

CREATING WORLDS with GARTH NIX

Education Resources

Grades 9 - 12

The following resources have been developed to take your Word Play experience from festival to classroom. Written and compiled by qualified teacher, Ella Peile, UPLIT's Children & Young Adult Programs Coordinator, the suggested classroom exercises and activities below are designed to reflect key learning areas outlined in the ACARA Australian Curriculum and QCAA Senior English Syllabus.

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Curriculum Links

The following activities are designed to complement the Australian Curriculum in English Years 9-10 and the QCAA Senior English Syllabus. Specific curriculum links have been noted at the end of each activity.

About the Author

Garth Nix was born in 1963 in Melbourne. A full-time writer since 2001, he previously worked as a literary agent, marketing consultant, book editor, book publicist, book sales representative, bookseller, and as a part-time soldier in the Australian Army Reserve.

Garth's books include the award-winning young adult fantasy novels *Sabriel*, *Lirael*, and *Abhorsen*; the dystopian novel *Shade's Children*; the space opera *A Confusion of Princes*; and a Regency romance with magic, *Newt's Emerald*.

His fantasy novels for children include *The Ragwitch*; the six books of *The Seventh Tower* sequence; *The Keys to the Kingdom* series; the *Troubletwisters* series and *Spirit Animals: Blood Ties* (co-written with Sean Williams.)

More than five million copies of his books have been sold around the world, his books have appeared on the bestseller lists of *The New York Times*, *Publishers Weekly*, *The Guardian* and *The Australian*, and his work has been translated into 40 languages.

He lives in a Sydney beach suburb with his wife and children.

Introduction to the Book Goldenhand

Lirael is no longer a shy Second Assistant Librarian – she’s now the Abhorsen-in-Waiting, with a new hand, one of gilded steel and Charter Magic.

When she discovers Nicholas Sayre lying unconscious, she uses her powers to save him. But the attack has left Nicholas tainted with Free Magic, so together they embark on a dangerous journey to seek help at Lirael’s childhood home, the Clayr’s Glacier. Ferin, a young woman from the distant North, is travelling to meet them, bearing a warning from Lirael’s long-dead mother about the Witch With No Face. But who is the Witch, and what is she planning?

Lirael must save the Old Kingdom from this great danger – and it must be forestalled not only in the living world but also in the cold, remorseless river of Death.

Watch the trailer for *Goldenhand* at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2CQ3OohwHjE>

For students unfamiliar with the Old Kingdom series, the following video provides an overview:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cADIOWk5VrU>

Introduction to the Book Frogkisser

With *Frogkisser!*, acclaimed bestselling author Garth Nix has conjured a fantastical tale for all ages, full of laughs and danger, surprises and delights, and an immense population of frogs.

It’s 50% fairy tale, 50% fantasy, and 100% pure enjoyment from start to finish.

Poor Princess Anya. Forced to live with her evil stepmother’s new husband, her evil stepstepfather. Plagued with an unfortunate ability to break curses with a magic-assisted kiss. And forced to go on the run when her stepstepfather decides to make the kingdom entirely his own.

Aided by a loyal talking dog, a boy thief trapped in the body of a newt, and some extraordinarily mischievous wizards, Anya sets off on a quest that, if she plays it right, will ultimately free her land-and teach her a thing or two about the use of power, the effectiveness of a well-placed pucker, and the finding of friends in places both high and low.

Class Discussion Introduction to the Old Kingdom

Watch the summary of the Old Kingdom <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cADIOWk5VrU>

Discuss the two kingdoms, considering the major differences and possibilities of each.

If the class has some students who have read the series and others who haven’t, divide the class into groups with each group containing a student who has read the books.

Each group creates a timeline of the major events and characters of the stories.

Use prior reading and research to summarise the main 'rules' of magic in the series. E.g.:

- Charter Magic is constrained by symbols
- Symbols can be drawn, spoken, engraved, etc.
- Charter Magic relies on its user having a Charter mark.
- Free Magic is unconstrained
- Free Magic causes adverse affects on its casters

Conduct a debate arguing which would be the best way to live: using Free Magic, using Charter Magic, or living in the New Kingdom with modern technology but no magic.

Present an argument about a literary text based on initial impressions and subsequent analysis of the whole text(ACELT1771)
Explore and reflect on personal understanding of the world and significant human experience gained from interpreting various representations of life matters in texts (ACELT1635)

Class Activity

Character Analysis

This activity would suit any of Garth Nix's books.

Break the class into groups and assign each group a character from the book: either the protagonist or the antagonist. Ask students to draw a silhouette of their character, taking up most of the page space. Encourage them to keep the shape simple and include one or two characteristic physical features or items of clothing as part of the outline. E.g. hairstyle, silhouette of clothing, signature possession.

Students are to fill the sheet with the following:

- Physical descriptions drawn or written along the silhouette outline
- The character's outward persona, i.e. the personality they show to most of the world. Write descriptions, actions, and quotes of things they've said or ways other characters describe them outside the silhouette to the edge of the page
- The character's inner world, i.e. their private thoughts, feelings, fears, values and beliefs. Write inside the silhouette (include quotes)

Ask students to share their character analysis. Discuss what pieces of information were communicated directly by the author and which were revealed through action, speech, and thoughts (indirect characterisation).

Pair up a group who analysed the protagonist with one who analysed the antagonist. Provide students with the following questions to answer as a group:

- What is the relationship between the two characters?
- What are their similarities and differences?
- How do these similarities and differences inform the development of the story?
- How does the antagonist further the character development of the protagonist?
- Who is the more developed character? Explain, considering complexity of traits, values, motivations, and backstory.

Understand how ideas can be expanded and sharpened through careful choice of verbs, elaborated tenses and a range of adverb groups/phrases (ACELA1523)

Reflect on ideas and opinions about characters, settings and events in literary texts, identifying areas of agreement and difference with others and justifying a point of view (ACELT1620) Understand, interpret and discuss how language is compressed to create layers of meaning in poetry, for example haiku, tankas, couplets, free verse and verse novels (ACELT1623) Compare the ways that language and images are used to create character, and to influence emotions and opinions in different types of texts (ACELT1621)

Classroom Activity

Imagery in Prose and Verse

Discuss the importance of creating a believable world in the fantasy genre. Consider that where the events of the story are outside reality, readers may be less likely to suspend their disbelief. Discuss what makes for a believable, immersive world.

Ask students to choose a particular setting which they believe was effectively portrayed in the book. Students could then group together based on the setting they have chosen. Ask each group to describe the setting, without referencing the text. Find images (colours, textures, landscapes, etc) that evoke their memory of the place. Use these to create a digital collage or slideshow. Then refer to the book to find examples of how that was communicated to the reader. Consider:

- Descriptions which appeal to the senses
- Descriptions which evoke a memory or reminder of a real place
- Use of simile and metaphor

Reconstruct the examples chosen in a poetic form (e.g. free verse, sonnet, haiku), exploring how the use of imagery and figurative language can be transferred to verse.

Groups then present their poem to the class while displaying their digital collage or slideshow.

Compare the effect of the group poems to that of the book excerpt used. How do the different literary forms influence the impact on the reader?

Analyse and evaluate how people, cultures, places, events, objects and concepts are represented in texts, including media texts, through language, structural and/or visual choices (ACELY1749)

Create imaginative texts that make relevant thematic and intertextual connections with other texts (ACELT1644)

Explain how authors creatively use the structures of sentences and clauses for particular effects (ACELA1557)

Analyse text structures and language features of literary texts, and make relevant comparisons with other texts (ACELT1772)

Use a range of software, including word processing programs, confidently, flexibly and imaginatively to create, edit and publish texts, considering the identified purpose and the characteristics of the user (ACELY1776)

Independent Activity

Creating a Setting

Read the following quote:

I've always been quite partial to rifts and canyons and gorges. I guess the Great Rift owes something to every geographical formation of this kind I've ever visited, including the Grand Canyon in the USA.

(Full interview at http://oldkingdom.com.au/author_goldenhand_QA.html#.WUo78oVOKUI)

Students individually choose a place or type of landscape that they know well and find interesting or inspiring.

Answer the following:

- What are the sights, sounds, and smells immediately noticeable?
- Describe the light and temperature
- What other aspects require closer attention? Consider small details, hiding animals, background sounds, etc.
- Who and what lives here? How hospitable is the environment?

Use the answers to inspire a descriptive passage, describing the protagonist entering the place and their physical and emotional reactions. Try to make your descriptions as vivid and believable as possible.

Create literary texts that reflect an emerging sense of personal style and evaluate the effectiveness of these texts (ACELT1814)

Create literary texts with a sustained 'voice', selecting and adapting appropriate text structures, literary devices, language, auditory and visual structures and features for a specific purpose and intended audience(ACELT1815)

Create imaginative texts that make relevant thematic and intertextual connections with other texts (ACELT1644)

Independent Activity Augmented Stories

In an interview at http://oldkingdom.com.au/author_goldenhand_QA.html#.WUo78oVOKUI Garth Nix states *The Old Kingdom is a big canvas, with lots of room for stories of all kinds. I have notes for stories set in the 'gaps' between the books or in other parts of Old Kingdom history I haven't ever delved into. So anything is possible!*

Discuss some of these possible 'gaps' and use this to inspire one of the following responses:

- An additional chapter to the book in the same narrative style
- A series of letters between two characters
- An animated story using online creation tools such as <https://www.littlebirdtales.com/>

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Use a range of software, including word processing programs, confidently, flexibly and imaginatively to create, edit and publish texts, considering the identified purpose and the characteristics of the user (ACELY1776)

Further Resources

Teaching notes for *Frogkisser* are available at

http://resource.scholastic.com.au/resourcefiles/8492863_65835.pdf

Teaching notes for *The Keys to the Kingdom* series are available through Allen & Unwin at

<https://www.allenandunwin.com/browse/books/childrens/childrens-fiction/Mister-Monday-Garth-Nix-9781741142136>