

Notes for teachers and librarians on
When the Mountains Roared
by Jess Butterworth

INTRODUCTION

When the Mountains Roared by Jess Butterworth is suitable for teaching to children aged 9–11, either in class or during allotted extra-curricular sessions. The reading questions and activities suggested here cover literacy objectives, focusing on reading comprehension and inference, but also provide suggestions for cross-curricular links. They work as an introduction to the themes and ideas within the book, taking students' understanding of the text to a new level and inspiring them to read further.

ABOUT THE BOOK

I thought we'd live here forever ... but then, I thought Mum would be here forever too.

When Ruby's dad uproots her from Australia to set up a hotel in the mountains of India, Ruby is devastated. Not only are they living in a run-down building in the middle of the wilderness surrounded by scorpions, bears and leopards, but Ruby is sure that India will never truly feel like home – not without her mum there.

Ever since her mum died, Ruby has been afraid. Of cars. Of the dark. Of going to sleep and never waking up.

But then the last remaining leopards of the mountain are threatened and everything changes. Ruby vows to do all she can to protect them – if she can only overcome her fears...

A vivid, warm and atmospheric adventure set in the mountains of India, about a girl who is determined to protect the wild leopards of the mountain from poachers, perfect for fans of Katherine Rundell.

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by Jess Butterworth, available now



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READING GROUP QUESTIONS

1. The novel begins with an extract of Ruby's life in the present time, before switching to the past in Chapter 1 – 'Australia: Two Months Earlier'. What is the effect of this switch? How does it draw the reader in?
2. In Chapter 1, Ruby is angry with her Dad and Grandma for moving her from Australia to India. Can you find evidence of her anger? Is Ruby right to feel this way? Does she adapt and change during the course of the book, and if so, how?
3. In Chapter 1, we are told that Ruby's mother has recently passed away. How has this impacted Ruby? Do you believe that Ruby's mother is a main character in the story, even though she is never physically present? How?
4. In Chapter 6 – 'The Equator', we learn that Ruby's middle name is 'Sky'. Who gave her this name, and why? What can you infer about Ruby's personality from this name?
5. Some might argue that Ruby's closest relationships in the story are with animals. Would you agree with this? What is the evidence to support this point of view? What is the significance of the leopard in the story?
6. In Chapter 11 – 'Butterflies', Ruby's relationship with Praveen develops into something stronger. How does this happen? What impact does Praveen have on Ruby? How important is their relationship in the book? What does it represent?
7. How is the culture of India referenced in the novel? How does it become important to Ruby? Can you find examples where the author Jess Butterworth uses the culture of India to symbolise some of themes in the novel, e.g. 'Motherhood', 'Nature', or 'Spirituality'?
8. Who is the villain in the story? Is it possible for a villain to not simply to be a character or a group of characters, but an idea or an emotion? How might you relate this to Ruby's experience? How does Ruby defeat the villain?
9. What does the word 'home' mean in the novel? How does Ruby's attitude towards 'home' change or transform over the course of the story? Can you detect the turning points when Ruby shifts her definition of what is important to her?

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READING GROUP QUESTIONS CONTINUED

10. Jess Butterworth is the author of *When the Mountains Roared*; she spent her childhood between the UK and India and grew up hearing stories about the Himalayas from her Grandmother. How do you think her experience impacted her writing? Can you see any similarities between the author's biography and Ruby's experiences in the story? What are the pros and cons of writing about a real experience?

SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

Literacy

- Write a diary entry in role as Ruby when she is on the boat from Australia to India.
- Using the imagery in the novel as inspiration, write a description of India through Ruby's eyes – or describe an exotic setting that you have visited or seen in a photograph.
- Write a creative piece entitled 'Home': think about what the word means to you and what you think makes a good home.
- When you have finished reading, continue the story for one more chapter writing from the point of view of a character of your choice.

Drama + Speaking and listening

- Discuss the book in terms of the following oppositions:
 - LIFE/DEATH
 - CITY/NATURE
 - LONELINESS/COMPANIONSHIP
 - GOOD/EVIL
- Create a short piece of drama in groups, depicting one of these oppositions in relation to the story.

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SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES CONTINUED

Science - Biology

- Choose an animal from the book to research and then create a fact-file including information about its environment, how it has adapted to suit its habitat and how it survives.
- Make a list of the creatures and living things that are mentioned throughout the book. Devise an eco-system and a food chain diagram for all of these living things.

Geography

- Research the continent of Asia and make a list of some of its physical and human features, such as climate and population.
- Draw a map of Ruby's journey from Australia to India. Include a key with any bodies of water crossed, the Equator, and points on the compass.

Art & Design

- Choose an animal from the book to draw or paint – use the author's imagery and description to help you.
- Create a book cover for *When the Mountains Roared* based on what you have learned about its main characters and themes.

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