

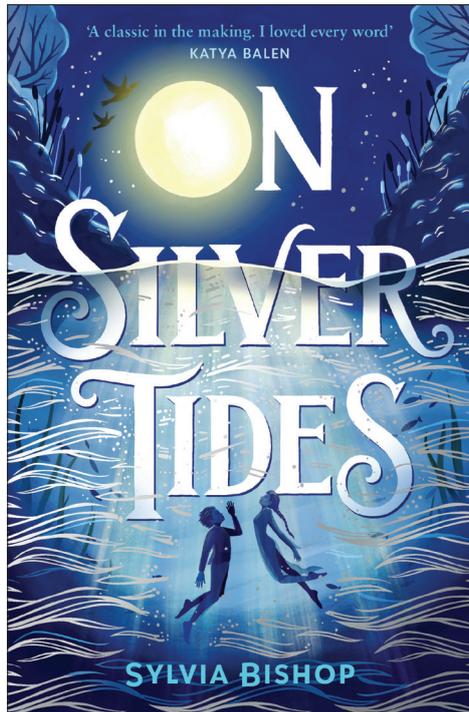
TEACHER NOTES



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TEACHING RESOURCE



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On Silver Tides

by Sylvia Bishop

Published by Andersen Press

ABOUT THE BOOK:

Kelda has always protected her little sister Isla from danger on the rivers, and from the suspicions of their community. For Isla cannot breathe underwater – and so her very existence is forbidden by silvermen's Lore.

Now the rivers of England are growing sick: monstrous creatures are awakening and a fierce torrent of blame falls upon Kelda's family. When betrayal comes, the sisters escape on a desperate journey upstream. Joining forces with a mysterious boy, Kelda discovers the darkest depths of her kind's secret history. But to save both her sister and the very life of Britain's waterways, Kelda will have to make a sacrifice – one that will change her life forever.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Sylvia Bishop is the author of several books for young readers, and her work has been translated into seventeen languages. She lives in Bristol, England. When not writing, she can be found reading, performing comedy and – when she gets the chance – swimming in rivers.

ABOUT THIS RESOURCE:

This resource is intended to be used with a short extract of *On Silver Tides*. For discussion questions and writing prompts designed for students who have read the whole book, please see the separate Reading Group Guide.

GETTING STARTED:

To begin, read the opening chapter of *On Silver Tides* (pages 1-6). Look out for clues introducing the time, place and magical world...

QUESTIONS

1. What impression do you get of Kelda's character? Provide evidence from the text.
2. '*None of them knew anything about drowning.*' Why?
3. Roughly when do you think the story might be set? Find two clues in the text.
4. Why is the family distressed by the baby's inability to breathe underwater?
5. The new baby is very vulnerable. Find three words the author uses to highlight this vulnerability to the reader.
6. What problems do you think the family might face in the future? Provide a line from the text that tells you this.

CREATIVE WRITING EXERCISE

Write a diary entry of these same events from Kelda's point of view. Here are some tips for getting started:

1. First, note down the major events that take place in the extract. You can use these to structure your plan.
2. Then consider whether you want to imagine and include any other events from Kelda's day. What else could happen in the daily routine of an amphibious human? These might not be normal human experiences – what techniques could you use to convey how these things would look and feel?
3. Finally, ask yourself what Kelda might feel about these events. What concerns and hopes might she confide in a diary?

INDICATIVE CONTENT

1. What impression do you get of Kelda's character? Provide evidence from the text.

Responses may include: cheeky, practical, wild, willful, caring, responsible, perceptive.

Evidence from the text may include:

- *'a punishment for cheek'*
- *'Kelda suddenly understood that no one else was going to do anything. So she ducked her head under her father's and put her mouth over her sister's'*
- *'it was the moment in which Kelda, until then her own willful, wild person, was understood by everyone to have become her sister's guardian.'*
- *'Kelda was old enough to know what Dad suspected'*
- *'The unnamed baby whimpered in Kelda's arms. Kelda was inclined to agree. Her sister didn't deserve a half-hearted name, which just said what she nearly was. She wasn't a half-thing. Her name should feel complete.'*

2. 'None of them knew anything about drowning.' Why?

As amphibious creatures, they do not drown in water.

3. When do you think the story might be set? Find two clues in the text.

The book is set in 1904. Any indication of awareness that the setting is recent but not contemporary, in conjunction with appropriate clues:

- Excitement over a *'motorcar'*
- The clothes of the landmen described – *'a puddle of skirts', 'cravat and collar'*
- The use of candles for lighting

4. Why is the family distressed by the baby's inability to breathe underwater?

Answers may include:

- It is forbidden by their culture to keep her on the boat
- It raises the concern her mother may have had an affair
- It makes her different to them, in danger of being seen as a *'freak'*
- It endangers her, as they have ritually thrown her in the river

5. The new baby is very vulnerable. Find three words the author uses to highlight this vulnerability to the reader.

Possible words: *'little', 'limp', 'tiny', 'small', 'cough', 'splutter', 'squirm', 'whimpered'*

6. What problems do you think the family might face in the future? Provide a line from the text that tells you this.

Any answer discussing the fact that their new baby will be suspected of having landman blood, and that this would be *'absolutely forbidden'*. Quotes may include:

- *'understood by everyone to have become her sister's guardian'*
- *'Keeping anyone of landman blood on board was absolutely forbidden, and the River would sicken and spoil'*
- *'If the baby wasn't silverman through and through, Mam would never have her on the boat.'*