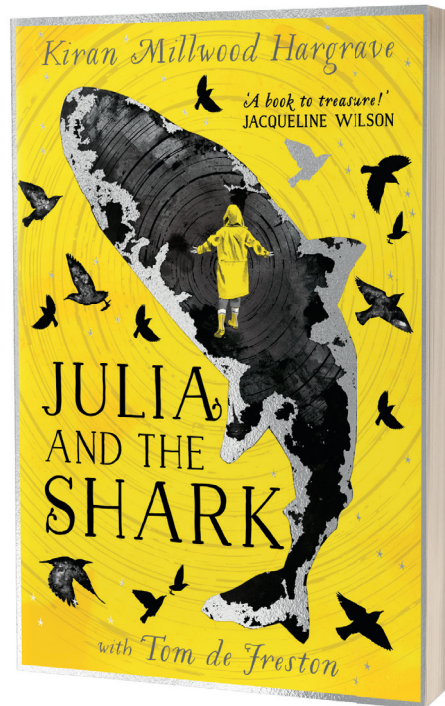


JULIA AND THE SHARK



AGES 9+

NOTES FOR TEACHERS:

Explore themes of:

- ✓ Family
- ✓ Friendship
- ✓ Mental health
- ✓ Racism
- ✓ The environment
- ✓ Marine biology

Subject checklist:

- ✓ Literacy
- ✓ PSHE
- ✓ Art

The activities included here are suitable for the classroom or library sessions.

ABOUT THE BOOK

A beautiful, lyrical story about a mother, a daughter, and love – with timely themes of mental health, science and the environment.

Julia has followed her mum and dad to live on a remote island for the summer – her dad, for work; her mother, on a determined mission to find the elusive Greenland shark. But when her mother's obsession threatens to submerge them all, Julia finds herself on an adventure with dark depths and a lighthouse full of hope...

Note: This book covers some sensitive issues. It is advised that teachers read it through before sharing it with children in a classroom setting.

JULIA AND THE SHARK

CONTENTS

Theme 1 – Awe and wonder

Activities: Write a descriptive poem about the Greenland shark.

Objectives: Retrieve and record information from fiction and nonfiction texts. Use strong descriptive language.

Theme 2 – A bad dream

Activities: Prepare a performance poem based on Julia's dream.

Objectives: Communicate the meaning of a poem to an audience using different performance techniques. Consider how language and illustrations are used to create atmosphere and tension.

Theme 3 – Worries and fears

Activity: Record Julia's thoughts and emotions.

Objectives: Infer a character's thoughts and feelings from their words and actions. Consider how text and illustrations can work together to create meaning.

Theme 4 – Towards the light

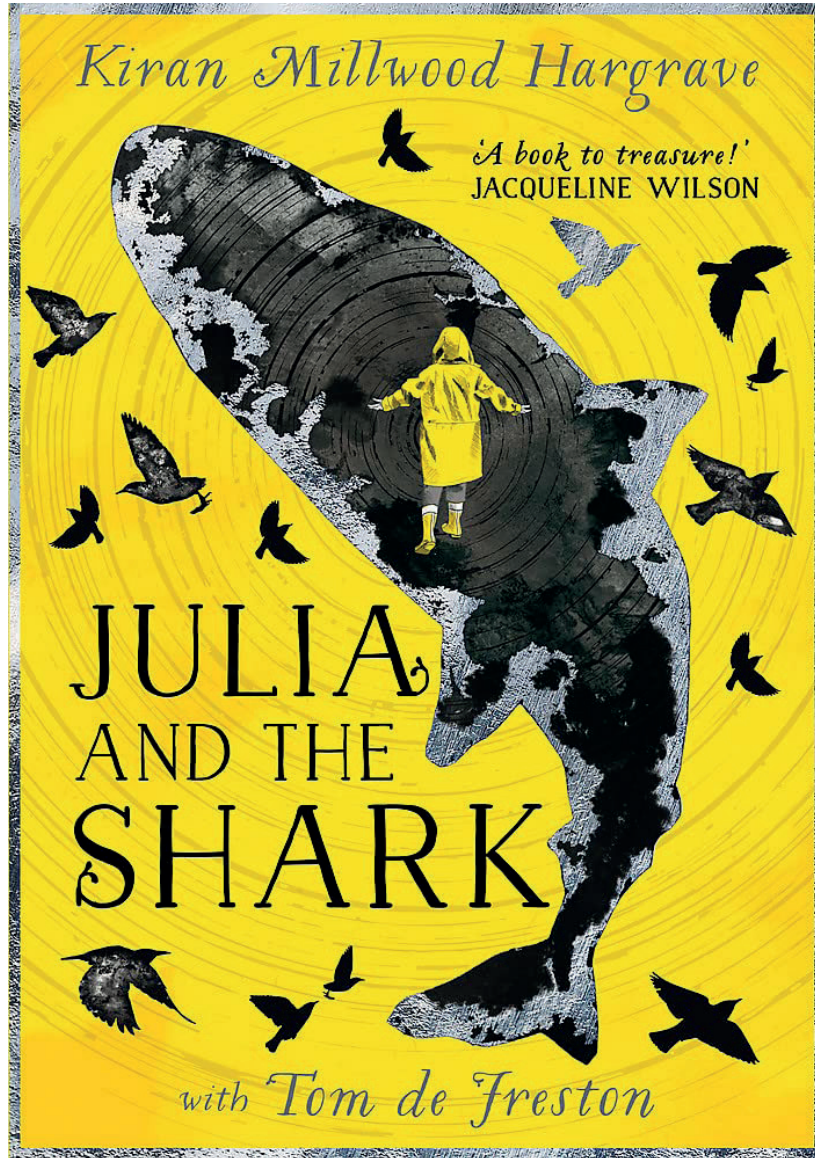
Activity: Create a collage based on own interests and passions.

Objectives: Empathise with the main character. Reflect on the ways in which the main character's outlook has changed throughout the course of the story.



JULIA AND THE SHARK

REFLECTION ACTIVITIES



BOOK COVER PROMPTS:

- What genre do you think this book might fit within?
- Which parts of the front cover grab your attention?
 - What do you like about the front cover?
 - Can you predict what the book might be about?
- Can you think of three questions you have about the book based on the front cover?

JULIA AND THE SHARK

THEME 1: AWE AND WONDER

'How you holding up, my J?'

'Fine.'

'It's been a long journey,' she said.

'I know,' I said. 'I was there.'

She looked around and jumped when she saw me, pretending surprise. 'So you were!'

I giggled. 'The Greenland shark.'

'*Somniosus microcephalus*.'

'I've been reading more about it on Dad's phone.'

'How did you get signal up here?'

'It says that they live to five hundred and seventeen years old.'

Mum shook her head.

'It's not true?'

'It's not proven. It could be true, but they've never found one that old. I think the oldest was about four hundred.'

I stared at her. 'Four hundred?'

'Yep.' Mum often did this: dispensed amazing facts like she was reeling off a shopping list. Her knowledge was something she wore as easily as her coat. 'There's room for error. Normally with sharks it's easy to age them. Their bones grow rings, like trees. But Greenland sharks, their bones are too soft for that. So they dated the crystals in its eyes.'

My brain felt like it was stretching, and I made myself remember these facts to put in my yellow book. 'But that's mad!'

Mum flinched. She hated that word. She said mad people were only misunderstood. 'It's clever.'

'How do they get so old?'

'They're slow,' she said. The wind was blowing her hair across her face but she didn't brush it away. I still remember that, how it was loose though usually she tied it back. That day it half-hid her from sight, so that I thought she looked like a seer from a story, giving prophecy.

'Slow?' I wrinkled my nose. 'So?'

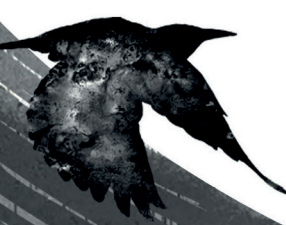
'So they move so slowly, they age slowly. They sort of cheat time. They grow one centimetre a year. You know that's this much?' She held up her hand, her fingers nearly touching. 'It's not much at all.'

'Do you think I'll live a long time, even though I'm growing fast?'

Mum laughed and pulled me to her. She smelt of the rubber of her coat, and of fresh air and sausage rolls. 'Of course you will.'

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- How would you describe Julia's mum? Use evidence from the text to support your answer.
 - Can you describe Julia's relationship with her mum?
- Why do you think Julia's mum wants her to use the word 'clever' instead of the word 'mad'?
 - How much do Greenland sharks grow each year?
 - Julia's mum says a Greenland shark has been proven to be four hundred years old! How many of your lifetimes is that? Draw a timeline and put the birth of the 400-year-old shark on it. What was happening in the world four hundred years ago?
 - What do you think it would be like to live to be 400 years old?
- Why does Julia feel like her brain is 'stretching'? Have you ever felt like this? What makes your brain stretch? (Why not start a whole class list of 'brain stretchers' or facts about the natural world that inspire awe and wonder?)
- What further information would you like to know about Greenland sharks?
Think of three questions about Greenland sharks.



JULIA AND THE SHARK

ACTIVITY 1: THE GREENLAND SHARK

1. Imagine you are a Marine Biologist just like Julia's mum. Using the extract from THEME 1, as well as any relevant books or online resources, find out as much as you can about Greenland sharks. Research the following features:

Habitat Appearance Rate of growth Life span Speed
Length Weight Eyesight Other interesting facts

As a class, can you measure out the length of a fully grown Greenland shark?
Perhaps you could draw its outline on the playground with chalk.

2. Now, let your imagination get to work on the facts you have collected! Think about how you could use poetic language to describe the shark – you might want to use the prompt questions below to help you.

Tip: Make a note of any words and ideas as they come to you.

- Can you think of any adjectives to describe the shark?
- What about some expressive verbs to describe the way it moves?
 - What might you compare its movement and speed to?
- How would you describe the appearance and texture of its skin?
 - What does it remind you of?
 - What do the shark's eyes look like?
- Can you think of any similes or metaphors to describe the shark?

You could also think about time periods it has lived through and what emotions it evokes in you. Try to be as creative as you can and expand your ideas using poetic language. For example, instead of saying the shark is 'like a big boat', you could say the shark is 'an ancient ghost ship trawling the depths of the ocean, searching for secrets in the darkness'.

3. Use your notes to write a poem about the Greenland shark and write it inside the shark template on the next page to create a shape poem. Don't worry too much about structure or rhyme, focus on using descriptive language to create a strong image for the reader.

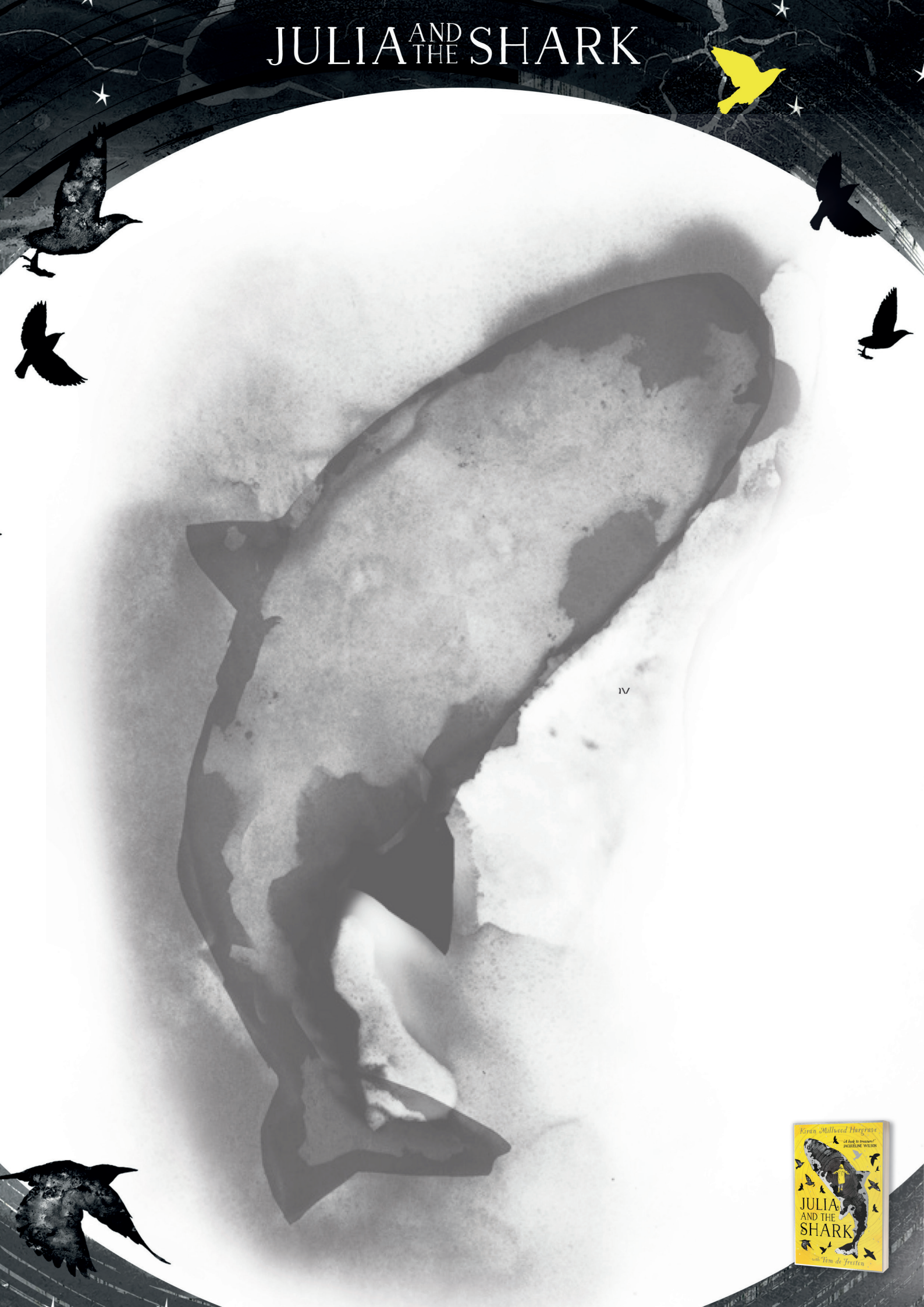
Tip: You can write about the shark in third person, or you could write from the point of view of the shark itself.

4. Why not create an image of the sea as a background for your poem? Perhaps you could use collage, colouring pencils, paint or oil pastels. Experiment with different ways of creating texture. For example, if you are using paint, you could apply it using scrunched up paper to give the impression of sea spray.

Tip: Cut your poem out and stick it on your seascape to create a beautiful piece of art for display.



JULIA AND THE SHARK



IV



JULIA AND THE SHARK

THEME 2: A STORMY NIGHT

*The bed was a boat, and the sheets
turned to foam under my fingers.
The whole room was rocking, and
above me the roof was gone, replaced
with lightning lashing the low, thick
clouds, long tongues of fire furling and
unfurling, tracing veins of burning silver
– but silent. It raged and raged, without
a sound.*



And there was something in the water.

*It was deep,
moving slowly
through the black sea.
The water rose above the rolling shape,
huge and swallowing as the sky.
I couldn't move,
couldn't see it.
It was quiet, all so quiet
I felt caught behind glass.
I couldn't turn my head,
but I knew it was rising,
knew it was opening
a mouth
wide as
the world—*

*pages 83-84 of *Julia and the Shark*



JULIA AND THE SHARK

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- Why do you think these pages are written in italics?
- How would you describe the mood of this extract?
- How was Julia feeling before she fell asleep? Why?
- Close your eyes and ask someone to read the extract to you.
Can you build up a picture in your mind? What do you see?
- At the beginning of the book, the idea of the shark gave Julia a sense of awe, wonder and excitement. What emotions does the shark evoke for Julia now?
Why do you think this is? What has changed?
- How do the images by Tom de Freston help you to understand the text?
Do you think you would read it differently without the images?
 - How do you feel as a reader at this point in the book?

iv

ACTIVITY 2: PERFORMANCE POETRY

With a partner or small group, practise reading the text on pages 83-84 out loud as a piece of performance poetry. How will you communicate the meaning of the poem to your audience? Think about how you might use different performance techniques including:

- Volume
- Tone
- Speed/pace
- Posture, movement and facial expressions
 - Pauses
 - Repeated words or echoes
 - Choral reading
 - Music and sound effects

Annotate the text to show the different styles and techniques you will use.
Finish by sharing your performance with the class.



JULIA AND THE SHARK

THEME 3: WORRIES & FEARS

Read pages 130-132.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- Dad isn't happy about how Julia handled the conflict with Adrian. What does he think Julia should have done? Do you agree?
 - Do you think Maura gave Julia good advice?
- How has Maura's behaviour changed since the start of the book?
- Underline key words or phrases in the text that tell you how Julia feels.
- How has Julia's relationship with her mum changed since they first arrived at the light house?
- In a group of 3, can you create a freeze frame to show the dynamic between Julia and her mum and dad at this point in the story? How is each character feeling? How are they relating to each other? Can you show this using your posture and facial expressions? Now take it in turns to say out loud what each character is thinking.
- Have a look at the illustration below which is from the top of page 130. Describe what you can see.



- Why do you think Tom de Freston has chosen to draw Julia in this way?
 - Does the image help you to empathise with Julia?



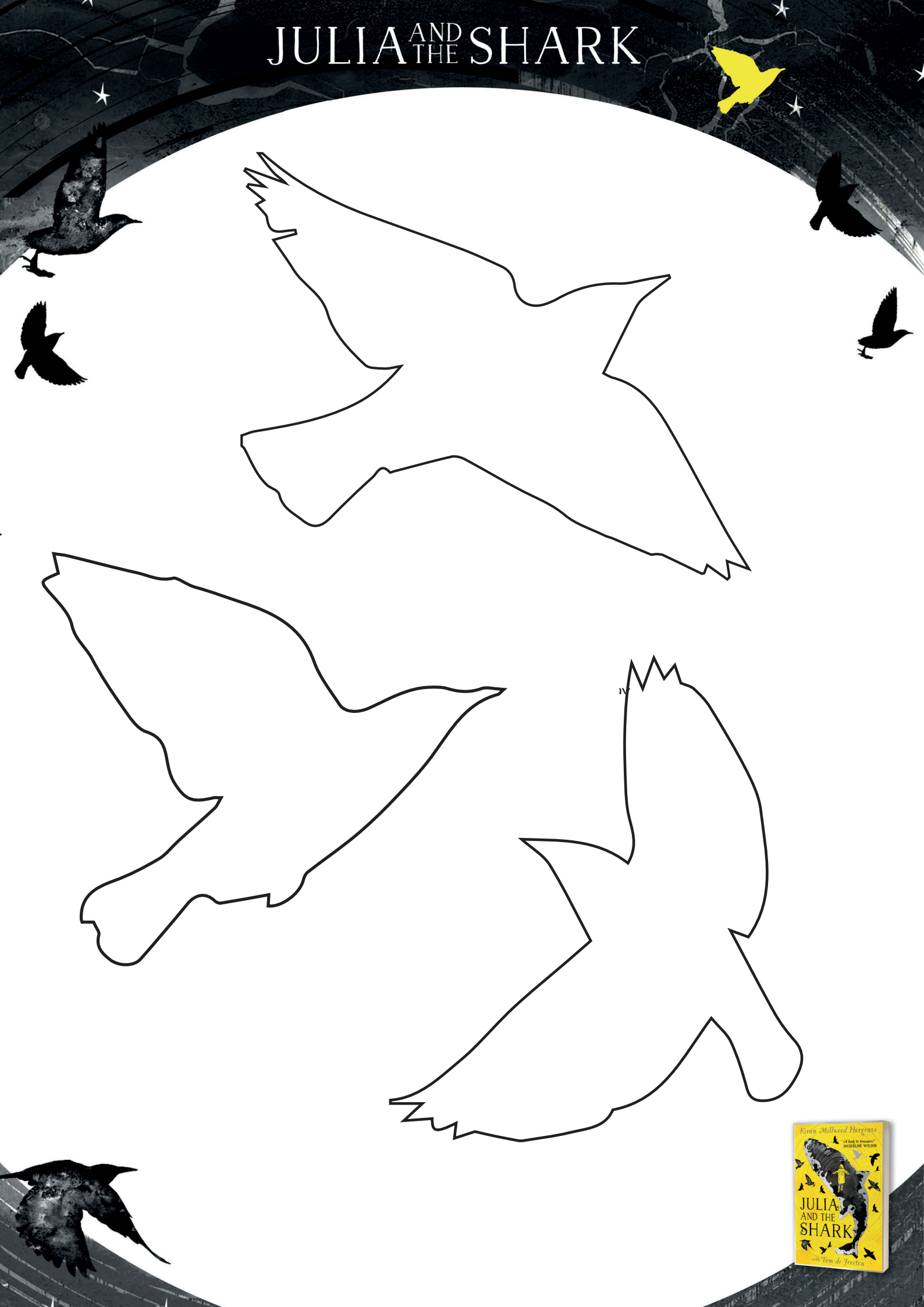
JULIA AND THE SHARK

ACTIVITY 3: EMPATHY

1. Julia has a lot on her mind at this point in the story. There is the incident with Adrian, her friendship with Kin and her worries about her mum. What thoughts might be going through Julia's mind? Put yourself in the position of Julia and write your thoughts inside the bird templates on the following page. When you have finished, cut the templates out.
2. As a class, draw the outline of a person on a large sheet of paper. Take turns to read your thoughts out loud and place your birds over the head of the outline (as in the illustration on page 130). As you listen to all the thoughts and worries being read out, think about how Julia must feel to have all of this going on in her mind. Can you come up with some words, phrases, similes or metaphors to describe Julia's feelings and emotions? As a class, collect ideas and write them inside the outline of the body.
3. You could finish by reflecting on what might happen next. How is the tension in the story increasing? What might Julia choose to do? Can you predict what the climax of the story might be?



JULIA AND THE SHARK



JULIA AND THE SHARK



THEME 4: TOWARDS THE LIGHT

I realised then what I'd really found by finding the shark.

Remember at the beginning of this story, how I said I lost my mum? Really, what I meant was I lost my idea of Mum. The idea she was perfect and invincible and always right. But as well as the shark, I found the real Mum, with her complications and tangles and tears, and I love her just as much as ever. More, maybe. I told you to watch out for words, they are tricky.

I also said what I was trying to get to was Mum. But now, I think that was a mistake. I think by spending all this time worrying about her, and caring about the things she cared about, I was losing myself. Mum and me aren't the same person, and that's all right.

Dad poked his head around the door.

'You have a visitor.'

I knew who it would be, even without asking.

Dad stood aside, and Kin shuffled past him. He was looking at me through his fringe, his lips a tight line. He looked as nervous as I felt, and knowing that, seeing him, broke my fear like an egg. I nodded my best Neeta nod, and his face lit up. I know it's a cliché when people say that, but it's true. Like the lighthouse, he actually *beamed*.

Mum left us, and it was like that night with Adrian never happened. He told me about their search for me, and I told him about the shark, and an hour gulped by in a moment. Just before he had to leave, he pulled out a notebook from his coat pocket. It was nothing like my yellow one, lost in the sea. It was navy blue, with a gold J pressed into the front.

'I thought you'd want a new one of these.'

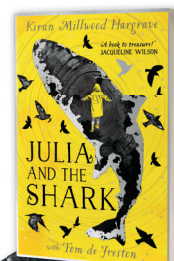
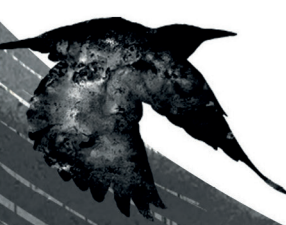
I took hold of the notebook and opened it to a clean page. This wouldn't only be for sea creature facts. This would be for myths about stars and mountains and forests, and maybe a few numbers if Dad wanted. But first, Kin could tell me the names of the constellations.

I had found the impossible shark, but it hadn't been the answer Mum was looking for. Only she could find those, inside herself, by herself. It wasn't up to me to fix anything, to fix her.

Now I was ready to find something of my own. Something mine. Something new.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- What does Julia mean when she says, 'I lost the idea of Mum'?
How have Julia's feelings about her mum changed?
 - What does Julia feel was a mistake?
 - How do Julia and Kin react when they see each other?
 - How will Julia's new notebook be different to her old one?
What does this tell us about how Julia has changed?
- What does Julia mean when she says, 'It wasn't up to me to fix anything'?
 - Kin's full name, 'Kinshuke', means flowers. What else does 'Kin' mean?
How is this connected to his role in the story?
- Having read this extract, turn back to pages 180-181. How are the words and images on this double page spread symbolic of the change in Julia's outlook?
What does she 'let go' and in what ways does she kick 'towards the light'?



JULIA AND THE SHARK

ACTIVITY 4: ABOUT ME

By the end of the book, Julia has realised that she doesn't have to focus just on things that are important to her mum, but she can have interests of her own too.

Create a collage of the things that are important to YOU. You can include pictures of your hobbies, maps of places you love, words that inspire you, your favourite song lyrics, photos, pictures of your favourite things such as different food, books, animals or sports – anything that is important to you!

You could stick your collage on the front page of a new notebook. This notebook will be your very own space to fill with whatever you choose. What will you put in your notebook? Perhaps you could fill it with fascinating facts, creative writing, plans and ideas, films you've seen, books you've read, places you'd like to visit, recipes, diary entries or notes about how you are feeling. Whatever you put in your notebook is entirely up to you. Your notebook will be completely unique and individual, just like you!



JULIA AND THE SHARK

REFLECTION

Activity ideas for when you have finished the book:

- Have a look at pages 94–95 in which Julia is looking at the murmuration of starlings. How does this image compare to the image that you studied on page 130? What has changed? What words would you use to describe how Julia feels now? How is this different to how she felt before? What are your thoughts about the final line of the book?
- Plot Julia's emotions throughout the book on an emotions graph.
- Create a class performance poem using all the dream sequences (the pages written in italics). How do these dream sequences mirror Julia's actual experiences in the book?
- On page 5, Julia gives a definition of the word 'binary'. There are many contrasting pairs in the book including sea/sky, dark/light, words/numbers. Can you think of any more from the book? How do the characters move between these opposites throughout the story? Create a piece of art based on the idea of contrast or opposites. *Tip:* You might like to use white and black paper and perhaps chalk and charcoal. The illustration on page 196 might give you some ideas.
- Role play a conversation in which Julia is speaking to another child who also has a parent with bipolar disorder. What advice might Julia pass on? What has Julia learnt about her mum's illness? What has she learnt about how to look after herself?
- Write a letter either from Julia to Kin or from Kin to Julia a year from the end of the book. What have they been up to in the past year? How have they changed? Perhaps they are planning a trip to meet up?
- Look back at all the illustrations in the book. Which ones are your favourites? How would the experience of reading the book have been different without the illustrations? Do you have any questions you would like to ask Tom de Freston about the process of illustrating the book?
- On page 18, Julia says, 'I could see why so many stories were set in lighthouses. It's a good place for adventures.' Who do you think the next occupant of Uffle-Gent lighthouse might be? Why might they be there? Write a story of your own set in the lighthouse. Will your main character find what they are looking for ... or will they find what they need?

