

CURSE OF THE DREAM WITCH

By Allan Stratton

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Part One: Empathy

- 1) If you were Princess Olivia, would you feel responsible for all the stolen children? Why or why not?
- 2) If you or your brother or sister were kidnapped by the Dream Witch, would you (partly) blame Princess Olivia for bringing on the Great Dread? Why or why not?
- 3) What would be some of the problems of being a mouse, like Ephemia?
- 4) If you were turned into a mouse and couldn't speak, how would you let your family know who you really were so that they wouldn't try to catch you in a mousetrap?
- 5) If you were kidnapped like Milo was, would you work with the Dream Witch to capture Princess Olivia, or would you refuse and risk the lives of your parents who are dying of heartbreak? Why?

Part Two: Connecting *Curse of the Dream Witch* to Real Life

- 1) Milo thinks he's old enough to go into the woods, but his parents say he's too young.
 - a) What are some activities you would like to do when you're older?
 - b) What do you think would be the right age for those activities and why? Discuss.

- 2) Princess Olivia isn't able to go outside to make friends.
 - a) Discuss other situations that can make it hard for children to meet friends. What can we do to help them?
 - b) *Curse of the Dream Witch* takes place a long time ago, before modern technology. What are some of the ways we can communicate today if we are stuck indoors?

- 3) Connect the Great Dread to dreads in the real world. For example, how would we cope if we were in a pandemic, a natural disaster or a war zone. How would we get food, electricity, medicine and/or shelter?

- 4) Are dreams connected to real life? Discuss what dreams might mean. Do they predict the future or do they reflect problems we're having? Think about falling dreams, flying dreams, dreams where you can't run away from something. Can dreams tell us anything about ourselves? What are some of our recurring dreams, scary dreams, happy dreams, and/or funny dreams.

ACTIVITIES

- 1) Listen to Allan Stratton read a chapter from *Curse of the Dream Witch*. (Link to the mp3.)
- 2) Write a story about a recurring nightmare or happy dream (or a made up dream). Read these to each other.
- 3) Draw a picture of one of your dreams, make a comic book of one of your dreams (real or made up), or build a set of a dreamscape in a cardboard box.
- 4) Draw a scene as if you are seeing through the eyes of Ephemera as a mouse (on a dungeon rafter, in the princess's room, in the woods, etc.)
- 5) Pretend you are one of the other children captured by the Dream Witch. Write a story or tell the group how you got captured, what happened when you were with the Dream Witch, and what happened to you after you were released. You can also do this in the interview setting described below.
- 6) What would be your dream come true? Imagine a spell and the ingredients you would need for your spell. Use some ingredients that would be hard to find. For instance "three dragon scales, two freckles, etc."
- 7) Dreams come from our imaginations. Use your imagination to adapt any of the suggestions above. Or use your imagination to make your own activities.

INTERVIEWS

Interview characters from *Curse of the Dream Witch*.

Sit in a semi-circle with a student in a chair facing the semi-circle. The student in the chair pretends to be one of the characters. The teacher is moderator for the other students who interview the character. Questions should *not* be designed to trip up the student playing the character; they are to be about how and why the characters felt what they felt, or about aspects of the characters not covered in the book. For example, questions for the Dream Witch could be: "What is your favourite dream for scaring people?" or "How did you become the Dream Witch?" or "Do you have brother or sister witches or other family members who are witches?" For Milo: "Since you've reunited with your parents, how do you and your parents like living at court?" or "What do you think you'll do for a living when you grow up?" Follow up questions like "Why?" are also good.

Note: There are no wrong answers. The student playing the character *IS* the character and therefore is the expert on how that character thinks and feels. The student must always answer as "I," not with the character's name. If something is said that contradicts the book, the response should not be, "But that's not what happened," but rather, "Why are you saying this when..." Role-players can say, "Well, the book about me may say that, but here's the real truth."

If there are too many students (more than ten), then the teacher can moderate one whole class interview and then divide the class into groups of five or six, with one student in each group playing a character and another student moderating; or, if the group is small and responsible, groups can function without a moderator. The teacher moves between groups making sure they are on task and letting the groups know when to rotate the student in the hot seat.