

Song of the Sea: The Graphic Novel

CREATED BY
TOMM MOORE

ADAPTED BY
SAMUEL SATTIN

SCIS: 5446181

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RECOMMENDED FOR: Mid to Upper Primary



SYNOPSIS

A lush graphic novel about family adrift and the magical adventure that brings them together. Based on the award-winning film, this gorgeous adaptation includes a 18-page bonus story from the film's creator.

Many years after the disappearance of their mother, siblings Ben and Saoirse are still drowning in grief, as is their lighthouse-keeper father. Ben blames his little sister for the loss of their mother, and despite being six years old, Saoirse has yet to speak. When the kids discover that Saoirse is a selkie and the magical world that their mother told stories about is real, they dive into an adventure to keep the spirit world from disappearing forever.

Based on the award-winning film *Song of the Sea*, this graphic novel is a wonder of magical storytelling and visual splendour that is destined to become a classic.

ABOUT THE CREATOR

Tomm Moore was in Northern Ireland, UK. He is a producer and writer, known for *Wolfwalkers* (2020), *Song of the Sea* (2014) and *The Secret of Kells* (2009). He is married to Liselott Olofsson. They have one child.

ABOUT THE ADAPTER

Samuel Sattin is a writer and coffee addict. He is the words behind the Glint trilogy, *Bezcamp*, *Legend* and *The Silent End*. His work has appeared or been featured in the Nib, the Atlantic, NPR, and elsewhere. He holds an MFA in Comics from California College of the Arts and has a creative writing MFA from Mills College. Residing in Oakland, California, he sometimes teaches at the California College of the Arts and lives with his wife/assassin and two cats.

STUDY NOTES

- Before reading the story, as a class, discuss the book cover and title. Some things to include in your discussion could be:
 - What do you think is happening on the cover?
 - What is the song of the sea, and what do you imagine it must sound like?
 - Has anyone seen the movie that this book is based on?
 - What do you think might happen in this novel?
 - Where do you think that this book might be set, and why do you think this?
- Having read the first four scenes, who, in your opinion, is the main character of this book? What makes you think this? Write a paragraph explaining your answer and make sure to use evidence from the text.

- Much of the story in *Song of the Sea* is told entirely through the visual narrative. As a class, discuss the art of telling a story without using text, dialogue or any other representation of the spoken word. Some things to include in your discussion might be:
 - Why might an author choose to use illustrations rather than a text based narrative to tell all or parts of a story?
 - How is this done when a story is being told using audio-visual media rather than a book?
 - Are there any stories or types of stories that might lend themselves to this type of wordless storytelling? Why/why not, and if so which types?
- What language is Ben's mother singing to him in? How do we know this? Can you work out what she is saying? (Hint: you might have to research online to find out the answer to this.)
- How old are Ben and Saoirse when the main action of the book begins?
- Where do Ben, Saoirse and their father live? How can we know this? Provide evidence from the text to support your answer.
- What does Saoirse find locked away, what happens to her when she finds it and uses it, and why do you think this happens? If necessary re-read the opening section of the novel and see if that gives you enough clues to work out what is happening and why. Why do you think her father had it locked away?
- As a class, discuss the character of Ben and Saoirse's grandmother. What is her role in the novel, and what type of person is she? Is she motivated by malice or does she have good intentions? What in the novel makes you think that this is so?
- Use the previous discussion about Ben and Saoirse's grandmother to help you write about one or more scenes in the novel from the point of view of Saoirse and Ben's grandmother. Think about why she says and does the things she does in the novel, and what might be motivating her to do so. Share her thoughts and feelings in your writing and try to provide some insight into her decision making process. Where you can, use direct evidence from the text to help you.
- Why did Ben and Saoirse's father decide to send them away with his mother? As a class, discuss the different reasons why he might have done so. How do you think he felt after they left? Draw or paint a picture of him watching as the car with his children drives away from him.
- Look carefully at the map Ben draws during the drive to the city. What did he and Saoirse see along the way? What do you think they might also have passed that he didn't choose to put on his map? In pairs or small groups, create a map of your local area, or of a trip between two local places with which you are all familiar. Use Ben's map as inspiration for yours, and be sure to discuss what should be included in your map, and what can be omitted. When you have finished, look at all the maps that other groups have also drawn, and as a class, discuss where they are different and where they are all similar. Consider in your discussion not just what decisions people made when drawing their maps, but the reasons behind those decisions.
- What is a selkie? Why is a selkie's coat important? Which mythologies contain stories of selkies?
- What, in your opinion, is the scariest scene in the novel? In small groups, discuss which scenes you think are scary, what makes them scary and what role scary scenes play in narrative construction. Think about what a book or story would be like without any scary scenes, and specifically think about what *Song of the Sea* would be like if it were written without any scary scenes. In small groups or as a class, write a short revised version of the story without any of the conflict or scary parts. Compare your revised version to the original and discuss the impact that the differences have on the reading experience.
- In the story, all the children other than Ben and Saoirse, are dressed in their Halloween costumes. Design a cool halloween costume of your own that you would like to wear at Halloween. Create a design document for your costume that includes notes on construction techniques, a list of materials needed and a fully coloured illustration of how you imagine the finished product should look.
- What do you think of the way the story ended? Did it end how you had thought it would?
- What was the decision that Saoirse had to make? Do you think she made the right choice? Why/why not?
- What have you learnt about selkies from this story?
- When Ben meets the Great Seanchaí he learns that every hair on the head of the Great Seanchaí is a different story. As a class make a Great Seanchaí story wall of your own. Draw or print a picture of the Great Seanchaí on an A3

piece of paper or card. Have every student write a short story of their own on a small piece of paper. Roll the piece of paper with the story on it up into a small scroll, and then use one end of a long piece of string or yarn to tie the scroll closed. You might want to tape the string to the scroll so they stay attached to each other, but make sure it can be easily untied so the story can be read. Use tape or glue to attach the other end of the string to the head of the Great Seanchaí, so that each piece of string becomes one of his hairs.

- Macha the Owl Witch is half turned to stone, and turns others to stone as well—but she thinks she is helping them by taking away all the emotions and feelings that are causing them pain. As a class, discuss what it would be like to live without any emotions at all. During your discussion, be sure to consider what it would be like to not experience any positive emotions as well as any negative ones.
 - Brainstorm and make a list of all the emotions and feelings you can think of. Sort your list into two categories of feeling; positive, and negative. Is it possible to feel emotions from both lists at the same time? Try to think of examples when people might experience mixed emotions.
 - Use your lists of feelings to help you write a story about someone who has an emotionally fraught experience.

AUTHOR OF NOTES
RAE CARLYLE