



Miss Mary-Kate Martin's
GUIDE TO
MONSTERS

The Wrath of the Woolington Wurm

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June 2022

ISBN: 9781760526627

Format: Paperback

Recommended for: 6–10 years

Themes: myth, family, fantasy, animals, adventure, travel, anxiety, environment

Applicable to learning areas: English language, literacy and literature, visual literacy

Summary

There are those that hunt monsters to harm them and there are those that hunt monsters to help them. Which one are you?

Dressed in sparkly red shoes and carrying her strawberry-scented notebook, Mary-Kate is accompanying her archaeologist mother to the tranquil English countryside to investigate some interesting bones found in an old well. But once they arrive, they realise that the village of Woolington is not as peaceful as it seems. Mysterious noises, earth tremors and a terrifying legend have the locals frightened.

Could there be any truth in the myth of the beast who lives in the ancient well? And if so, why would it return? Mary-Kate might be anxious, but she is not afraid to get to the bottom of this monstrous mystery.

A delightful fantasy-adventure from the award-winning and bestselling author of *Lenny's Book of Everything* and *Dragon Skin*, with lively line illustrations by Freda Chiu.

'A deliciously thrilling mystery, full of heart, wisdom, wit and ingenuity.' Edwina Wyatt, award-winning author of *The Secrets of Magnolia Moon*

'Easily one of the most charming books for young readers I have come across ... A perfect balance of fun, fantasy, humour and innocence.' Katrina Nannestad, author of the Travelling Bookshop series



Suggestions for Classroom Discussion and Application

Before Reading

Examine the front cover and look for clues in the title, font, illustration and colours to help you answer the following questions:

- What is the name of the girl in the story?
- What is the name of the creature?
- What do the words *wrath* and *wyrm* mean?
- What genre are you expecting this book to be?
- Do you think this story will be dark and terrifying?
- What is it about the colours used on the cover, the images and the font that helped you answer the last question?

Establishing a Mood

- What sort of story might you expect when you first open the book and see the map of Woolington Well? Do you think dark and scary things might happen in a village like that? What was it about the illustration that made you feel this way? Move on to the first page of text describing the 'creature' roaming the village at night. Look at the language used here and carefully note the words that stood out to you. How did words such as *slunk*, *slithered*, *shimmered*, *slid*, *sleeping*, *shadow*, *silent*, *searching*, *screech* make you feel? What do each of these words have in common?
- Turning the page, how did the language of the next section – the excerpt from P.K. Mayberry's *Complete Guide to Monsters of the Northern Hemisphere* – compare with the earlier scene? Did the decorative flourishes above and below the excerpt, along with the striped effect behind it, contribute to how you felt reading this section? How did the changes in tone from map to creature to excerpt make you feel about the story ahead?

Characterisation

- Most characters are not introduced in books using their full first name, let alone the prefix *Miss*, but that is precisely how we are first introduced to the heroine of this story. Why do you think the author chose to introduce her like this? In your answer consider what you learn about Mary-Kate later in the chapter and how her personality might match the formal use of her name here.
- Consider this extract from the text and answer the questions below:

Mary-Kate's dress and hair bow were black. Her shoes were red and so was her backpack. Both of them were sparkly. It was all perfectly coordinated, with exactly the right proportions of sparkle and colour. It made her feel good. If she changed the shoe colour it would mess things up. She'd be only twenty-five per cent sparkle. She'd begin to worry... (page 5)

Descriptions of clothes tell us a lot about characters in this story. What do Mary-Kate's clothes tell us about her personality? What do descriptions of her mother's and grandmother's clothes tell us about their personalities?

Show Not Tell

- Mary-Kate's clothes are not the only thing in this chapter to tell us about the sort of person she is. The chapter is full of information: some is given directly, for instance the fact that Mary-Kate tends to worry a lot and that she relies on her lucky items to cope with the worry, along with other strategies. Some information comes in a less direct manner and is suggested but not actually said. For example, ask yourself what Mary-Kate's drawing of the Swiss Alps tells us about her. Divide a page in your workbook into two columns, one with the word *Told Directly*, and the other with *Told Indirectly*.
- Read all of Chapter 1 and make a list of examples where the author has told us directly about Mary-Kate and examples where the author has shown us Mary-Kate's reactions and thoughts to help us understand the sort of person she is.

Characterisation

- Consider this extract from the text and answer the questions below:

'Mary-Kate, you have trouble with beginnings and endings,' her granny always said kindly, 'but you're very good with in-betweens.' (Page 11)

What do you think Mary-Kate's granny meant when she said this about her? How do Mary-Kate's adventures in the village of Woolington support this assessment? What are some of her best traits?

Worksheet

Create a table with columns for Mary-Kate, the Prof, Arabella and Lord Woolington.

In each column, record things that each character said in the novel and explain what each quote says about that character's personality. Continue to record and interpret information throughout the story.

Anxiety and Catastrophising

- Many seemingly trivial things make Mary-Kate feel anxious, including brown colouring-in pens. When she is anxious, she begins to imagine the worst possible outcome for her situation, such as train crashes and avalanches. When people do this, it is called *catastrophising*. What are some of Mary-Kate's coping mechanisms for controlling her thoughts?
- Can you suggest any other ways she might be able to control them? Does she learn to control them better by the end of the story? What does she do or say in the story that led you to think this? What sort of people at school or in the community might Mary-Kate approach to help her deal with her anxiety and catastrophising? Lord Woolington also suffers from anxiety and fear of the wrym for much of his life, which is why he is so keen on destroying the well and building the shopping centre. How and why does he learn to face his fears and overcome them by the end of the story?

Foreshadowing is when readers are given a hint about what will happen next

- Can you see a pattern emerge between the excerpts from P.K. Mayberry's book and what happens in the chapter that follows? Make a list of each excerpt and match it with at least one event in its accompanying chapter. How did the excerpts make you feel as you began each chapter? Why do you think the author of this book, Karen Foxlee, might have wanted you to feel that way?

- Why do you think she chose the final excerpt in the story (which becomes the first in the preview of Book 2)?

Symbolism

- Lord Woolington's proposed shopping centre is both a key plot point and a symbol for something relating to our modern society. If a symbol is something that represents an idea, emotion or state of mind – for instance white is both a colour and something that represents purity and innocence – then what do you think the centuries-old village making way for a modern shopping centre might represent? How might the symbol of the shopping centre relate to some of the themes in the story?

Mystery

- Although the mystery of the wyrm is solved by the end of the story, new mysteries arise for Mary-Kate to solve. Make a list of these mysteries and try to solve them yourself. What do you think the letters 'W.S.M.H' might mean on the medal?

World-building

- In what way is Mary-Kate's world like ours and in what important way is it different? [Answer: it has trains, mobile phones, picturesque villages, *monsters* and *books about how to catch monsters*.]
- What are some of your favourite worlds in books and movies?

Build your own world

- Write a short story in which you wake up in a world that is only slightly different to your own, but where the differences make it very scary.

A Word from the Author

'This book started with the idea of a girl with many worries and anxieties who is very good at helping monsters. When I was young, I was also very anxious. I worried about all sorts of calamities that might happen, especially if I didn't complete certain rituals. I was also very shy and worried incessantly about saying the wrong thing. In this way, I really drew on part of myself to create Mary-Kate.

'From the beginning, I could see Mary-Kate Martin very clearly and her name arrived at the same time. Although Mary-Kate is often anxious, she also has many strengths. She's very good at solving problems; she's a clear thinker; she likes writing things down in her notebook; she's a great listener; she's kind and polite. Also, as it turns out, really quite brave! I decided her mother should be a famous archaeologist who travels the world and it seemed the perfect way to get Mary-Kate to various locations to have her meet monsters and have adventures.

'I knew from the beginning that I wanted Mary-Kate to be helped in some way by each mission she goes on, by the friendships she makes and by the monsters she saves. But I also wanted her to be actively helpful and kind too. She's a great character and I'm really proud of her. I can't wait to keep developing her character arc through other adventures.'

– Karen Foxlee

About the Author



Karen Foxlee is an Australian author who writes for both kids and young adults. She grew up in the Australia outback mining town Mount Isa and still frequently dreams she is walking barefoot along the dry Leichhardt River. Karen's first novel *The Anatomy of Wings* won numerous awards including the Dobbie Award and the Commonwealth Writers' Prize for Best First Book.

Ophelia and the Marvellous Boy, Karen's first novel for children, was published internationally to much acclaim while her second novel for younger readers, *A Most Magical Girl*, won the Readings Children's

Fiction Prize in 2017 and was CBCA short-listed the same year. Her next book was the internationally successful *Lenny's Book of Everything*, which has won multiple awards including the NSW Premier's Literary Award, the Indies Book Award, the Queensland Literary Award, was a CBCA Honour Book and was nominated for the Carnegie Medal.

Her latest middle-grade novel, *Dragon Skin*, was short-listed for the CBCA Awards, the NSW Premier's Literary Awards, the Aurealis Awards and the Indie Book Awards. Karen lives in South-East Queensland with her daughter and several animals, including two wicked parrots, who frequently eat parts of her laptop when she isn't looking. Her passions are her daughter, writing, daydreaming, baking, running and swimming in the sea.

About the Illustrator

Freda Chiu is an author and illustrator from Sydney, Australia. As well as illustrating children's books, her work spans comics, editorial and retail graphics. Outside her art practice, Freda lectures in Illustration at the University of Technology Sydney. Her debut picture book, *A Trip to the Hospital*, was short-listed for the CBCA Award for New Illustrator and the IBBY Australia Ena Noël Award.

