

Curriculum-linked school resources for *The Bird Singers and The Wildstorm Curse* by Eve Wersocki Morris

Notes for teachers for use with children aged 9+ and Key Stage 2 pupils

Explore Themes of:

Mystery and adventure
Family and friendship
Courage
Kindness
Polish myths and fairy tales
Dyslexia
Theatre and storytelling

Subject Checklist:

Literacy
Drama
History
Geography

The activities included in this pack are suitable for the classroom, library, book club or reading group sessions.

For each book, you will find pre-read discussion questions, post-read discussion questions, an activity to help you explore the themes of the book plus a chapter spotlight. At the end of the pack, you will find some prompts to encourage children to compare the two books.

Contents:

About the books - Page 2

The Bird Singers resources - Page 3

The Wildstorm Curse resources - Page 6

Comparing the two books - Page 8



About the books

The Bird Singers

Strange things have been happening to Layah and her younger sister, Izzie, ever since their mother dragged them to a rain-soaked cottage miles from anywhere in the Lake District: there is a peculiar whistling at night, a handful of unusual feathers appear on their doorstep and there are murmurings of a shadowed woman in the forest. And their mother is behaving very oddly. Layah is mourning the loss of her dear grandmother in Poland - and can almost hear her Babcia's voice telling her the old myths and fairy tales from that magical place.

And as the holiday takes on a dark twist, Layah begins to wonder if the myths might just be real.

The Wildstorm Curse

A fabled witch. A powerful curse. A monster out for revenge.

13-year-old Kallie Tamm can't wait to spend a week of her summer holidays at the Wildstorm Theatre Camp: she's determined not to let her dyslexia hold her back from achieving her dream of becoming a playwright. The finale of the whole week is a performance in the local village theatre. But as soon as she arrives, Kallie discovers that the cast will be performing a play written by a 17th Century witch, Ellsabet Graveheart, and strange, scary things start happening. Unbeknown to Kallie, a dark shadow is stirring in the woodland near Wildstorm: an ancient and dangerous creature has awoken from a centuries old slumber, and they're out for revenge, putting Kallie and all of her new friends in grave danger.

The Wildstorm Curse is a thrillingly suspenseful story about unlikely heroes and the power of storytelling.



The Bird Singers

Pre-read discussion questions

Book cover prompts

- Who do you think the 'bird singers' might be?
- How do you think the two girls on the cover are feeling? Why do you think they might be feeling like this?
- Do you think the character with white hair at the top of the cover is a friendly character or an unfriendly character? Why?
- Can you spot the following objects: a book, two necklaces, a feather in a glass jar, an arrow and a boat?
- Choose one of the objects on the front cover and make a prediction about the role you think it might play in the story.
- Can you think of three words to describe what kind of story you think this will be?

Explore the setting

- The Bird Singers is inspired by ancient Polish myths and fairy stories. What do you know about Poland? Can you find Poland on a map?
- The novel is set in The Lake District. Have you ever been to the Lake District? See if you can find a picture of the Lake District to help you visualise the setting.

Vocabulary check

- Here are some key words from the story. Can you find out what each word means?
 - Myth
 - Translation
 - Amber
 - Plumage
 - Descendent
 - Superior



The Bird Singers

Post-read discussion questions

- How did you feel as you read the book? Were there any bits that surprised you?
- Why has the author written some pages in italics?
- On page 117, Mesula says, 'You think choice is freedom? Power is freedom!' Would you rather have choice or power? Why?
- How does Layah's relationship with her mum change throughout the book?
- On page 255, Ren says, 'Being yourself is the best you can hope to be.' What do you think she means by this? Do you agree?
- Based on what you know about the characters of Layah and Izzie, how do you think they might use their new powers in the future? How would you use your powers if you were a Vilsestra?

Exploring the themes of the book

Below are some of the themes explored in *The Bird Singers*

FRIENDSHIP	FAMILY	COURAGE
KINDNESS	BETRAYAL	FREEDOM

Each person in your group needs a set of theme cards (you could write the themes on pieces of paper). Now, ask somebody in your group to read out the first event on the list below. Choose the theme that you think this event best demonstrates and hold your theme card up so that everyone can see it. Do you all agree or are there some differences of opinion? (There are no right or wrong answers and each event might illustrate several themes.) Can you explain to the group why you chose the theme that you have chosen? Repeat for each of the events on the list:

- Page 76 – Ren seals the windows of Rook Cottage with glue.
- Page 103 – Somebody leaves food parcels in the forest for the 'stranger on the mountain'.
- Page 166 – The girl directs the lightening to hit a tree rather than the Bellford's sweetshop.
- Page 179 – Layah and Izzie decide to try and rescue Ren.
- Page 223 – Henry gives Izzie to Mesula.
- Page 226 – James chooses not to tie Layah's hands together despite being instructed to by Henry.
- Page 244-246 – Layah, Izzie, Ren, Dad, Henry and James blast out of the hillside.



The Bird Singers

Chapter Spotlight

Chapter twenty-two (pages 205-207) is a useful chapter to help us understand the characters of Ren and Mesula.

- Having re-read chapter twenty-two, compare and contrast the characters of Ren and Mesula. What do they have in common and how are they different?
- Based on what you know about Mesula, what do you think her back-story might be? Where do you think she was born? Who raised her? What experiences might she have had in her life? Discuss with a partner.



The Wildstorm Curse

Pre-read discussion questions

Book cover prompts

- What is the first thing you notice about the front cover?
- How many pairs of red eyes can you see? Do they look friendly? Who do you think they belong to?
- The characters are standing on a white symbol. Can you see this symbol anywhere else on the cover? What do you think it might mean?
- Do you think it is night-time or daytime in the picture? How can you tell?
- Can you spot the following items: a cat, a crow, a feather, a golden key, the moon?
- Choose one of the items above, can you predict what role this item might play in the story?

Explore the setting

- Much of the action in the book takes place in an old theatre. Have you ever been to a theatre? Find some pictures of well known theatres. Which one do you like best? Why?
- Kallie and her friends sleep in tents whilst they are at theatre camp. Have you ever slept in a tent? What was it like?

Vocabulary check

- Here are some key words from the story. Can you find out what each word means?
 - Elizabethan
 - Quill
 - Playwright
 - Parchment
 - Auditorium
 - Successor



The Wildstorm Curse

Post-read discussion questions

- Can you think of three words to describe how you felt as you read the book?
- What mark did the enchanted have?
- Why did Kallie need to save the enchanted before the Hay Moon?
- Do you think Kallie's confidence changed throughout the story? Why do you think this was?
- On page 209, Kallie says, 'The pen is mightier than the sword.' What do you think this means? Do you agree?
- Would you like to go to Wildstorm Theatre Camp? There are lots of different roles in a theatre production including actor, playwright, director, costume designer, set designer, prop maker, musical director, lighting technician, special effects operator. Which role would you like to try?

Exploring the themes of the book

Below are some of the themes explored in *The Wildstorm Curse*

CONFIDENCE
CREATIVITY

COURAGE
THEATRE

FRIENDSHIP
STORYTELLING

Each person in your group needs a set of theme cards (you could write the themes on pieces of paper). Now, ask somebody in your group to read out the first quote on the list below. Choose the theme that you think this quote best demonstrates and hold your theme card up so that everyone can see it. Do you all agree or are there some differences of opinion? (There are no right or wrong answers and each quote might illustrate several themes.) Can you explain to the group why you chose the theme that you have chosen? Repeat for each of the quotes on the list:

- Pages 58, 207 and 252 - 'I may not be a hero but I am braver than you think.' - Kallie
- Page 58 - 'Her imagination was like a warm blanket, keeping out the cold world.'
- Page 95 - 'A theatre is the most magical place ... a place where people share stories and dream as one.' – Ellsabet
- Page 171 - 'You might be the successor but I'm here too. We'll figure it out together.' – Emilia
- Page 174 - 'With Emilia by her side, Kallie felt, in that moment, that there was nothing they couldn't do.'
- Page 252 - 'Not all stories spread hatred. Stories can give us hope; they can make us happy, comfort us when we're scared or alone. Stories can make us brave.' – Kallie



The Wildstorm Curse

Chapter Spotlight

Chapter 7 (pages 37 – 45) is a useful chapter to help us understand the characters of Kallie and Emilia.

- Why is Kallie embarrassed to show Emilia her writing on page 38? How does Emilia respond?
- Emilia and Kallie have different skills, talents and interests. What are they each good at?
- What do you like about Kallie and Emilia's friendship?

Comparing the two books

What do *The Bird Singers* and *The Wildstorm Curse* have in common? Do the two books explore any similar themes?

If the characters from the two books met up do you think they'd get along? What might they do together?

