

# SHADOWGHAST

TEACHERS' NOTES

AN EERIE-ON-SEA MYSTERY

# SHADOWGHAST



THOMAS  
TAYLOR

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[@ThomasHTaylor](#) [@thomaskagram](#) [@WalkerBooksUk](#)



WALKER  
BOOKS

*These notes have been written by the teachers at the CLPE to provide schools with ideas to develop comprehension and cross-curricular activities around this text. They build on our work supporting teachers to use quality texts throughout the reading curriculum. They encourage a deep reading of and reflection on the text, which may happen over a series of reading sessions, rather than in just one sitting. We hope you find them useful.*

These teaching notes are particularly suitable when working with children in Key Stage 2

### Before You Start:

- As you read through the book it would be helpful to use a group journal or give children individual reading journals to record and organise discussions and responses to the text. The children could also be asked to consider the author's use of language and how he creates a particular effect or image at key points throughout the text. The author's rich vocabulary and taste for invented words also provides opportunities for investigation and creation of words.
- The length of the book means that you will need to consider how you wish children to engage with the text. You could use a blend of reading aloud by the adult; re-reading by the adult or the children and discussion of key passages; pupils reading sections of the text independently between sessions, depending on their experience, then summarising what they have read; revisiting specific passages and episodes and engaging in specific activities to deepen response and comprehension.
- To support children's overview of the story, it would be helpful to create a geographical storymap — which could be based on the map on pages 6-7 — and a simple cast of characters, perhaps grouped according to the social groups to which they belong, e.g., hotel employees and residents; Caliastra's troupe; townsfolk (Dr Thalassi, Mrs Fossil, Jenny Hanniver, Mr Seegol).

### Cover and 'All Hallows' Eve' (page 11) to 'Violet' (page 45):

- Begin by sharing the cover, reading what messages it might contain about the book they are about to read, and drawing the children's attention to the cover illustration. Ask the children to make predictions of what the story could be about and to justify their responses, drawing out any connections they may make to other stories. Record the children's responses around a photocopy of the cover and return to these as you read the book, comparing the children's initial thoughts to how the story actually unfolds.
  - Who do you think these characters could be? What do you think they are doing and why? What clues do you get from their clothing and body language?
  - Where and when do you think the story might be set? What leads you to think this? Where do you think they are, what kind of building is this? What else do you notice about the setting? How might the lantern and the cat perched in the armchair be significant? Does the cover make you want to read the story? Why? Why not?
  - What can you say about the layout and appearance of the cover, the palette and style of the illustration, the typeface used for the title **Shadowghast**? What or who do think a/the '**shadowghast**' might be: what other words does it remind you of — *children might mention 'ghastly', 'aghast'* – what feelings does it evoke in you? How might it relate to the horned silhouette pursuing the shadows of the two human figures?

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- Have you heard of the author Thomas Taylor, or read other stories by him? Note the strapline **'An Eerie-on-Sea Mystery'**: have you read any of the other Eerie-on-Sea mysteries (**Malamander** and **Gargantis**)? What does your knowledge or experience of his other books or other mysteries (possibly in this series) lead you to expect here?
- Read aloud 'All Hallows' Eve' (page 13). Give the children time and space to reflect on and discuss what they have heard and consider:
  - What do you think is happening in these pages? Who do you think is speaking, and what do you learn about them and the setting of the story?
  - Do any of the experiences they describe resonate with your own? Do you celebrate Hallowe'en? What does the final sentence, **'Unless that trick of the light is actually a trick of the dark...'** make you predict about the story? What do you understand by **'trick of the light'**; what might a **'trick of the dark'** be? What mood does this opening create?
  - Discuss the device of using these recollections of an unnamed narrator to introduce the story. Have you read a book with a prologue – a part of the story that comes before the main events, and might be from a different period – before? What do you think the author aims to do by using it: why not just tell the story? How does this section fit in the story as a whole, how does it relate to what is to come?
- Read aloud 'Birthday Breakfast' (page 17) and 'Mr Mummery' (page 22). Again, allow time and space to reflect on and discuss what they have heard and consider:
  - What do you think is happening in these chapters? Who are the main characters and what do you learn about them?
  - What do you learn about the character of Herbert Lemon? What do you think his Lost-and-Founder role might involve? How do you think he gets on with his colleagues at the Grand Nautilus Hotel, especially Mr Mollusc, the manager? Do they remind you of characters you have met in other books or films or people you have met in real life? Note the children's initial ideas to create a sense of the cast of characters, encouraging them to draw on evidence in the text.
  - What do you imagine when listening to Herbie's account of the voice and which words or phrases help you to visualise this; **'like dark honey'** in his ear, the inexplicable **'wisp of perfume'**, and the enigmatic woman standing with the group of people checking in at Reception?
  - What more do you find out about the group from Herbie's conversation with Amber Griss? How does Mr Mollusc's treatment of Herbie make you feel?
  - What further insights into Herbie, his role, friendships and personality do you get from seeing his cubbyhole, the note from his friend Violet, his care for Clermit, his interaction with Mr Mummery? What do you think Mr Mummery wants him for, what might the interview he mentions involve, what might be about to happen?



- Go on to read aloud 'Smoke and Mirrors' (page 31) and 'Caliastra' (page 39) up to page 45, '**What if she says the right name?//What if she doesn't?**' As before, allow time and space for the children to reflect on what they have heard, then discuss:
  - How do you think Herbie feels to find himself facing Lady Kraken and her mysterious guests? How do you know? Note the words and phrases that the children think capture his emotions.
  - What do you find out in these pages about Herbie's arrival in Eerie-on-Sea, his life up to this point? How do Caliastra's revelations about her connection to him make you feel? Does this scene remind you of any you have seen in other stories?
  - What else does the scene, where Herbie asks Caliastra for proof of her claim, tell you about his emotions? What will it mean if she is telling the truth about his origins? What would be the implications? What do you think will happen next? What do you think he should do? After hearing children's suggestions, invite them to write a brief **note of advice** to Herbie suggesting ways in which he could deal with the dilemma he is experiencing.
- Now read on from page 45 '**"I have to go!", I blurt out...**' to the end of the chapter.
  - Was this what you expected? Why do you think *Herbie fled*? Why do you think Mr Mummery, Rictus and Tristo were at the door? Why do you think the two mime artists are described as '**so disturbing**'?
- Read aloud 'Violet' (page 47), and discuss:
  - Why do you think Herbie flees to Violet? What do you understand by the phrase '**A problem shared isn't a problem at all. It's an adventure**'? Discuss with the children other expressions they know that sound similar, such as 'a problem shared is a problem halved'.
  - What do you find out about Herbie and his friendship with Violet, about the Eerie Book Dispensary, and Erwin the bookshop cat? How might these characters and this location be important, do you think?
  - What do you think is the mystery that Violet had written to Herbie about, and that she wants him to help her solve? What might be in the metal tube concealed in the croissant Herbie took from the hotel?
- Invite the children to share and record their predictions in writing or artwork which could be placed in a tube to compare to what is revealed in the next chapter.

### **'The Mermonkey Blinks' (page 52) to 'Padlocks and Crowbars' (page 97):**

- Begin by asking the children to **summarise** what they have heard and discuss their responses to the text so far. The group can begin to explore their responses to it with the help of what Aidan Chambers calls '**the four basic questions**', giving children accessible starting points for discussion:
  - Tell me ... was there anything you liked about this text?
  - Was there anything that you particularly disliked?



- Was there anything that puzzled you?
- Were there any patterns ... any connections that you noticed?
- As you read on, the children will benefit from regular opportunities to return to these questions sharing their personal responses to the key events and character developments as they occur.
- After reading the next seven chapters, ask the group to summarise this part of the book together, working towards a shared interpretation of what has happened, and recording key events on the shared **storymap**. Come back together to discuss:
  - What impression does the unfolding of the piece of paper with SS Fabulous on it make on you? Do you think this is magic, how might Caliastra have achieved this? What impact do you think it has on Herbie; how do you know?
  - What do you think are Violet's feelings about Caliastra? How does the author reveal them?
  - Why do you think she might feel as she does, is she right to mistrust the magician?
  - What do you think about the scene in which the mermonkey chooses The Subtle Mask for Caliastra? Consider the significance of this choice and debate whether the children agree with Caliastra's dismissal of it.
  - Can you imagine a bookshop that dispenses a book to you according to your needs? What do you think yours might be? Can you imagine prescribing a book for a friend of yours: what would it be and why?
  - How do you think Herbie feels at the prospect of leaving Eerie-on-Sea to travel the world as Caliastra's assistant? How would this affect Violet, how does she feel about it?
  - What do you think Jenny Hanniver's disappearance might mean for the story moving forward? What more do we learn about the town: what kind of a mood is created by its unusual shops and services (a luxurious hotel, a Book Dispensary with talking cat, Ghastly Night celebrations centring on a puppet show and manglewick candles, a flotsamporium...)? What do you find out about Ghastly Night, the legend of the Shadowghast and the sinister Sebastian Eels from Herbie and Violet's visit to the Flotsamporium?
  - Discuss the authors use of names in the book and **look at language** more closely; for instance, '**Flotsamporium**' (potentially an amalgam of flotsam emporium) which is one of many words worth investigating with the children and adding to their Reading Journal. Children might also mention the eccentric names which further serve to provide a sense of the story setting: Questin D'Arkness, Lady Kraken, Mr Mollusc, Mrs Fossil, Mr Seegol, etc.
  - Discuss whether the children feel this is a scary or a funny story. Can it be both? Why might the author use humour in a mystery story? What affect does it have on you as a reader?
- The legend of the Shadowghast is told as a story within a story in the chapter 'The Puppet Master', page 88 to page 97, '**... new shadows to snatch**'. Provide copies of the text while you re-read aloud and ask the children to **text-mark**, looking at the language and structure of this episode, identifying features that stand out for them. Invite the children to prepare their own **performance reading** of this section, thinking about how they might

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convey the excitement to an audience.

- How does Herbie and Violet's visit to Sebastian Eels' abandoned house advance the plot?
- What do you think is the significance of the light upstairs that Mrs Fossil saw in 'Something in the Window' (page 83), and the discovery of Jenny's hat on the doorstep of that house?
- What do you think will happen next?
- Reflect on the character of Herbert Lemon. Support the children in completing a **Role on the Wall** for him. To do this, have a prepared template of a boy onto which the children can record their ideas. Ask the children to write words or phrases on the outside of the outline sharing what they know about his outward appearance or other information about him from the story events. Then, use these to begin to infer and deduce his internal feelings and characteristics and note these on the inside of the outline.
- To promote a higher level of thinking, ask the children to consider what we know from what he says and what is said about him by other characters and by the narrator, and what we have to infer from body language, gestures and actions. Support the children in making explicit links between the external and internal. For example, *what does something Herbie does — longing for a good breakfast, fleeing from Caliastra— tell us about his personality? Or, how does Herbie's personality — his loyalty to Violet, yearning for family, and sense of right and wrong — make a specific action seem most likely?*
- Support children in organising their thinking about other key characters in the story — Amber Griss and Mr Mollusc; the members of Caliastra's troupe; Dr Thalassi and Mrs Fossil — by adding a quick **pen portrait** of each to the Reading Journal. A pen portrait is an informal description of a person or a group of people, a character sketch in words. A pen portrait may discuss 'hard' facts, such as age or gender, but it should also focus on 'softer' aspects, such as attitudes and appearance. Information you could include in the pen portrait might be name, appearance, background, relationship to other characters and role in the story, likes and dislikes, as well as any other ideas they have expressed and the children's own inferences about them from what they have read.
- Encourage the children to add further pen portraits as appropriate, and to continue to return to the Role on the Wall as you continue to read the story, using a different colour each time to highlight the knowledge they gain as they read on. They could also complete their own Role on the Wall for Violet and compare the two characters.

### 'Chips for None' (page 103) to 'The Volunteer' (page 142)

- After reading the next seven chapters in the story, ask the children to summarise what they have heard, to enable them to arrive at a shared understanding of what has happened and how the story has developed, recording the key events on the shared storymap and discussing the impact these have on Herbie, Violet and the unfolding plot.
- Come back together to discuss:
  - How is the relationship between Herbie and Violet affected by Caliastra's plan to take Herbie away, and by



Violet's concern about Jenny?

- What evidence do you see of any strain in their relationship? Children might examine the dialogue between the two for evidence of tension.
- Do you think Violet is right to run away and Herbie right not to follow her, but instead to go to the pier? What would you advise either of them to do or say in this moment?
- Use a **visualisation** exercise to deepen the children's response to the setting and how Herbie feels within it, unpicking how the author has elicited the response. Read aloud the opening of 'Arcade', from page 109. **'The wind whistles...'** to page 114, **'...types out a short message'**. Ask the children to picture the scene in their mind's eye as you are reading aloud, closing their eyes and picturing the scene unfolding as if it were a scene in a film. Read the section aloud two or three times and then ask them to describe to a partner what they pictured. You could give the children simple art materials to depict their visualisation.
- Following this, ask the children to share what they imagined and to identify key vocabulary or phrases which support their understanding or interpretation. For example, **'... empty and crooked, threatening to fall into the sea...'** or **'... creaky old building that hulks defiantly against the elements...'** or **'... empty and covered in dust — and more than a few seagull droppings...'** or **'... dust and detritus...'** or **'... the face — which is cracked and peeling — isn't a living face at all but belongs to a plaster man, beneath a silk turban...'** Ask the children why these words or phrases in particular stood out to them.
  - What made them so vivid or memorable?
  - What impression is created by the author through the descriptions?
  - How do these descriptions make you feel?
  - What would you be thinking if you were an onlooker?
- Consider how the plot is moved onwards by Herbie's visit to the theatre.
  - How does seeing the Shadowghast in the game of Space Invaders make you feel? What mood do you think it puts Herbie in before he literally bumps into Mr Mummery then talks with Caliastra? Why do you think she is interested in his Lost-and-Found cubbyhole?
  - How do you think Caliastra's magic show affects Herbie? How do you think she wants him to feel as she shows him her power and offers him a share in it? How do you think he then feels when Violet walks in on them (page 132)? What does their conversation tell you about her feelings?
  - What effect does the performance have on Herbie, Mrs Fossil and Violet? How does the author convey the impression it makes?
  - Why do you think Caliastra is keen for Violet to volunteer in the act, and what is the impact of Mrs Fossil stepping up instead? What do you predict will happen to whoever volunteers?
  - What do you think causes Mrs Fossil to faint?



- Encourage the children to share their predictions of what might happen next and gather these together to discuss. What inspired their predictions? What similarities and differences are there in the predictions made?

## 'A Bit Bamboozled' (page 148) to 'Light and Dark' (page 194)

- Complete these activities after the children have read the next eight chapters, so that they can effectively summarise, discuss and respond to the next section of the story. Record the key events on the shared storymap, and allow time and space to reflect on what they have read and to support each other in interpreting the events described and how these affect Herbie (and Violet) and advance the plot.
  - Do you accept Caliastra's explanation that it was a trick, and Mrs Fossil's that she was '*a bit bamboozled*', or, like Violet, do you think '*there's something really not right about all this*' (page 153)? Can you offer an explanation for what happened? What do you think would have happened if Violet had volunteered, as Caliastra wanted?
  - What do you make of Violet and Herbie's plan to break into Sebastian Eels's house? What do you think they might find? How do you feel as they try and fail to use Clermit to break in, then sneak in behind Mr Mummery? How does the author create and sustain tension: which words or phrases are effective at keeping you on the edge of your seat?
  - What do you think the secret chamber might contain? Does this passage remind you of other stories you may know from other stories? What do you associate with rooms like this?
- Invite children to consider how the author conveys the excitement of the action scenes, as Mr Mummery, Rictus and Tristo return and they have to hide, and end up locked in the underground chamber. Provide copies of the text while you re-read aloud and ask the children to **text mark**, looking at the language and structure of these parts of the story and encouraging the children to identify features that stand out for them. You might also get the children to prepare their own **performance reading** of these sections, thinking about how they might convey the tension in their reading.
  - How do you think Herbie and Violet might feel to be locked in underground? How do you feel as they find the door to the Netherways and decide reluctantly to try and escape this way? What do you think are the risks? Do you believe it really is Jenny Hanniver that they see?
  - How does their fear of exposing themselves to the Shadowghast by using a light make you feel? How do you think Herbie feels as he and Violet become separated in the dark?
- Following this discussion, invite the children to write Herbie a brief **note of advice**, comforting him and suggesting what he could do.
  - *Do you think this is really the voice of the Shadowghast, or just Herbie's imagination?* Discuss the idea that his shadow is different and that this makes the Shadowghast avoid him.



## 'Guiding Star' (page 200) to 'Pickled Lemon' (page 254)

- After reading the next nine chapters in the story ask the children to summarise what they have heard, to enable them to arrive at a shared understanding of the events described, the impact these have on Herbie and Violet, and how the plot is advanced inevitably to a climax.
- Invite children to consider how the author conveys the elation of Herbie and Violet reunited after Erwin helps them escape, and the unusual behaviour of Dr Thalassi, indifferent to the fate of Jenny Hanniver and the disappearance Mrs Fossil.
  - What do you think has happened to change Dr Thalassi? Is this eccentricity or is something else affecting him? What do you think might have happened to Mrs Fossil?
  - Do you think Herbie is wise to return to the Grand Nautilus Hotel, and are you surprised when he finds himself locked away again – '*undergrounded*'? How do you think he might feel as he faces again the possibility that he will have to use the Netherways to escape? How do you know he has tried to put that out of mind up to now?
  - What insights do you gain into the relationship between Violet and Herbie as they are locked in together (page 222 to page 234?) Do you think Violet is right in her warnings about Caliastra? Why do you think Herbie is sensitive about what she says?
- Encourage the children to use their storymap, or the map on pages 6-7 to plot the escape by the Netherways, guided by Erwin's '*catnav*' (page 235).
- Consider how the plot is moved onwards by their escape to the bookshop, and their visit to Dr Thalassi.
  - Do you think Herbie and Violet are wise to take their discovery to Dr Thalassi after he was indifferent about Jenny Hanniver and Mrs Fossil?
  - How do you think Dr Thalassi has lost his shadow, and what does this mean? When do you think this happened?
  - How does it feel to see Herbie and Violet powerless to resist being caught, their friends clearly under some kind of spell? What do you predict that Caliastra proposes to do with Violet and then with Herbie? What hope is there of escape for the two friends? How do the children feel in this moment?

## 'The Magician's Assistant' (page 262) to 'A Surprising Offer' (page 322)

- After the children have read the final ten chapters of the story, allow them time and space to summarise and reflect on what they have read, how the resolution of the story has affected them, and how they feel about the book as a whole. Come back together to discuss:
  - How do you feel about the way the story ends? How does the author draw everything together? What thoughts are you left with by the resolution of events? Do you have any unanswered questions to discuss?



- Do you feel this is the right outcome for Caliastra, Mr Mummery and Tristo, who have been villains, even if unwitting? For Mr Mollusc, is this sufficient come-uppance? For those who regard the **'whole episode as nothing more than a fading dream'**? How do you think each of the characters feels? How do you know?
- How do you think the author wants us to feel about Herbie and Violet, and their return to normality? Why do you think Herbie decides to stay in Eerie-on-Sea?
- What do you think the Shadowghast didn't like about Herbie's shadow? Why is he different? (page 323) What do you think happened to Sebastian Eels/Rictus? Can you imagine what might happen in a future instalment of the Eerie-on-Sea mysteries?
- Invite the children to choose and read aloud short extracts of this final section that they particularly enjoyed, sharing the reasons why they selected them. This might include the dramatic Erwin-aided foiling of Sebastian Eels; Herbie and Violet's escapes through the Netherways; Clermit's rescue of Herbie from the gibbet cage. Use this as the basis for further **text marking**, asking the children to identify, for example, how the author sustains tension, paces action, uses dialogue for effect or leaves a cliff-hanger, depending on the excerpts the children choose.
- Allow the children to explore their responses to the text as a whole through booktalk, with the help of Aidan Chambers's special questions, e.g.,
  - *Which character interested you the most? Is that character the most important in the story? Did any of the characters remind you of people you know, or of characters in other books?*
  - *Were you inside the head of one of the characters, only knowing what they knew, or did the story take you inside a number of characters?*
  - *Did it matter where the story was set? Did you think about the place as you were reading? Was the setting interesting in itself? Would you like to know more about it?*
- The publisher says of *Shadowghast*: **'A creepy magician with a shadowy act. A legend that goes back to the dawn of time. Eerie-on-Sea just got stranger. And darker...'** Do you think this is an accurate description? If you had to summarise the book succinctly, what would you say about it? Collect the children's ideas on sentence strips to display around a copy of the front cover to display in the class reading corner or school library. *Who do you think would enjoy this book? Why? What would you tell them about it to encourage them to read it? What would you hold back, so as not to spoil their reading experience?*

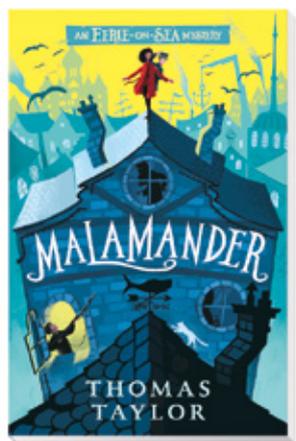
### After reading:

- Consider the different characters, the plot and the setting. Repeat the Arcade visualisation activity with different settings, e.g., the Netherways, the Flotsamporium, the Eerie Book Dispensary, the Pier Theatre...
  - *How does the author use the different settings of the Grand Nautilus Hotel, the Book Dispensary, the Netherways, Sebastian Eels's house and secret chamber? How important do you think they are to the story? What insights do these settings give us about Herbie, his life, what is important to him and his characteristics and motivations?*



- Which character, aspect of the story, incident or episode interested you the most? Did any of the characters remind you of characters in other books, films, on TV or people in real life?
- Review the story in chronological order and consider the different emotions that Herbie has felt throughout the story, the high and low points, using the storymap to support recollection of key events and the **Role on the Wall** to support discussion of his emotional journey. Use **hot-seating** to explore the feelings of Herbie or any of the characters further; in hot-seating one member of the group role-plays a central character and is interviewed by the other children. This activity involves children closely examining a character's motivation and responses. The children could work collaboratively to choose words that describe a character's emotions at different points of the story. Write these on post-it notes, then organise them to demonstrate shades of emotional intensity that they have felt in the story and create a **graph of emotion**. You could also explore the emotional journey of other characters such as Violet.
- If possible, leave copies of the book in the book corner for the children to revisit and re-read in independent reading time if they want to, by themselves or socially in a group or to take home and re-read for themselves.
- *Shadowghast* is the third book in the Eerie-on-Sea Mysteries. Walker have commissioned Thomas Taylor to write a fourth and fifth, and he writes: 'I'm delighted for the chance to delve deeper into the curious world of Eerie-on-Sea, and the fascinating characters I have found there. Of course, doing this will mean exposing Herbie and Violet to even more legendary creatures and dastardly peril along the way (Bladderwracks!), but I'll always make sure there's plenty of fish and chips and cake and fireside friendship for them to share – with each other, and with the reader.' *What kind of adventures do you think Herbie and Violet might go on to have? How might the characters and the relationships between them develop? Would you like to read further adventures, or go back and read the first two in the series? Why? Why not?*
- Find out more about Thomas Taylor in the author's note (page 355) and his website <http://www.thomastaylor-author.com/> and <https://eerie-on-sea.com/>.

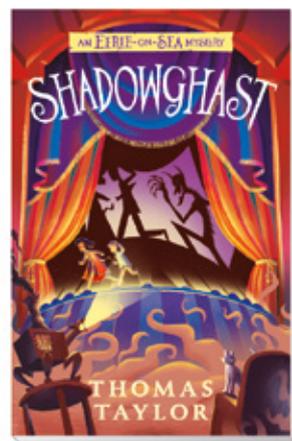
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