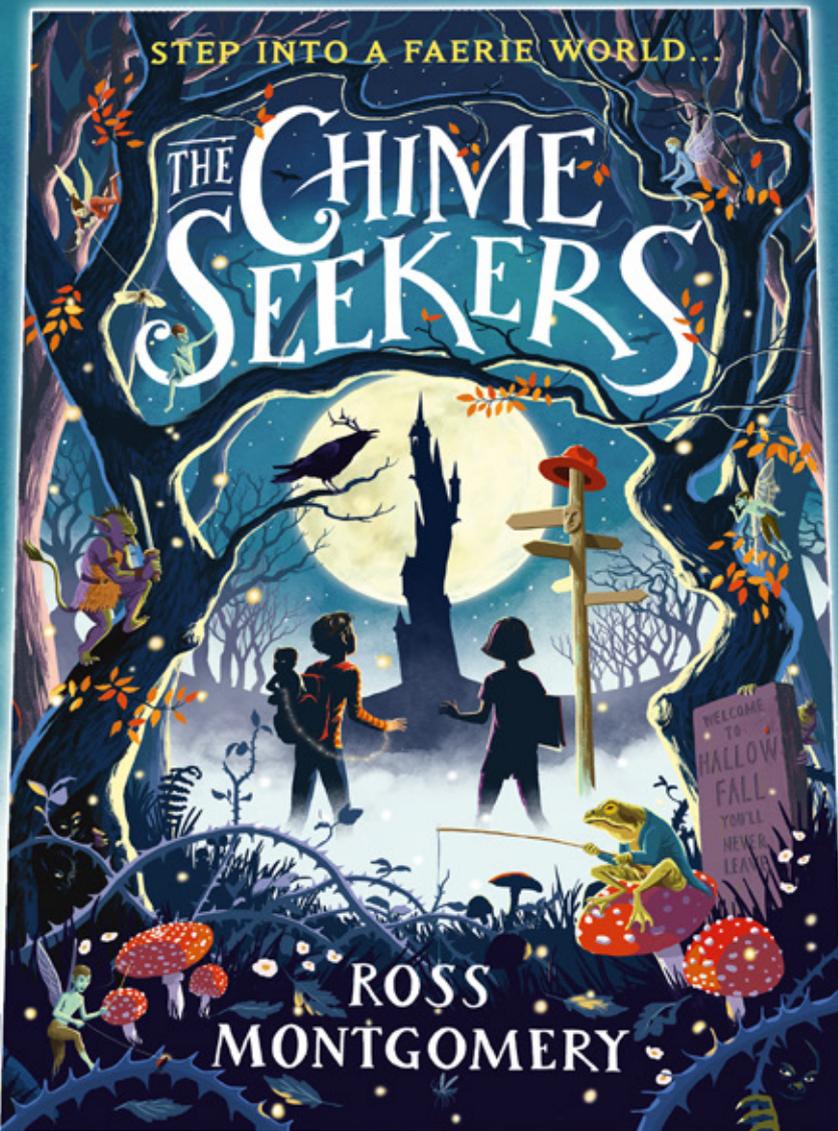


THE CHIME SEEKERS

TEACHERS' NOTES



9781406391190 • £7.99 • 9 years+

"Charming, hilarious and brimming with magic." Catherine Doyle

  @WalkerBooksUK  @MossMontgomery

WALKER BOOKS

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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 Reading Journal to organize and store discussions and responses to the text. Children could also be asked to consider the writer's use of language and how he creates a particular effect or image.
- The length of the book means that you will need to consider how you wish children to engage with the text. The sessions below propose a blend of: reading aloud and discussing key passages; allowing time for pupils to read sections of the text independently between sessions; 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 story map of Fallow Hall/Hallow Fall and a simple cast of characters, e.g., Mum, Dad, Amy, the shopkeeper, Lorde Renwin, the argumentative frog, the talking signpost, Gobbrox and Grunta, the Goblin Queen, the changeling/Larry, Gustiver.

Cover and Welcome to Fallow Hall (page 9 to page 84)

- Begin by sharing the cover, reading what messages it might contain about the book, 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.
- Ask them to think about who these two characters could be, what they are doing and why, and what clues they get from their clothing and body language. Consider also where the story might be set. *Where do you think they are standing? What kind of building is this? What else do you notice about the pair and the setting?* Encourage them to look closely at the cover, and invite them to speculate about the story: *Why might the raven have antlers, the signpost a face and a red hat on top? What do the other creatures you can see, and any other details, suggest to you about the story world?*
- The children may have heard of the author Ross Montgomery, or read other stories by him. *What does your knowledge or experience of his other books lead you to expect here?* Note the gravestone-like sign **Welcome to Hallow Fall — You'll Never Leave**: *What does this suggest to you about the story?* Consider the strapline **Step into a faerie world...** and the quotation from W.B. Yeats' "The Stolen Child". *How do these words prime you for the story you are about to read? Does the cover make you want to read the story? Why? Why not?*



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- Now consider the section heading, **Welcome to Fallow Hall** (page 9), then ask the children to find the other section headings (**Welcome to Hallow Fall**, page 85; **The Lower Kingdoms**, page 293; **Welcome to Fallow Hall**, page 361) and reflect on the titles. Invite the children to speculate on why the author has divided the book into parts with these names. *How do these settings help you to imagine the story events to come? How do you think they might relate to the cover illustration, or to the quest implicit in the **seekers** part of the title?*
- Read aloud the opening chapter **The New House** (page 11). Give the children time and space to reflect on what they have heard. Then discuss: *What do you think is happening in these pages? What do you learn about Yanni and the setting of the story? Do any of his experiences resonate with your own?* Children may have moved house and had to start at a new school, or have a younger sibling who they feel took up their parents' attention when they were born, or even cousins they don't get on with as well as their parents think they should. Encourage them to relate the events of the story to their own experience, as they explore how Yanni feels, and how they know. *What impression does the "new" house and the village make on Yanni and on you? What features stand out for you? How do you think he feels to be moving into it?* Discuss the mood created by this opening.
- Now read **The Gift** (page 21), then **Fallow Hall** (page 30), again giving the children time and space to reflect on and discuss what they have read, and consider what more they find out about Yanni here. *Do his grandparents — his yiayia and pappou — remind you of your own, or of grandparents you know from other stories?* Consider the "mati" they have given Yanni, and establish whether they have heard of the "evil eye" it is meant to guard against. Support them to see the link between All Hallows' Eve and Hallowe'en, and to reflect on what clues these references offer about the developing story. *What does Yanni's visit to the village add to the sense that things are not quite right? How do his encounters at the shop and the church make you feel? Why do you think there might be no other children in Fallow Hall?*
- Provide a copy of the text from page 36, **The playing field to like a predator**, page 37. Invite the children to **text-mark and annotate**, identifying words and phrases that especially capture the mood of the place.
- Read the next chapters: **All Hallows' Eve** (page 39) and **The Visitor** (page 50). Ask the children to summarize what has happened in these pages, and establish what more we find out about Yanni and his family, especially about Dad and Mum. *How well matched are Yanni and Amy? Do you think they will get on? Why or why not?* Ask whether the children have heard of or played the kind of fantasy role-playing games Amy likes; or had a babysitter they didn't enjoy being with, or felt they were too old to need. *What do Yanni and Amy seem to think of each other? How do you know?*
- Consider the line **And that was when everything changed** at the end of **All Hallows' Eve** (page 49) and how it makes the children feel. *What did you predict was about to happen? Do you think Yanni is justified in resenting his sister?* Discuss the man Yanni takes for Mr Edwards: *Who do you think this really is? What impression does he make on you? Which words and phrases that describe his sudden appearance and the way he talks, looks and acts, stand out? Why do you think **the voice at the back of his head was screaming** (page 54)?* Re-examine the scene where he seeks to trick Yanni into giving him Ari, and the cracking glass. *What does the cracking glass suggest to you about the mysterious visitor?*



- Discuss the aftermath of the stranger’s visit after reading on through **A Turn of Events** (page 61) and **The Changeling** (page 69), unpicking how the author captures the confusion after the visitor has left, and how Yanni and Amy make sense of what has happened. *Why do you think Yanni is struggling to remember what has only just happened? What evidence suggests that the visitor was a faerie, and that something has happened to Ari?*
- Reflect on the word “**changeling**”, and ask whether the children have heard it before or know stories about human babies swapped for mythical creatures, which are common in the folklore of many cultures. *Where do you think Ari has gone, and how was the man able to take her? What do you think Amy’s assertion that **faeries live by strict rules** (page 72) suggests about the world of the story and how things might unfold?*
- Invite the children to consider the dangers of going to the Land of Fae to rescue Ari. *Do you think Yanni and Amy should risk going through the gateway to find his sister? What might happen if they don’t? Do you think the pair are likely to succeed in a world so different from their own? How do you think they can work together, when they seem not to get on?* Ask the children to write a brief **note of advice** to Yanni and Amy, with any guidance and encouragement they can offer, then to read each other’s letters and reply by **writing in role** as Yanni or Amy to the letter they have received.
- Finish the session by reading the final chapter of this section, **Crossing Over** (page 78), then discussing how the story might develop: *What do you think Yanni and Amy will find when they go into the Land of Fae? How do you think each of the two characters feels as they stand on the threshold? How do you know?*

Welcome to Hallow Fall: Hallow Fall (page 87) to The First Task (page 131)

- After reading the first three chapters of the second section of the story, **Welcome to Hallow Fall** (Hallow Fall, page 87; **The Dark Tower**, page 97; and **Lorde Renwin**, page 102), ask the children to summarize what they have read, so they reach a consensus on how things stand with Yanni and Amy, the situation they find themselves in, the threats that surround each of them and the challenge they face.
- Invite them to reflect on what we have found out about Yanni’s and Amy’s personalities, and how they are feeling about the situation they find themselves in. *What are your feelings towards each of them? How do you think the author wants us to feel about them? What clues does the author give you about how well they are working together?*
- Consider the encounter with the frog then the signpost: *What is the effect of dramatic incidents like this being depicted with humour, e.g. page 93, “Oof! That’s a nasty little changeling you’ve got there”? Why do you think the author chooses to use humour in this way?* Discuss how the shared experience of these two characters helps to establish a relationship between Yanni and Amy.
- Reflect on the relationship between the faerie world and the real world, and how Amy’s interest in role-playing connects the two. *What do we find out about faeries from Amy’s **Orc’s Quest** manual? How do you think this information might be relevant as the story develops? How does Yanni react to the new information he has to take on board?*



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- Go on to the impression made by the pair’s arrival at the Dark Tower. *Which words or phrases capture the sense of the place? As Yanni heads inside on his own, how do you think he might be feeling? The author describes him as terrified, but what do you think makes him face his fear and press on?*
- Invite the children to consider the differences between Lorde Renwin and Gustiver as we meet them in the Dark Tower compared to “Mr Edwards” and his raven that we saw in Ari’s bedroom. *How do the surroundings affect Yanni? Do you think he is right to propose a wager? Why do you think he decides to do exactly what Amy said he shouldn’t? What do you think are the risks in the bargain he has made? How might Lorde Renwin try to trick him?*
- As new characters — including the frog, signpost and raven — are introduced, the children could organize their thinking about the characters Yanni and Amy meet 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. It might be interesting to let the children choose the characters they think are worth noting, but to include Lorde Renwin, Gustiver and the changeling. Information you could include in the pen portrait might be name, appearance, background, likes and dislikes, ideas they have expressed, and any other inferences the children make from what they have read.
- Ask the children to 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**”. These questions give children accessible starting points for discussion:
 - Is there anything you like about this text?
 - Is there anything that you particularly dislike?
 - Is there anything that puzzles you?
 - Are there any patterns ... any connections that you notice?
- As you read the story, the children will benefit from regular opportunities to return to these questions and share their personal responses to the key events and character developments as they occur.
- Read on through the next chapter, **The Wager** (page 114), and invite the children to consider how the author conveys the tension of the confrontation. Provide copies of the text while you re-read aloud and ask the children to mark the text, **looking at the language** and structure of this part of the story and encouraging them to identify features that stand out for them. This might include direct speech, sentence structure and punctuation that capture the back-and-forth argument, as well as insights into Yanni’s thinking and small clues from gestures that indicate the dynamics of the scene. You might also get the children to prepare their own **performance reading** of this section, thinking about how they might convey the tension.



- After reading the next two chapters (**Gustiver**, page 122 and **The First Task**, page 131), ask the children for a brief summary of what they have read and discuss the characters of Yanni and Amy and their relationship. Reflect on the events of the story so far and ask the children to complete two **Roles on the Wall** for them. To do this, have prepared templates of a boy and a girl 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 the characters' outward appearance, or other information about them gleaned from the story events. Then, use these to infer and deduce their 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 about the characters from what they say and what is said about them 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 Yanni does — throwing the **Orc's Quest** manual away — tell us about his personality? Or, how does Yanni's personality — his willingness to push on, even though afraid — make a specific action seem most likely?*
- Encourage the children to return to the **Roles on the Wall** as you read the story, using a different colour each time to highlight the knowledge they gain as they read on. Another way to organize the children's thinking about the two protagonists would be to plot a two-circle **Venn diagram** to identify the similarities and differences between them.

Welcome to Hallow Fall: **Gobbrox** (page 143) to **The Name-Taking** (page 282)

- The remaining sixteen chapters of this section relate to Yanni and Amy's quest to win Ari back by locating and retrieving the three items that Lorde Renwin specifies, namely the Toadstone from the Goblin Fortress, the elixir of life from the Fount of Eternal Youth, and the broken crown from the drowned Erlking.
- It is important for all children to have the opportunity to read the chapters first with you, but, to enable them to engage in depth with the text, allot each part of the quest to a pair or group of children for them to re-examine, identifying the patterns across the section.
- For the Toadstone, allot **Gobbrox** (page 143) to **The Pale Stranger** (page 174); for the elixir of life allot **The Enchanted Ruin** (page 182) to **The Black Piano** (page 218); and for the broken crown allot **The Galleon** (page 228) to **Victory** (page 272).
- As they re-read their own chapters, encourage them also to consider the story as a whole, with these prompts:
 - What more do you find out about Yanni and Amy from each part of the quest? What insights do the incidents give you into their personality?
 - How do you see their relationship develop over the course of the chapters? What does each have to do to be able to move closer to the other, and to be able to support the other so that they can work as a team? Can you find specific examples in the text of things either of them says or does that show them changing?



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- Ask the children to consider what they notice about Lorde Renwin as each quest is achieved, considering the impact on him as a character. How is this manifested through the state of his stronghold, the Dark Tower? Ask them to identify descriptive passages that track the deterioration of the tower from when Yanni first entered it.
- Consider the role the changeling/Larry plays in the story. *Yanni begins by being manacled to Larry: how do his feelings towards Larry alter the more he understands the Land of Fae, and Lorde Renwin's power? How does Yanni's attitude to Larry compare to his attitude towards his sister Ari? Similarly, reflect on any insights into the story world we get from the antlered raven Gustiver and his changing behaviour during the three quests. What do you know or think you know about this character and how he came into Lorde Renwin's service? Do you see his position shifting during the course of the section, and, if so, how? Where can you point to in the text for a softening towards Yanni and Amy?*
- As well as inviting them to consider these questions across the chapters they have read, ask the children to summarize what they have read independently, arriving at a shared understanding of the events described and the impact these have on Yanni and Amy, and how the plot has been advanced. Allow time and space to reflect on what they have read, then discuss how they think Yanni and Amy might feel to find themselves returning to the Dark Tower with the Erlking's crown, having acquired the third and final item, and preparing to face Lorde Renwin and reclaim Ari. *How do you think each has changed? How has the relationship between the two altered over the chapters you have read? How do the different personalities of the two characters express themselves, and how do you feel about each of them? How do you think the author wants you to respond to the pair? What tells you this?*
- Ask the children to reflect on how our sense of the world of the story is deepened by the events in the Goblin Fortress, the Enchanted Ruin, the Galleon and the sea bottom beneath, and the Dark Tower each time they return to it. *How do you think the faerie world of Hallow Fall relates to the surface world of Fallow Hall? What connects the two? Are there any points during reading when you have seen them touch or overlap?*
- Consider with the children how Yanni and Amy succeed in the following: exchanging the Toadstone for small change; using stealth and teamwork to gain the elixir of life; working with others to seize the Erlking's crown. Update the **Roles on the Wall** with the insights you gain from observing them working together in these scenes. *What more do you find out about Yanni and Amy from these episodes and their interactions with each other, with the goblins, with the frog and signpost, with Gustiver? What do you think they are learning about each other? How is their relationship changing?*
- Each of the incidents is thrillingly captured. Discuss with the children how the tension is sustained in each case, for example from the characters' entry to the Goblin Fortress (page 139), their encounter with Gobbrox and Grunta (page 146), their escape into the hands of the Goblin Queen (page 162) and their successful negotiation (page 168); or their arrival at the Enchanted Ruin (page 185), their entry to the Abbey (page 194), the collection of elixir from the Fount of Youth (page 199) and their escape from the sleeping guard (page 207). Invite them to re-read aloud passages that they find especially exciting, identifying the features of the writing that convey the sense of adventure. They might notice the use of punctuation for effect; the careful selection of vocabulary,



including powerful verbs to capture the action or in sensory descriptions; and the use of multiple perspectives during this series of events — seeing through the eyes of Yanni, Amy, the goblins, Gustiver, Larry.

- Read the final sentence of page 281: **Yanni had failed.** *How does this short and simple sentence make you feel as a reader, after what has gone before? How does it relate to Yanni's and Amy's feelings as they approach the Dark Tower?*
- End by reading the final chapter of the section, **The Name-Taking** (page 282), and unpicking how this final chapter makes us feel. *What is your reaction to Lorde Renwin's treatment of Gustiver, of Amy, and of Larry? What do you think is the impact on Yanni? How do you know? Consider the all-or-nothing wager Yanni proposes, and why Lorde Renwin accepts it. What has Yanni learned about faeries and their love of a wager that makes him risk it? Do you think he can succeed without Amy and Larry? What do you predict will happen next?*

The Lower Kingdoms (page 293)

- Begin by asking the children to summarize the story to this point, arriving at a shared understanding of the way the plot has developed, the challenge Yanni now faces, and the implications if he fails. If their summary does not refer to it, ask them what Yanni has collected over the course of the three quests, and how these items might prove to be significant as the story reaches its conclusion. You could point them to Amy's words on page 183: **"It's obvious you've never played Orc's Quest. You never know when something might come in handy. Keep it in the inventory, just in case."**
- Read **Alone** (page 295) and allow the children to reflect on Yanni's new situation, the impact his wager has had on the faerie world, and his new-found isolation, with the frog as an unexpected ally. Ask them to write Yanni another brief **note of advice**, which could include summarizing what he has so far achieved, why his quest matters and why you think he could still be successful.
- Read the next chapter, **The Raftsman** (page 304), and discuss the impact on Yanni of the environment he is passing through. *How do you think Yanni might feel in the **vast, empty cavern** (page 304), then crossing the river on the raft of blackthorn logs (page 308), emerging from the tunnel towards the waterfall (page 310)? What impression does his situation make on you and him? What stands out in the author's description of the place, and the mood it evokes?*
- Having taken us to the Land of Fae, the Dark Tower, the Goblin Fortress, the Enchanted Ruin and the undersea battlefield, the author takes us to Yanni's old house before they moved to Fallow Hall. Use **visualization** to deepen the children's response to the setting and unpick how and why the author has elicited the response. Read aloud the opening of **The Stronghold**, from page 312 to page 314 **...as if the challenge had never happened.** Ask the children to visualize 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 visualization.
- Following this, ask the children to share what they imagined and to identify key vocabulary or phrases that support their understanding or interpretation. For example: **in the cavern wall ahead, was the door to his old**



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house or chipped paint around the lock or the scorch mark at the top where they burned a cross above the door with a candle every year at Greek Easter or close and cosy rooms or family photos above the TV. 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?
- Read the rest of the chapter and discuss what the children think has happened in this chapter. Reflect on the test Yanni has had to pass in finding his way to Lorde Renwin's stronghold, and why he was brought to his old home to face it. *What do you think Yanni learns about the quest, about Lorde Renwin and about himself? What do you think will happen when he goes through the stronghold door? What might he find?*
 - Read the final four chapters of this section, **The Reckoning** (page 321) to **Larry** (page 350). Consider how Yanni draws on everything he has been through in the story to this point, and listens to his instinct. In **The Last Hand** (page 331), Yanni suddenly finds himself back in Lorde Renwin's presence. Ask the children to predict what will happen now, how this final confrontation might play out. *How does Yanni succeed in beating Lorde Renwin at his own game? How does the aftermath of his victory make you feel, after Yanni's triumphant "I tricked you" on page 338? What do you think it means for Ari, Amy, Gustiver and Larry? Why do you think it is important that Yanni and Amy will not be allowed to remember anything of what has happened (page 354)?*

Welcome to Fallow Hall (page 361)

- After reading the final section of the story, allow the children time and space to summarize and reflect on what they have read.
 - How does the resolution of the story make you feel? How does the author draw everything together in one place? Does it remind you of other stories you know in books or films? Is this the kind of story ending you enjoy?
 - Are you satisfied by the way the story ends? Do you feel this is the right outcome for Yanni and Amy; for Lorde Renwin; for Larry/Lari and the faeries? Does it matter that Yanni and Amy will forget everything in time? Would you change anything?
 - How do you think the author wants us to feel about Yanni and Amy, and what they might go on to do? How do you think each of the characters feels at the end? How do you know? What might the new term at Riddleton School be like, do you think?



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- Revisit Aidan Chambers' "four basic questions", giving the children the opportunity to reflect.
 - Did you enjoy this story?
 - What puzzles did it contain?
 - What links do you see to other stories you already know?
- The publisher describes *The Chime Seekers* as a "fantasy adventure about siblings, courage and the magic that hides in the cracks". *Do you think this is an accurate description? Does it capture what the book meant for you? Who do you think would enjoy this book? What would you say to them about it? How could you make an enticing recommendation without giving away too much of the plot?*

After reading, you could also:

- Consider the different characters, the plot and the different settings. Which character, aspect of the story, incident or episode interested the group the most?
- Children might like to repeat the visualization activity they did for Yanni's old house with different settings, e.g., the Dark Tower in its various stages of magnificence and decay, the Goblin Fortress, the Enchanted Ruin, the Galleon, the Lower Kingdoms. *How does the author use the different settings of Fallow Hall and Hallow Fall, and within Hallow Fall the Goblin Kingdom, the Enchanted Ruin, Lorde Renwin's Dark Tower and stronghold? How important do you think they are to the story? Do the radically altered real-world settings help to create a credible background to the story?*
- Review the story in chronological order and consider the different emotions that Yanni and Amy have felt throughout, the high and low points, using the **Roles on the Wall** to support discussion of their emotional journeys. The children could also revisit the different section headings and review their story map to support their recall of the story.
- Use **hot-seating** to explore the feelings of any of the characters further; in hot-seating, one member of the group role-plays a central character from a poem or story 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 and then organize them to demonstrate shades of emotional intensity that they have felt in the story. You could also explore the emotional journey of other characters, such as Amy, Larry or Gustiver.
- Through modelling, ask the children to describe their favourite part of the story. Provide the children with an oral scaffold. For example: *the most memorable part of the story was... because...; my top moment in the story was... because...* and in pairs ask them to identify their favourite part of the narrative. Encourage children to give reasons for their choices and invite some children to share these.
- If possible, leave copies of the book in the book corner for the children to revisit and re-read in independent reading time, by themselves or in a group.



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- Children could find out more about Ross Montgomery in the inside back cover and his website <http://rossmontgomery.co.uk/>, and from interviews and videos that can be easily found, where he talks about his writing and inspiration.

Suggestions for further reading:

By Ross Montgomery:

- *Alex, the Dog and the Unopenable Door* (shortlisted for the Costa Book Award and Branford Boase Award; Faber & Faber, 2013)
- *Christmas Dinner of Souls* (Faber & Faber, 2017)
- *Max and the Millions* (Faber & Faber, 2018)
- *Perijee and Me* (Faber & Faber, 2016)
- *The Tornado Chasers* (Faber & Faber, 2014)
- *The Midnight Guardians* (*Guardian Children's Book of the Year 2020*; Walker Books, 2020)

Stories with similar themes:

- *The House with Chicken Legs*, Sophie Anderson, illustrated by Elisa Paganelli (Usborne, 2018)
- *If You Find This*, Matthew Baker (Hot Key Books, 2015)
- *Wonderscape*, Jennifer Bell (Walker Books, 2020)
- *Between Worlds. Folktales of Britain and Ireland*, Kevin Crossley-Holland, illustrated by Frances Castle (Walker Books, 2019)
- *Faery Tales*, Carol Ann Duffy, illustrated by Tomislav Tomic (Faber & Faber, 2014)
- *Wed Wabbit*, Lissa Evans (David Fickling Books, 2018)
- *Blackberry Blue*, Jamila Gavin, illustrated by Richard Collingridge (Tamarind, 2014)
- *The Song from Somewhere Else*, A.F. Harrold, illustrated by Levi Pinfold (Bloomsbury, 2016)
- *Fairy Tales*, Terry Jones, illustrated by Michael Foreman (Puffin, 1987)
- The Eerie-on Sea Mysteries (*Malamander, Gargantis, Shadowghast*), Thomas Taylor (Walker Books, 2019, 2020, 2021)



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