them that dictionaries are in alphabetical order. Giving them a small booklet to capture these words and definitions can be motivating. They may enjoy creating an illustrated cover page for their dictionary and adding illustrations to the definitions. Some words from the book are listed below, and others could be added.

Once the students have their dictionary, they could use the words in it to contribute to their own spooky story.

scary  
strange  
spooky  
misty  
whispery  
creepy  
ghosts  
ghost walk  
eerie  
creaked

# PLOT

Using a graphic organizer can help to improve the students' comprehension of a story. The following graphic organizer could be used at various points throughout the reading to help students organize their learning and understanding.

Settings(s)	Time(s)	Place(s)
Characters:		
Problem:		
Plot/Events:		
Resolution:		

Having completed a graphic organizer for *Myles and the Monster Outside*, students could be invited to plan their own story using the same graphic organizer. Once the story is planned, they could go ahead and write it.

# CHARACTER

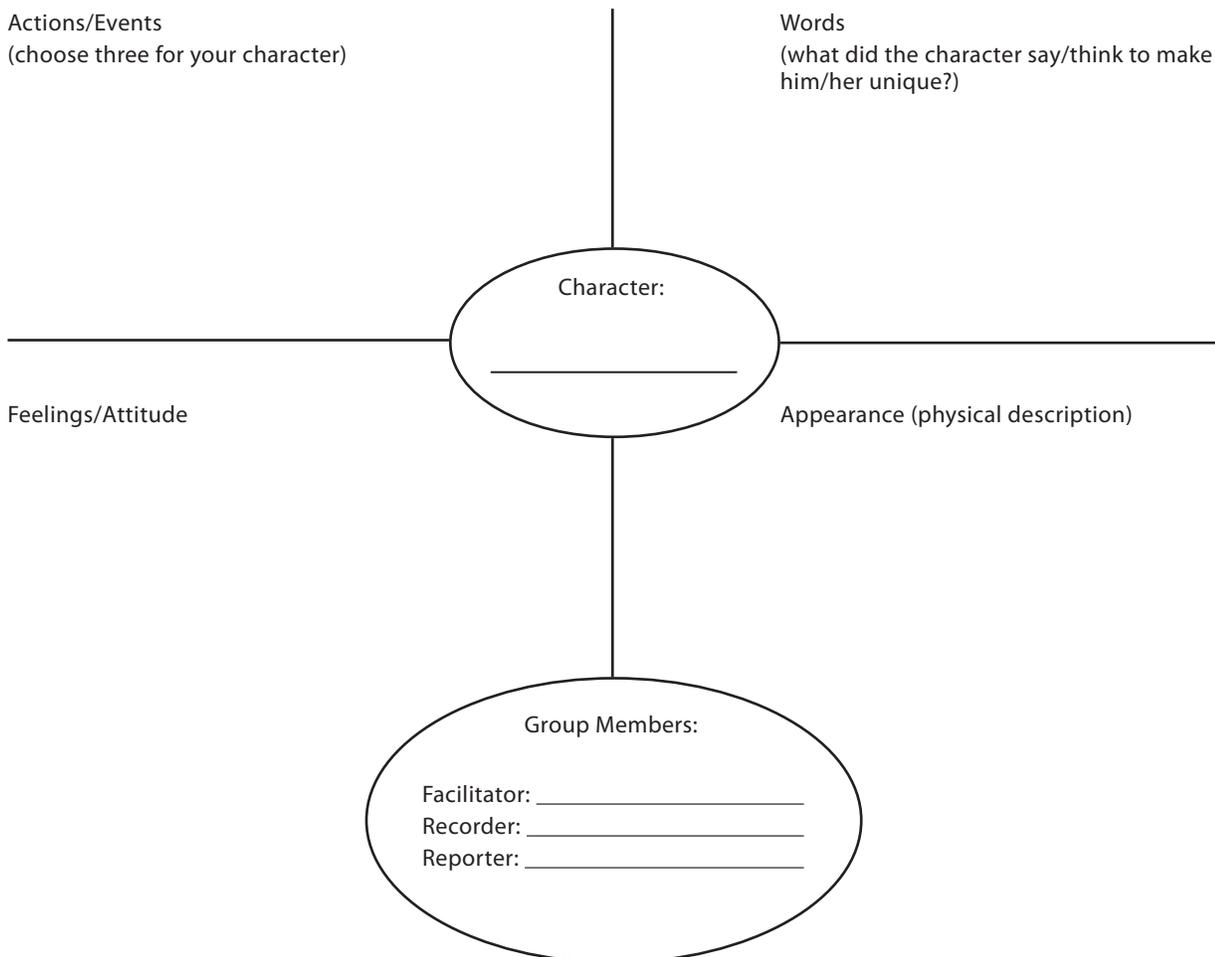
There are several interesting characters in *Myles and the Monster Outside*. Studying these characters helps to deepen appreciation for the story, and it helps students to focus on the development of characters in their own writing. Following are some possible activities for exploring characters in this story.

## Character Web

In this activity, students are divided into groups of three. For each group, a facilitator, a recorder and a reporter are assigned. The facilitator’s job is to make sure the group stays on topic and to keep the discussion going; the recorder’s job is to document the discussion as it is occurring; the reporter’s job is to report back to the large group when requested. All members are responsible for the research and for participating in the discussions in addition to their specific roles.

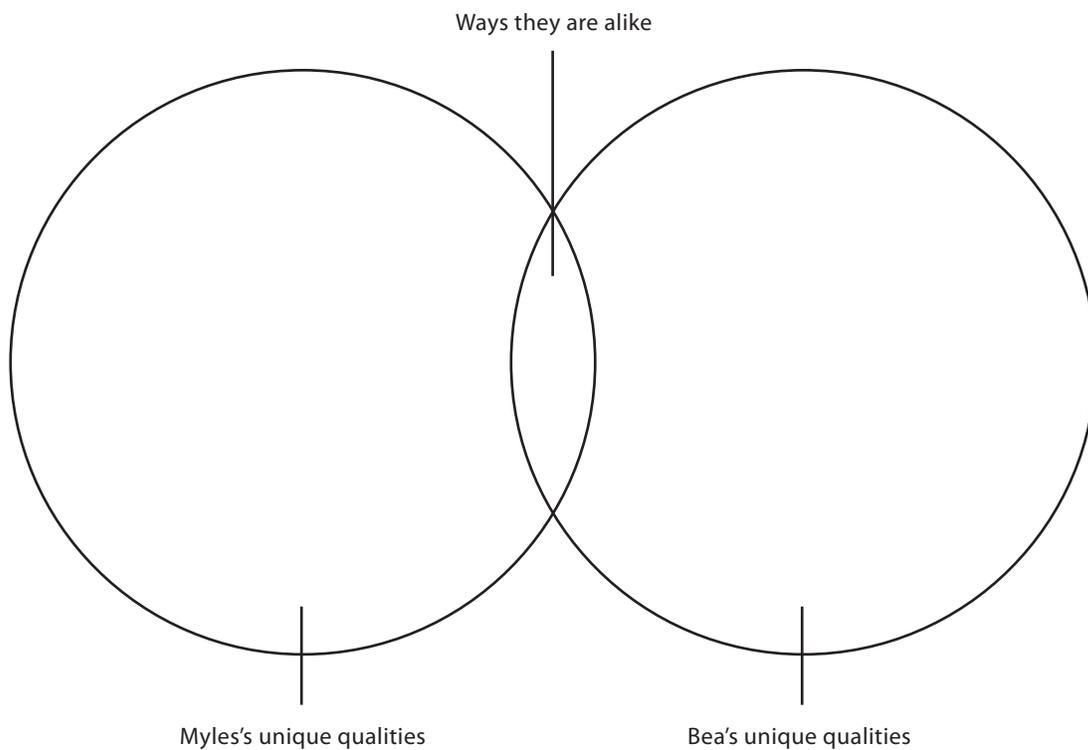
Each group is assigned a character from the story: Myles, Mom, or Pete Fournette. It is quite possible that more than one group will be studying a character.

The assignment: Discuss “your” character, record information on the following template, and then present the information to the large group.



## Character Comparison

Compare and contrast the characters of Myles and his sister Bea. Initially, students collect information by using a Venn diagram (as below). The Venn diagram allows students to organize the information in point form as to unique characteristics of each character, and as to ways they are alike. Using the information from the Venn diagram, students then write a paragraph that explains the ways Myles and Bea are similar to and different from each other.



## Character Interview

In groups of two, each group chooses one of the following characters: Mom, Bea, Pete Fournette, or Myles. The group works together to develop ten questions they would like to ask this character. The group also writes the answers they think this character would give. All of this is to be based upon what they know about the character and the way the character acts in the story.

When the questions and answers have been developed, the group turns them into an interview. One group member is the interviewer and the other group member is the character. The completed interview is presented to the class (to add colour to this, students may wish to add some type of costuming) and the written portion is submitted to the teacher. Teachers may choose to assess students on the process of working in a group, the authenticity of the questions and answers, and the effectiveness of the oral presentation.

## SETTING

Philippa Dowding effectively uses description of the various settings to create mood. It is notable and worthy of class discussion that this entire story takes place over the course of one night.

One effective way of responding to the novel during reading would be to use some sketch journaling to help keep track of the various times, places and moods that the reader discovers throughout. Here are some possible passages that students could sketch as they read. Pencil sketching would be effective for this work as the main part of the story takes place at night. But don't forget to use red for the monster's eyes! And, once the night passes, some colour may be added to show the contrast between darkness and light.

- p. 14 "Suddenly, an island loomed out of the fog. It was closer than the others, and Myles could see black, dripping trees and swirling mist. The island rose from the dark water like a strange ship or house."
- p. 15 "It was an enormous man made of fog and mist, with huge, wispy legs, a swirling grey chest, and long, floating arms. Misty fingers reached toward the water. In the centre of the face swirled two bright RED EYES!"
- p. 24 "A sign popped up beside the road. It said GO HOME HIGHWAY, and Myles's mother veered toward it. She turned the car and they zoomed off the main highway, practically into a farmer's field. The car bumped along a rough dirt road."
- p. 25 "Myles looked out into the twilight. The fields were getting dark, and it looked like rain was coming. There were farmhouses dotting the highway, some with kitchen lights on. Some of them had children's swings outside or bikes propped against the kitchen door."
- p. 33 "Bea would have run if she'd seen the thing floating silently behind her along the road. Long, misty arms reached out for her. A wispy grey face with a round, dark mouth opened wide. Red eyes danced and burned. The monster from the island drifted just behind her, sniffing the air and catching her scent."
- p. 39 "A huge grey figure strode across the muddy field. It loomed in the night sky, darker than the fields, drier than the rain. A creature of fog and air, mist and fear. Monster feet stomped across the cold April mud, keeping stride with the car. Blazing red eyes burned out of the darkness. Long, wispy arms reached out..."
- p. 48 "The man stood, half-hidden in darkness beside the black fields. He wore a long, dark coat and a bright red scarf. The rain fell onto his peaked hat."
- p. 81 "Another wet chicken blew by the outside of the car and tumbled along the road. It blew on past, caught up in the wind. It had weird red eyes, glowing in the reflection of the car lights. More soaking, red-eyed chickens followed. They looked like tumbleweeds. A few of them flipped or strutted as they blew past the car."
- p. 106 "Bea sat in the driver's seat, steering. Myles and his mother pushed Victor slowly along the black, silent highway."
- p. 109 "An old abandoned truck stop appeared at the side of the road. The truck stop was in the middle of nowhere, surrounded by black, empty fields. But it had a single streetlamp, and a tiny shaft of light shone down on the broken, weedy cement below."

- p. 114 "It was spooky outside. And cold. Myles could see a faint pinkness in the sky to the east. The sun was coming. Not up. But soon. The wind was gentle, the sky was clear, the air was fresh and clean. Bright stars peaked out of high, thin clouds racing toward the pink dawn.
- p. 115 "A gentle ray of sun shone into the trees above the clearing and a harmless mist rose into the sky, disappearing with the gloom.

# IV. RESPONDING TO AND REFLECTING ON THE TEXT

## RESPONSE JOURNALING / DIALOGUE JOURNALING

In this assignment, students respond to different parts of the book in writing, either on their own or as in dialogue with a classmate or the teacher. The ideas for these responses may be posed as questions for the students to consider or the students may be asked to comment on a quote from the novel. This journaling encourages students to go beyond recalling events in the story and to demonstrate higher levels of thinking about what they have read. Some of the responses could take place during the reading of the book and some might best take place following the reading. For each, the teacher might consider a class discussion prior to the writing activity so that students would have time to think and to begin to develop ideas as to how they would begin their responses. In the case of dialogue journaling, they write back and forth to a partner as in a conversation, and would base their conversation on the particular question assigned by the teacher, commenting on the other student's ideas and posing further questions and offering possible answers.

Here are some possibilities for response starters:

- The first two sentences of the book (p. 7) read as follows: "You should know, before you even start this book, that it's a little scary. And parts of it are even a little strange."  
What do you think when you hear these sentences? How does it make you feel? What does it make you wonder?  
How does it make you feel about reading the book?
- On p. 9, the author talks about truth and believing this story. She says "You don't have to believe this story. But just because things are a little odd or a little strange or unbelievable doesn't always make them untrue. Truth is an odd thing; one person's truth can be another person's lie."
- What do you think about this comment? What are your beliefs about truth? What are your beliefs about truth in stories that are fiction? Do you agree with the statement made by the author? Please give your reasons one way or the other.
- Myles and his family were moving to a new town and hoped for a better life. What did this mean to Myles? What do you think it meant to his mom and dad? Have you and your family ever moved to a new place and a new life? What was it like for you? Did you have fears about your new life? If you have not moved in this way, try to imagine how you would feel and write about that.
- Myles and his sister Bea seemed to look at things a little differently. Bea seemed to be very calm and spent much of the night reading her book, while Myles worried constantly and thought a lot about the monster and worried about his new life. If this were you, how do you think you would act? Would you be more like Bea or more like Myles? Why?
- On p. 39, Myles talks to himself, telling himself to be brave. He thinks everyone is braver than he is. How do you feel about being brave? Do you feel you are or are not a brave person? Can you give some examples of things that make you brave or situations where you were not as brave as you might have liked to be?
- Throughout the story, Myles saw several different things including a fox, a dog and a monster. Of these, do you think any are real? Why or why not? If they are not real, why do you think Myles saw them?

- Can you think of an explanation for the encounter Myles and his mom had with the old man Pete Fournette (p. 48–53)? Do you think he was imaginary or real? Why do you think this?
- On p. 61, Myles says he just wants to go back to his old home. “But that was impossible. Where was home now?” Myles and his family are in transition from their old home to a new home. Have you ever experienced that kind of transition? How did you feel? Did you feel like you didn’t really know where your real home was? If you have not experienced this kind of transition, write about how you think you would feel.
- Myles had a feeling that both Pete Fournette and his dog Courage were ghosts. His sister Bea disagreed with him. What do you think and why? Be sure to consider evidence from the story and write about it in your response.
- On p. 101, Myles’s mother says to him “But you can’t let fear decide your journey, or your future.” What do you think about fear in your own life? Do you let fear help you decide what you will or will not do? Why or why not? Please give some examples.
- The dog’s name was Courage. Myles thinks the dog chased the monster away every time it came near, and he thinks the monster wrecked the chicken truck because Courage chased it away from him and his family. Do you agree with Myles? Why or why not?
- Do you wonder why the dog was named Courage and why Myles always named his dogs Courage in his future life? What do you think helps a person to have courage? Do you consider yourself a courageous person? Why or why not?
- By the end of the story, Myles seems to have developed some courage with regard to facing up to a monster in the future, even though he would still see the monster during some of the more stressful times of his life. What do you think helped Myles to grow into this ability to face his fears? Give some examples from the story.

## COMPLETION OF KWL CHART

Return to the KWL Chart that was partially completed at the beginning of reading the book. Ask students to complete the “What I Learned” or “L” part of the chart. This can be done individually, in small groups, or by the class as a whole. Regardless, the information should be shared with the larger group and can form an effective conclusion to the reading. Completing this chart helps students articulate their new learning and what they have learned while reading the book. The “L” part of the chart may contain new learning not previously wondered about in addition to questions answered.

K WHAT I KNOW	W WHAT I WOULD LIKE TO KNOW	L WHAT I LEARNED

## V. EXTENDING THE TEXT

Here are a few possibilities to extend the study and further engage student interest and learning.

- Discuss alliteration with the students. Alliteration is the occurrence of the same letter or sound at the beginning of adjacent or closely connected words. An example of alliteration is found in the name of the family's car "Victor-the-Volvo." Invite students to name and draw their own or an imaginary car, using alliteration for this purpose.
- A focus on the friendly letter could be enhanced by having students pretend they are Myles and writing a letter to friends from his old neighbourhood, talking about the journey and his new home and school. Alternatively, they could pretend they are Bea and do the same.
- Students could also write a diary. They could think of themselves as Myles and write some entries starting on the journey and continuing to a few months after the move to his new home.
- Students enjoy a culminating activity at the end of a novel study. A suggestion for *Myles and the Monster Outside*: invite students to dress as the various characters: Myles, Pete Fournette, Courage the dog, Chicken Truck Man, Bea, Mom, Norman, the waitress, and Dad. You may have to provide some of the costuming, which could be as simple as a sign with the character's name on it. Once the parts are assigned and everyone is costumed, have a homecoming celebration complete with pancakes!