

THE WAY TO IMPOSSIBLE ISLAND

SOPHIE KIRTLEY

Educational resource pack



Dear reader,

It's time to step back into the Stone Age with *The Way to Impossible Island*, the second unforgettable timeslip adventure from Sophie Kirtley, the author of *The Wild Way Home*. This educational resource pack is designed to provide the perfect learning resource for children reading the book in Key Stage 2 or 3. The notes work as a wonderful introduction to the themes within the book, giving suggestions for classroom activities to enjoy across different subjects – from making maps and creating their own legend to designing 'Hopes and Dreams' stars.

The reading questions encourage discussions around some very important subjects, including challenging stereotypes surrounding gender and difference. They also invite students to explore the power of making others feel accepted and the importance of having hopes and dreams.

We hope you enjoy travelling to Lathrin Island with Dara, Mothgirl and ByMySide, and working your way through this pack.

ABOUT THE BOOK

Born with a serious heart condition, Dara has been waiting for his Big Operation forever, and this summer it's finally going to happen. The moment his heart is fixed he'll row out to the island in the bay all by himself, just like he's always dreamed. But when his op is postponed, Dara snaps. When will he get to live his real life? Maybe the adventures he dreams of are just silly fantasies.

And then he finds a girl hiding in the boat shed. She wears animal skins. She has a real live pet wolf. She is, simply, impossible. Could Mothgirl really be from the Stone Age? And what is she seeking on Lathrin Island? As Dara and Mothgirl set out on a wild, windswept sea journey, Dara begins to realise that when you stop worrying about what's impossible, you can do anything.

A brave, life-affirming middle-grade timeslip adventure about finding your family and finding yourself, from the author of *The Wild Way Home*.



Sophie Kirtley © Ben Turner



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EXTRACTS AND NOTES FOR KS2/KS3 TEACHERS & LIBRARIANS

Suitable for: Ages 9+

Explore themes of: ✓ The Natural World ✓ Gender Equality ✓ Myths and Legends ✓ Hopes and Dreams

Subject Checklist: ✓ Literacy ✓ PSHE ✓ Geography ✓ Art, Design and Technology

CONTENTS

- **EXTRACT 1 The Natural World (taken from pages 1–2)**
Objectives: Explore how the writer creates a sense of place in the text; imagine and design a map for your own island.
- **EXTRACT 2 Gender Equality (taken from pages 15–16)**
Objectives: Challenge stereotypes surrounding gender and difference; identify how we can make others feel accepted.
- **EXTRACT 3 Myths and Legends (taken from pages 68–70)**
Objectives: Explore the significance of The Golden Hare in the text; write your own legend about a creature.
- **EXTRACT 4 The Impossible (taken from pages 258–259)**
Objectives: Reflect on the importance of having hopes and dreams; design seven 'hopes and dreams' stars.



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EXTRACT ONE

THE NATURAL WORLD (Taken from pages 1–2)

Mothgirl perched on a strong branch and peered out across the wide green forest, hoping for signs of her brother – a wisp of smoke perhaps; the splosh of his homeward paddle in the river water; the high cry of an arrow-struck boar ...

But no. Trees were trees, as they always were. River was river. Wind was wind. ‘Where you, Hart?’ she whispered. Her brother had been gone for two moons now, and although Hart was a full-grown man, strong as a bear, brave as a wolf, still Mothgirl was afraid for him.

From high in her tree, she squinted out beyond the forest to the Great Plain; that was where Pa believed Hart had gone, to the hunting grounds where herds of aurochs roamed. ‘Your brother will return to us soon and we shall feast like never before,’ said Pa each sunfall, but as the days and nights passed, Mothgirl noticed that even Pa’s strong voice had begun to flicker with doubts. Even further off, beyond the flatlands of the Great Plain, Mothgirl could just make out the dark shape of Lathrin Mountain, jagged and bold on the shores of the Big Water.

‘Lathrin Mountain,’ she whispered. And she shuddered, pulling her white rabbit-skin close. In her mind Mothgirl heard the firestories Pa had told so many times about Lathrin Mountain and the restless spirits that roamed there.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- How many references to the natural world can you find in the extract? Underline them.
- How are the Great Plain and Lathrin Mountain described as mysterious and sources of wonder?
- How has the writer presented Mothgirl as being at one with nature?
- Why is the sense of place so important to the story as a whole? How about time? Explain your ideas.
- What do you know about the inspiration behind the text? i.e. Rathlin Island; Northern Ireland; the Stone Age. If so, discuss.



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ACTIVITY: IMAGINING AN ISLAND



- Using the map from *The Way to Impossible Island* as inspiration, you are now going to imagine your own island and design a map for it!
- To get started, on your tables, spend a few minutes discussing the different kinds of natural terrain and spaces you might find on or around an island. You can use Rathlin and Lathrin Island and any other islands you have learned about or visited to help you. Note down your ideas on the list below:

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.
6.
7.
8.

- Then, individually come up with a name and a brief description of each natural space. Try to be imaginative and create a sense of wonder and mystery when naming the different areas of your island.
- Sketch and label the different areas of your island on your map, adding colour and shading to bring it to life. Don't forget to give your island a name, then share your work with a partner. Discuss some of the animals and creatures that may reside on or around your island.
- Think about any myths or legends about your island that may have been passed down through the ages. Make a note of these ideas as they will help you in your third lesson!



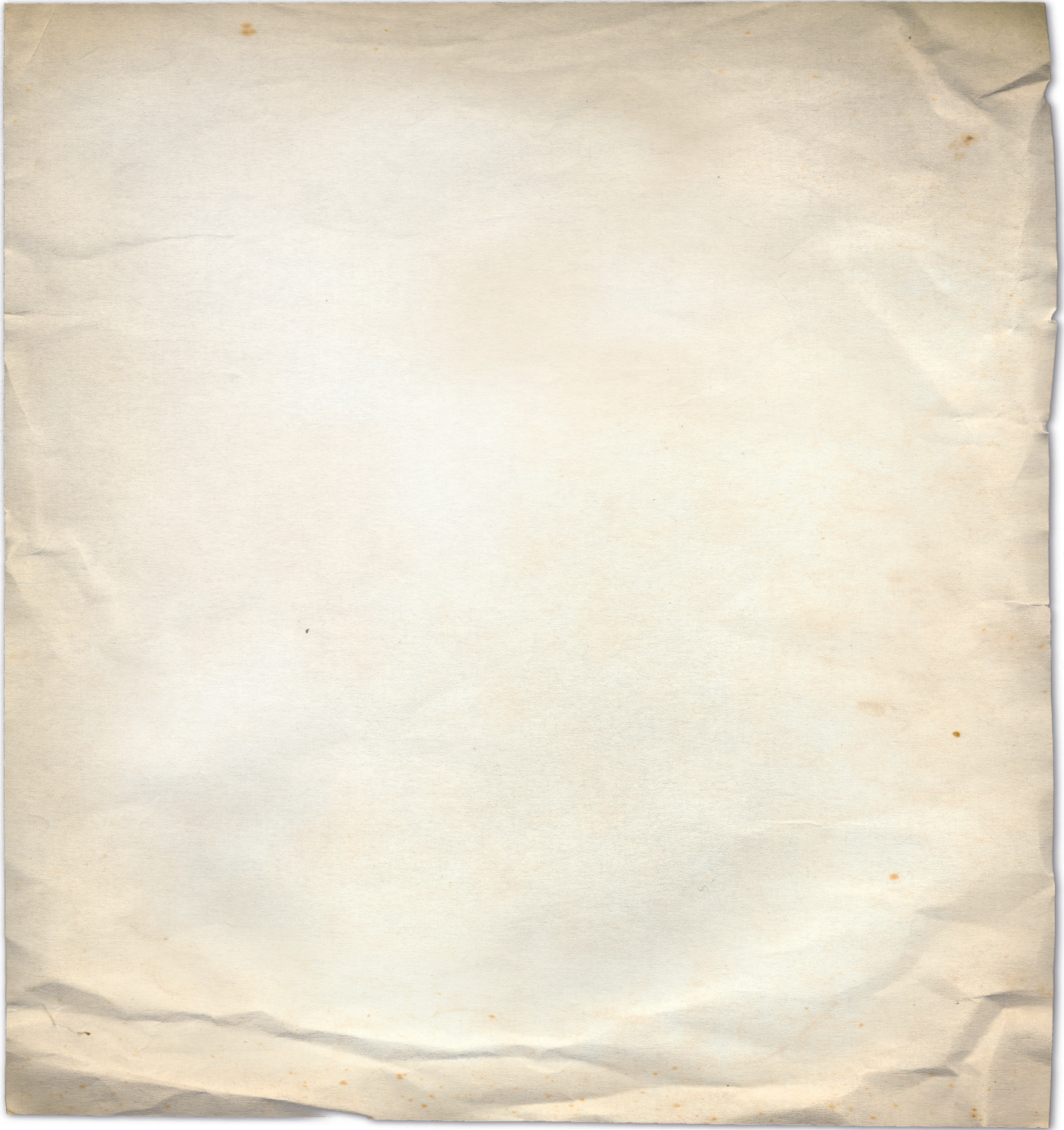
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DRAW THE MAP OF YOUR ISLAND HERE!



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EXTRACT TWO

GENDER EQUALITY (Taken from pages 15–16)

Mothgirl sighed, and peered out into the long forest shadows, her heart full of longing; this was the finest hour for a hunt, the hour when day turned to night. Mothgirl's skin tingled as she imagined running, sharp spear in hand, and returning with more meat than they could eat! 'Ha!' she whispered proudly under her breath. She knew that she was a fine fine hunter; Hart had taught her all he knew. But she also knew that this was not enough. Even if she were the finest hunter that had ever breathed amongst these trees it could change nothing; she was a girl, a twelve-summers-old girl, and as the seasons turned her wild, fast-hearted hunting days slipped ever faster from her. Soon Pa would say it was time to call her Moth and not Mothgirl, and her days would become woman-days only, slow and dull as mud, filled only with making nutcakes and scraping deerskins and smoking meat upon the fire.

A wisp of sweet smoke stung her eye, she rubbed it fiercely with her fist and flipped the nutcakes. If Hart was here *he* would let Mothgirl hunt even in her woman-days. He would say *more hunters, more meat*. But Hart was not here and Pa did not think fresh thoughts like Hart did. 'Some things are done, Mothgirl,' she mumbled crossly in a Pa voice. 'And some things are simply not the way.'

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- What does the word 'gender' mean? Why is it important not to make assumptions about people based on gender?
- Why is Mothgirl's 'heart full of longing' in the extract? Why does she fear becoming 'Moth'?
- How is Mothgirl presented as strong and brave in the extract and the rest of the text?
- What does Pa mean when he says, 'some things are simply not the way'? What would you say to Pa if you could?
- Which other character(s) suffer from gender stereotypes in the story? Give examples.



THE WAY TO IMPOSSIBLE ISLAND

SOPHIE KIRTLEY

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ACTIVITY: ACCEPTANCE

- Mothgirl, Dara and Voleboy all feel that they aren't accepted in their communities for different reasons. We can help to make the world a more inclusive place by embracing difference and challenging stereotypes.
- To begin, play a game of word association in pairs for each key word below. Think about the kinds of characteristics, jobs and behaviours you associate with each one and why:

MALE

FEMALE

'NORMAL'

- Use this as a starting point to discuss as a class:
 - Do you notice any patterns in the ideas you came up with?
 - Where do stereotypes come from? Why can they be harmful?
 - What can we do to embrace each other's differences and treat one another equally?
- Then, read over each of the three extracts from the text in the table on the next page together. Underline or highlight key words that link to the discussions you've had so far in this lesson and have a chat about them.
- Finally, in the right-hand side columns of the table, note down who doesn't feel accepted in each extract and why not. Also, think about what needs to change and any advice you would give the character(s). Reflect on anything more you can do going forward to make your school and classroom a welcoming and accepting space for everyone!



THE WAY TO IMPOSSIBLE ISLAND

SOPHIE KIRTLEY

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Extract and Character(s)	Who doesn't feel accepted in the extract? Why not?	What needs to change? What advice would you give each character and why? Think about: difference; gender; equality
<p>Vulture came close now, like a spider with a fly in his sticky web. 'Oh, Eagle, how it pains Vulture to speak hard truth to you, but all the clans ... they laugh at you, Eagle. All the clans they laugh at you and they laugh at your daughter. They tell of your daughter in their firestories. <i>Ha!</i> they tell. <i>Ha! Eagle's girl is half girl, half wolf!</i> <i>Ha!</i> they tell. <i>Eagle's girl hunt like man.</i> <i>Ha!</i> they tell, <i>Eagle's girl grow a big fine beard one day!</i>'</p> <p>A) Vulture (about Mothgirl) p38</p>		
<p>'Wolfsong; bearsong; lynxsong; boarsong,' he said. 'I have spear because ...' He shrugged. 'Because <i>man have spear</i>, it is <i>simply the way</i>. But, Mothgirl, I not need my spear to hunt. I not need my spear to make safe. I need my bone whistle.'</p> <p>B) Voleboy p65</p>		
<p>'It should've been possible. Everybody said I'd've had my Big Op by the time I turned twelve. I was meant to be better by now, Mothga. I was meant to be like everybody else. I was meant to be ... normal.'</p> <p>'What norm-ill?' asked Mothgirl gently.</p> <p>Daramurum's smallest-small smile grew a little bigger. 'I don't even know, you know? I'm not norm-ill, that's for sure!'</p> <p>Mothgirl's eyes grew wide in horror. 'I norm-ill?' she asked, fear-voiced.</p> <p>C) Mothgirl and Dara p184</p>		



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SOPHIE KIRTLEY

Educational resource pack



EXTRACT THREE

MYTHS AND LEGENDS (Taken from pages 68–70)

The Golden Hare

Once, long long ago, when all our world was new, a hare was born. The other hares didn't quite know what to make of her because this hare wasn't at all like they were: she wasn't brown or grey or black. The new hare was different; she had fur of pure gold and eyes of blue.

'She's surely bewitched,' whispered the other hares. 'She'll bring us ill luck.'

The golden hare's mother and the golden hare's father paid them no heed. 'A hare is a hare,' they said, and they raised her just the same as all their other young leverets.

But as the golden hare grew long-eared and tall, she found it harder and harder to ignore the sharp looks and whispers as she passed. Each morning she wished she would wake at dusk with brown eyes and brown fur, invisible like that, one of many. But alas it was not to be, for the golden hare grew more golden by the day, and also more lonely.

One terrible winter a sickness came amongst the hares. One by one their ears drooped and their eyes closed, never to reopen.

'We told you that golden hare would bring ill luck,' said the other hares. 'She must leave before her witching sickness catches every last one of us.'

So one full-moon night they drove the golden hare out across the frozen fields all the way to the sea. 'Go!' they cried, forcing her into the icy water. 'Swim away from us and never return!'

And the golden hare swam through the dark water all night long. As dawn broke, she saw land looming upon the horizon. Weary and heartsore, she swam towards it. Finally she crawled exhausted on to the sand and she fell into the deepest of sleeps.

When the golden hare awoke she saw another hare, whose fur was white as ice and who was sitting upon the sand by her side, watching her with the kindest purple eyes.

'What is this place?' asked the golden hare.

'This is Lathrin Island,' the other hare replied. 'All are welcome here, golden hare.'

And, filling the fresh island air, came the voices of hares – bronze and gold and silver; blue-eyed and black-eyed and green-eyed. 'You are welcome, golden hare. You are welcome,' they sang.

So the golden hare stayed and made a home of it.

Some say that she lives there still, and that if you catch a glimpse of that golden hare you'll have good luck through all your waking days.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- What do the words 'myth' and 'legend' mean? Why are they so important in the story? Explain your ideas.
- Why is the legend of The Golden Hare in particular so important to Dara?
- Can you remember examples of other animals and creatures in the text? Give examples.
- What do you think the message is behind this legend? How does it link to ideas discussed in the previous lesson?
- Can you think of other examples of myths or legends that you have read about or heard of? If so, discuss with a partner.



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SOPHIE KIRTLEY

Educational resource pack



ACTIVITY: A TRUE LEGEND

- As a class, discuss your favourite elements of the myths and legends in *The Way to Impossible Island*. Reflect on why myths and legends are such powerful stories. Why do they capture our imagination? What can they teach us? You are now going to use these ideas to help you to create your own legend!
- Refresh your memory of the island you imagined in Lesson One; this will be the setting for your legend! Like *The Golden Hare*, your story will centre around an animal or creature. You might like to use one of the other creatures mentioned in the text, shown below, or you can come up with your own!

WOLF

SEAL

PORPOISE

PUFFIN

GULL

AUROCHS

- Plan your ideas, ensuring you consider:
 - THE BEGINNING – *Where and when does your legend take place? How is your creature described?*
 - THE MIDDLE – *What does your character or creature seek or want? What challenges do they face?*
 - THE END – *Is it a happy ending? What is the main message behind this legend?*
- When you have finished your plan, write up your legend in the template below. Sit together as a class and share your stories. Discuss what is exciting and interesting about each story. How have you brought your islands and creatures to life? What are the deeper meanings behind each legend?
- Keep your legends safe as these can be used again as inspiration for a drawing or painting!



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The True Legend of Island

By

Once, long long ago ...



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EXTRACT FOUR

UNEXPECTED FRIENDSHIPS (Taken from page 265)

‘Thank you, Mothga,’ he said quietly, smiling warm and wide. He rested his palm over Mothga’s waymarker and looked out over the wild waking sea.

He watched the squawking seabirds soar and swoop and bob and dive and bicker and settle. Who would ever have known how crazy-busy it actually was out here on deserted Lathrin Island at the crack of dawn? When he’d pictured it in his head it had all been still and quiet as a picture in a book, but *in real life* there was a puffin with sprats dangling from his beak like a silver moustache; in real life a gannet dropped into the sea with a dive so swift and smooth it took Dara’s breath away; in real life an enormous, ominous black-backed gull perched on a rock, eyes peeled for prey.

In real life a Stone Age girl and a Stone Age wolf had walked upon this island, and he’d walked with them. It wasn’t possible. But it was true.

Maybe there was more to real life than he ever could plan for. Maybe stuff he didn’t expect or even imagine was waiting around every corner. Good stuff. Bad stuff. Strange, amazing, scary stuff. No one ever knew. There was no map. There were no answers.

‘Lathrin Island,’ Dara whispered, and he looked out at the huge sky that was night and was day both at once, at the sea that was deadly-dark and shimmerish-beautiful; Dara thought about impossible things and possible things, and how really they were all just the same.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- Why does Mothgirl and Dara’s friendship seem so ‘impossible’?
- What have these characters overcome through their friendship and unity?
- What does Dara learn about ‘real life’ by the end of the text?
- How do the possible and impossible merge in the story? How does this link to the title of the text?
- Why is it important to dream and have hope?



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ACTIVITY: MY HOPES AND DREAMS

- Close your eyes for a few moments and visualise your hopes and dreams for the future. How many of these might seem impossible right now? How can life surprise us sometimes when we least expect it?
- In each star, sketch an illustration of one of your hopes and dreams. Take notice of how you feel when you think about and imagine these dreams. Even if not all your dreams come true, discuss what we gain and can achieve by being hopeful and opening up our minds in this way.
- Share your hopes and dreams with a partner and put your worksheet on display to remind you to dream big!

MY HOPES AND DREAMS by

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You've now reached the end of this resource pack for *The Way to Impossible Island*

We hope these notes have proved to be a useful and fun introduction to the themes and ideas found within this book.

We would love to see examples of any work created as a result of this pack, so please do email them over to us on:

childrensmarketing@bloomsbury.com

or share on Twitter tagging us at

@KidsBloomsbury @KirtleySophie

