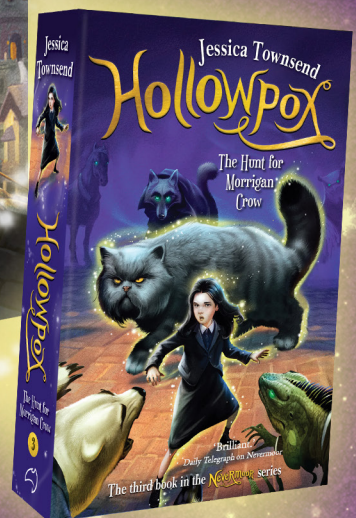
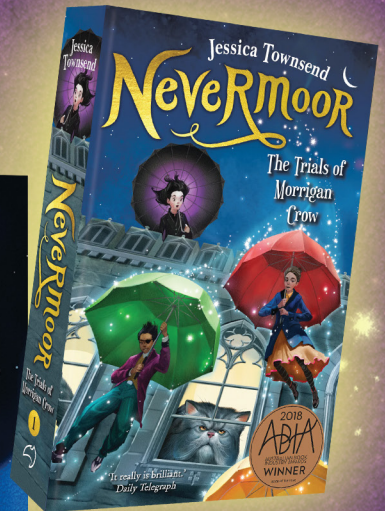
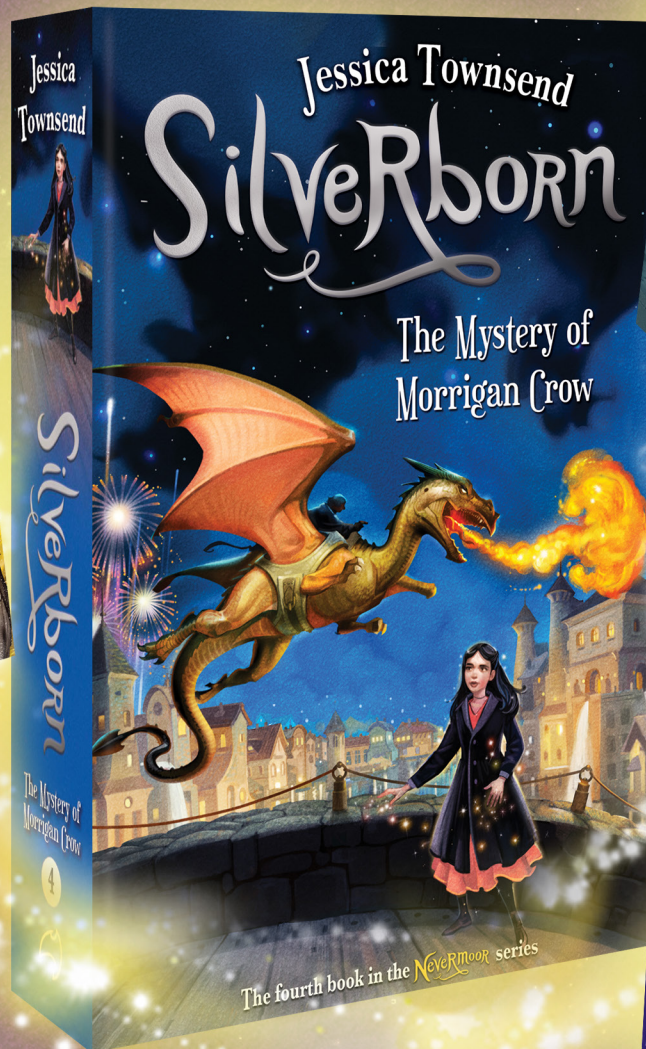
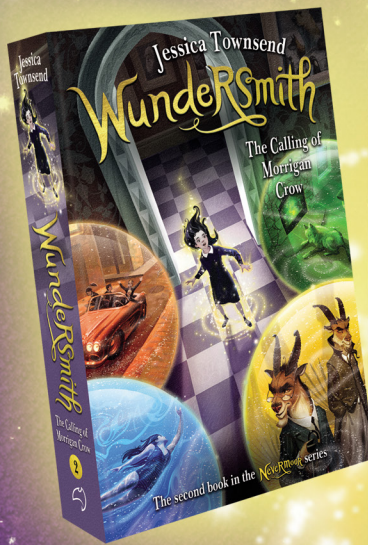


# Jessica Townsend Nevermoor Series



TEACHERS RESOURCES



# Jessica Townsend

# Nevermoor

## Series

### Teachers Resources by Robyn Sheahan-Bright

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# INTRODUCTION

## NEVERMOOR SERIES

Nevermoor is a stunningly original fantasy series. It is about a search for love, friendship, family and identity. For, despite being based on a fantastical premise, *Nevermoor*, *Wundersmith*, *Hollowpox* and *Silverborn* are fundamentally about what it is to be human and what it means to be part of a community.

## BEFORE & AFTER READING THE SERIES

- Examine the cover of each novel in this series. What does it suggest about each novel's themes?
- After you have read each novel, examine the cover again: what does it suggest to you now?
- After you have read the novels in the series, read about Jessica Townsend in reviews and articles and use the notes below to examine the texts more closely.

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**Note: Earlier Teachers Resources on the titles in this series have been collated in this set of Series Notes. Some quotations from the books have been truncated to condense these notes, but can be located in the pages referred to.**

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### BOOK 1 NEVERMOOR: THE TRIALS OF MORRIGAN CROW

Morrigan Crow is a 'cursed child', the unloved daughter of state Chancellor Crow of Great Wolfacre, living in Jackalfax, in the Wintersea Republic. But all that changes on the eve of her twelfth birthday (which is predicted to be the day she will die) when she is invited by Jupiter North to join the 'Wondrous Society' and is spirited away to Nevermoor (the 'free' or fifth state no one talks about). There she befriends the eccentric staff of North's Hotel Deucalion, who include the housekeeper Fenestra, a 'Magnificat', Kedgerees Burns, a concierge, Frank, a dwarf vampire and party organiser, Martha, a maid, and Dame Chanda Kali, a 'Grand High Soprano and Dame Commander of the Order of Woodland Whisperers'.

When Morrigan learns that she must discover a 'talent' or knack (like Jupiter, his nephew Jack, and her friend Hawthorne) in order to complete the trials needed to enter the Wondrous Society and to stay in Nevermoor, she briefly despairs. She also discovers that Mr Jones who has also tried to sponsor her in the trials, is actually Ezra Squall, the Wundersmith. This thrilling escapade ends with Morrigan discovering that she too is a Wundersmith. All this takes place against a backdrop of growing political unrest and a looming energy crisis.

### BOOK 2 WUNDERSMITH: THE CALLING OF MORRIGAN CROW

Morrigan Crow is inducted into Unit 919 of the Wondrous Society along with new members Archan, Anah, Cadence, Francis, Hawthorne, Lambeth, Mahir and Thaddea. But her new friends (apart from Hawthorne) aren't entirely happy to have been grouped with a Wundersmith. Meanwhile, Wunder is gathering in Nevermoor.

Morrigan may have defeated her deadly curse, passed the dangerous trials and joined the



mystical Wondrous Society, but her journey into Nevermoor, and all its secrets, has only just begun. And she is fast learning that not all magic is used for good. Morrigan's perilous adventures continues in this triumph of inventive and original storytelling.

### **BOOK 3 HOLLOWPOX: THE HUNT FOR MORRIGAN CROW**

Morrigan (Mog) Crow discovers even more about the demands placed on a Wundersmith and about using her predecessors' powers, by being initiated into the Ghostly Hours in which she witnesses several Wundersmiths delivering lessons in the past. Meanwhile, a dreadful virus known as Hollowpox infects Wunimals in Nevermoor, and the government is forced to intervene to impose strict curfews and quarantine regulations. In response, a rabid protest group known as The Concerned Citizens of Nevermoor Party stirs up anti-Wunimal sentiment. Morrigan's new friendship with Sofia, a foxwun, who becomes infected, makes the health crisis all too real for her. Then, Ezra Squall, Mog's old nemesis and fellow Wundersmith, arrives on the scene again, and tries to blackmail Morrigan into becoming his apprentice by promising a cure for Hollowpox. Mog discovers that Maud Lowry, the President of Wintersea, has the cure but that the Free State city of Nevermoor's Prime Minister Gideon Steed won't liaise with her. Morrigan's patron, Jupiter North, is forced to intervene with the Elders (who have played a somewhat duplicitous role in the negotiations) to bring about a possible rapprochement. And, as usual, Jupiter North, and her adopted family at the Hotel Deucalion, including Jupiter's nephew Jack, and her Wondrous Society (Wunsoc) school friends from Unit 919, support her as she exercises her previously underdeveloped skills.

Given that this novel was written well before the Covid-19 pandemic, it is eerily prescient, reflecting so many aspects of life then, and the way that fear can create division, violence and even a tendency towards anarchy. Instead, though, it proposes joyfully that – despite all – friendships, family, and adhering to a moral compass will always prevail. And so, at the novel's end, even after the health crisis had been resolved, Morrigan makes the hardest choice she had ever made, simply because she believes it is the right thing to do...

### **BOOK 4 SILVERBORN: THE MYSTERY OF MORRIGAN CROW**

In the magical city of Nevermoor, long-buried secrets are coming to light, and Morrigan Crow's life is about to turn upside down...

When Morrigan is invited into Nevermoor's wealthy Silver District, she discovers a world of extravagance and a family mystery she's eager to unravel. She could never imagine where it will lead: a white wedding, a golden dragon and a red pool of blood.

Embroided in suspicion and danger, Morrigan leaps headfirst into a murder investigation, while also grappling with her ever-growing Wundersmith powers. And although her friends are there to help, she fears that that could change if they learn she's keeping a terrible secret of her own.

As shadowy forces awaken in Nevermoor, can Morrigan find a killer and solve the mystery in her own past... before the clock strikes midnight? Jessica Townsend weaves a spellbinding tale of magic and mystery in this thrilling fourth instalment of the Nevermoor series.

# CURRICULUM TOPICS

Several themes might be identified in this series.

- Family, Friendships and Love
- Coming of Age and Rite of Passage Trials and Tests
- Forces of Good and Evil
- Politics, Bureaucracy and Public Discourse
- Individual Talents, Privilege and Responsibility
- Energy Crisis

## HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES (HASS)

<<https://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/f-10-curriculum/humanities-and-social-sciences/hass/>>

### BOOK 1:

- Family, Friendships and Love

*Discussion Point:* 'It shouldn't have been a surprise that Corvus was so resigned to her fate, but Morrigan suddenly realised that to him, she might as well already be dead. Perhaps in his heart, she'd been dead for years.' (p 58) Morrigan has grown up with a family that doesn't love her. When she is taken by Jupiter she finds the first family she has ever known. What must it be like to be unloved? How important is a family?

*Discussion Point:* Read this passage: "Look – the Wondrous Society is more than just a school. It's a *family*. A family that will take care of you and provide for you your entire life. Yes, you'll have a brilliant education, you'll have opportunities and connections that people outside the Society could never dream of. But *much* more important than that – you'll have your unit. The people who go through these four trials with you and come out victorious . . . they will become your brothers and sisters. People who will have your back until the day you die. Who will never turn you away, but will care for you as deeply as you care for them. People who would give their life for yours." Jupiter blinked furiously and rubbed a fist against the side of his face, looking away from her. Morrigan was startled to realise that he was blinking back tears. She'd never known someone could feel so strongly about their friends. Probably because she'd never had a friend. Not a real one. (Emmett the stuffed rabbit didn't really count.) An instant family. Brothers and sisters for life.' (pp 134–5)

Discuss Morrigan's feelings as they are reflected here and compare them to your students' attachments to family, and to communities such as their school friends.

*Discussion Point:* 'Hawthorne was giving his friendship as if it meant nothing. He couldn't know that it meant everything.' (p 181)

Morrigan is still doubtful that anyone could like her, and constantly expects friends to reject her. Is such insecurity about making friends a normal part of growing up?

- Coming of Age and Rite of Passage Trials and Tests

*Discussion Point:* "I've chosen you for my candidate, but that's just the beginning. Now you have to go through the entrance exams – we call them trials. There are four, spread out over the year. The trials are an elimination process, designed to separate the Society's ideal candidates from those who are . . . not so ideal. It's all very elitist and competitive, but it's tradition, so there you have it." (p 131)



Trials for Unit 919 of the Wondrous Society (p 158) include a Book Trial, a Fright Trial, a Chase Trial, and a Show Trial where each person must exhibit a talent or knack. Compare this list of trials to the ordinary calendar year for a student. What parallels are there here to many of the tests given to children in schools?

*Discussion Point:* “People think Society members are given a free ride, that once you get this little golden pin” – he tapped the *W* on his lapel – “the world will smooth itself out for you, and your path will always be free and easy. And they’re sort of right – the old gold spikes certainly open doors. Respect, adventure, fame. Reserved seats on the Wunderground. Pin privilege, people call it.” He rolled his eyes. “But within Society walls you’re expected to *earn* that privilege. Not just in the trials, not just once, but over and over again, for the rest of your life, by proving that you’re worthy of it. Proving you’re special.” (p 134)

Discuss the responsibility that being part of an elite or privileged group entails for its members?

### • Forces of Good and Evil

*Discussion Point:* “[Wundersmith] was a man who became a monster, lass, that’s what he did,” said Kedgerree. “A monster who made monsters of his own, who was so brilliant – so talented and *twisted* – that he decided to play God. He built a great army of fearsome creatures with which he planned to conquer Nevermoor, to enslave the people of our city.” “Why?” Kedgerree blinked. “For power, I suppose. He sought to own the city, and by owning the city to own the entire realm.” (p 270)

Does a quest for power lie at the heart of the battle between good and evil?

*Discussion Point:* The novel turns the concept of good and evil on its head in the battle between Saint Nick and the Yule Queen: “So nobody wins?” Morrigan asked. She couldn’t help feeling a little short-changed. “You must be joking. Presents *and* snow?” said Jack, laughing as he threw a snowball at Jupiter’s back. “Everybody wins.” (p 333)

What does the novel suggest about the purpose of such ritual battles?

### • Politics, Bureaucracy and Public Discourse

*Discussion Point:* This novelist enjoys satirising bureaucracy, for example:

The Dangerous Wildlife Eradication Force (DWEF) which conducts the ‘annual winter dragon cull’ (p 12).

OR

‘On his left and right would sit Left and Right his ever-present assistants. Corvus was always firing his assistants and hiring new ones so he’d given up learning their real names.’ (p 16)

OR

‘It couldn’t hurt your approval rating to remind them that you’re about to become a . . . a g-grieving father. From a journalistic point of view, it might give the event a unique, er, point of interest.’ (p 23)

Discuss how bureaucracy is portrayed in this novel.

*Discussion Point:* The novel also takes aim at government policies on border control, for example: When Jupiter North and Morrigan arrive they have to get through border control.

“Did you have permission to travel to the Seventh Pocket?” “I did, yes. Scholastic diplomacy visa,” said Jupiter.’ (p 75)

OR

“But I wouldn’t expect good manners from an illegal.” “A what?” “My patron says your patron

smuggled you into the Free State. He says nobody's ever heard of you before so you must be from the Republic. Do you know that's against the law? You belong in jail." (p 162)

OR

"Illegals are a plague, and it's my solemn duty to guard the borders of Nevermoor and protect its true citizens from Republic scum trying to weasel their way into the Free State. Jupiter turned serious. "A noble and valiant cause, I'm sure," he said quietly. "Protecting the Free State from those most in need of its help." (p 175)

What does the novel suggest about government intervention in the lives of those fleeing danger or persecution?

- **Individual Talents, Privilege and Responsibility**

*Discussion Point:* 'What makes each of us unique? The Show Trial is an over-the-top exploration of that very question – while some are dragonriders, mesmerists, have exquisitely entrancing singing voices; can talk to dogs, or some, like Jupiter, can 'see' things: 'No. I'm not a fortune-teller. I'm a Witness. That's the name for it. I don't see the way things *will be*, I see the way things *are*.' (p 137) Unlike these talented people, most of us have to be satisfied with our ordinary lives and finding what small talents we can. Does everyone have some hidden talent?

*Discussion Point:* 'Even greater than that. Wundersmiths were wishgranters and protectors. They used their powers to bring good things to the world. *Wundersmith* doesn't mean *monster* or *murderer* – Squall *made* it mean those things. He did something unforgivable. He betrayed his people and his city. Abused his power. He made *Wundersmith* a dark and terrible word, but it wasn't always. You can change its meaning again, Mog.' (p 440) Does talent inevitably entail responsibility?

- **Energy Crisis**

*Discussion Point:* Squall Industries is responsible for the state's supply of Wunder power and their defence of their services is eerily similar to excuses being made by corporations and governments today: 'Again, these are no more than silly rumours and fear-mongering. Our state-of-the art monitoring systems show no Wunder scarcity and no malfunction of Wondrous devices. The national rail network is operating perfectly, as are the power grid and the Wondrous Healthcare Service. As for Mr Squall, he is well aware that as the nation's sole provider of Wunder and its by-products, Squall Industries has a great responsibility.' (p 14) What other links to today's energy crisis did you discover in this novel?

*Discussion Point:* Wunder is a metaphor for energy. What does this novel suggest about energy resources?

## **BOOK 2:**

- **Family, Friendships and Love**

*Discussion Point:* 'A family emblem. Those words tugged gently at Morrigan's heart. She prized her golden *W* pin above all her other possessions (except, perhaps, her broly), but it was still just that ... a possession. An object that could easily be broken or lost. The imprint felt different; it was a part of her. And it proved that she was a part of something important, something bigger than just herself. A family.

*Sisters and brothers, loyal for life.*' (p 46)



Morrigan's story is of a search for family. Her own family showed no affection for her. Jupiter and his staff at the Hotel Deucalion have become a protective second family. And now becoming part of Wunsoc is equally special to her – to become part of a group of her peers. By the end of the novel has she found a third family?

*Discussion Point:* Read this passage: 'She was tired of so desperately wanting the friendship and approval of her so-called brothers and sisters. (*How* that phrase made her cringe now. When she thought back to the person she was a year ago, that *idiot* who believed she'd have eight readymade siblings if only she could pass the trials... as *if* anything was ever that simple.)' (p 336)

Discuss Morrigan's feelings as they are reflected here and compare them to your students' experiences of having tried to make friends with someone and failed.

*Discussion Point:* Both Hawthorne and Jack have proved very special friends to Morrigan, as has her beloved patron Jupiter, and all the peculiar people who inhabit his Hotel Deucalion. She is very aware of their affection, but like so many of us, it is those who deny her friendship who often preoccupy her thoughts.

- **Coming of Age and Rite of Passage Trials and Tests**

*Discussion Point:* Morrigan's trials didn't end in Book 1, for in this sequel she faces personal challenges which involve both taking risks and learning when to exercise caution. What else does she learn about herself?

*Discussion Point:* Jupiter is Morrigan's fierce protector but part of that role is encouraging independence as well. In which particular scenes in the novel does he encourage her to be more forceful?

- **Forces of Good and Evil**

*Discussion Point:* 'She could still see the frightened faces on the platform. Had Morrigan *enjoyed* that, she wondered. Had some small part of her *liked* the thought of striking fear in someone's heart... instead of being the one who was always afraid?' (p 395)

Ezra Squall constantly taunts Morrigan with her capacity to be both good and evil. Is this battle with oneself one of the major themes in this novel?

*Discussion Point:* Read these two quotes: 'I was weak,' he continued. 'I admit it. I was bitter and jealous. Everyone knows I'm the weakest in my unit. The boring one. *Map boy*, that's what they always called me.' His face twisted into something ugly. 'I wanted to be important, so when the Wundersmith came to me, when he asked for my help – *me*, of all people! – I thought I'd found a way to get back at them. Squall's the most powerful man in the Wintersea Republic! He promised me a place in his empire, a seat at his right side – how could I turn that down?' He paused. 'At first all I had to do was pass on bits of information. I didn't know anyone was going to get hurt. You have to believe me.' (pp 408–409)

OR

'He was nice to me,' she said finally. 'Mildmay. He was funny, and his classes were fun, and he made me feel like I was good at something. And Professor Onstald... he hated me. He was horrible, all year long, and he made me feel like *I* was something horrible.' She swallowed hard against the lump forming in her throat. 'But Mildmay set up the Ghastly Market. He betrayed all of us. And Onstald saved my life.' (p 443)

Evil is often simply weakness. Mildmay seems such a good man but proves to be a



weak one. What do these two passages suggest about human nature?

- **Politics, Bureaucracy and Public Discourse**

*Discussion Point:* In this series, the novelist enjoys satirising bureaucracy, for example:

‘Good. Now, let me tell you what *I* see when I look at Nevermoor,’ said Mildmay. He looked down at the tiny, teeming city with a rapture that lit his eyes from the inside. ‘I see a monster. A beautiful, terrible monster that feeds us all with stories and history and *life*, and demands to be fed in return. A monster that, over the Ages, has grown fat on the unwitting, the gullible, the vulnerable... has chewed them up and swallowed them down, never to be seen again.’ (p 146)

OR

‘That’s the *Stealth*.’

‘The what?’ asked Morrigan.

‘The Wondrous Society Investigation Department,’ said Jack. ‘Secret police.’ (p 197)

OR

‘Jupiter gratefully accepted the cup Morrigan handed to him. She curled up in the armchair opposite, hugging a cushion to her chest. ‘There’s nothing to charge them with, Mog. No evidence of any wrongdoing. No record of money changing hands. Black market trading is illegal, but there’s no evidence of any *actual* trading – not now that the museum is destroyed. They’re all claiming they thought it was a party.’ Jupiter made an angry growling noise in the back of his throat. ‘Scum.’ (p 442)

OR

‘Um, the Committee for the Classification of Wondrous Acts,’ she said with a sigh. ‘They were the people who decided if a Wundersmith had done something bad, like a Misstep or a Blunder, or something terrible, like a Fiasco or a Monstrosity, or the worst thing they could do, which was a Devastation. And Cascade Towers was a Fiasco bordering on a Monstrosity’ (p 131)

Discuss how bureaucracy is portrayed in this novel.

- **Individual Talents, Privilege and Responsibility**

*Discussion Point:* Each member of the Unit have extraordinary powers. How challenging is it to use such talents for good rather than evil?

*Discussion Point:* ‘At their best, Wundersmiths were self-indulgent eccentrics, abusing their positions of privilege by creating Wondrous vanity projects that inconvenienced many and benefited few. Like Decima Kokoro, who’d demanded public funds and resources to create a Wondrous skyscraper made entirely of water – an expensive and hazardous folly that resulted in several people drowning before it was shut down. Or Odbuoy Jemmity, who’d demolished an entire block of houses in a poverty-stricken borough to build an adventure park, which upon completion he named after himself and never allowed anyone inside.’ (p 112)

Morrigan later learns that this description of these two Wundersmiths is false. How often are those who create unique things classified as madmen or eccentrics? Why are human beings so often suspicious of those with talent?

- **Energy Crisis**

*Discussion Point:* Wunder is a metaphor for energy and power. What do these novels suggest about the importance of energy?



*Discussion Point:* 'That the mysterious magical energy source they called Wunder – a source that powered the world in ways Morrigan couldn't fathom – was gathering to her constantly, like moths gather to a flame, waiting patiently for her to come into her (still stubbornly non-existent) powers.' (p 48)

Morrigan's powers are by implication capable of saving or destroying the world. Is Wunder something which can be controlled?

## BOOK 3:

### • Family, Friendships and Love

*Discussion Point:* Morrigan has spent her childhood as an outsider not belonging to her family, and the series is about her search for family which has resulted first in being embraced by Jupiter and his staff at the Hotel Deucalion who become a protective second family, and then by becoming part of Wunsoc and a group of friends in Unit 919 who have become a third family. But she still searches for those she has lost, which takes her back (via the Gossamer) to her old home and to Emmett, the toy rabbit she was forced to leave behind. Why does she still yearn for that home despite her family's cruel treatment of her?

*Discussion Point:* 'Well, yes. Jealous. If she was being honest with herself. She couldn't even articulate precisely *what* she was jealous of. It was something about their ease with one another, the natural way they all just seemed to . . . fit. They were a puzzle with no missing parts.' (p 77) Is Morrigan's niggling jealousy of the Swift family typical of children who have been neglected?

*Discussion Point:* 'Friends who were *family*, who would defend her against anything, like Jupiter, and run through a horde of crazed Wunimals to protect her, like Fen. And she knew she'd do the same for them, no matter what. That was what made her and Squall different. She wasn't him. The sudden certainty of it made her feel buoyant and brave.' (pp 475–6) What role do friends play in one's emotional growth?

### • Coming of Age and Rite of Passage Trials and Tests

*Discussion Point:* Morrigan's trials didn't end in Book 2, for in this sequel she confronts Ezra Squall again and discovers the complexity of making choices when issues are never really either 'black or white'. What does she learn about herself?

*Discussion Point:* Read these two quotes:

'Ugh, I knew it,' Jack groaned as they turned both keys simultaneously and the door opened with a soft *click*. 'I knew he'd make it so we had to *cooperate*, or something. That's so Uncle Jove.' (p 82)

OR

'It's not supposed to be about having a good time, though, is it? We have a job to do. We're supposed to be working hard and making ourselves useful and doing some *good* in the realm!' 'We're THIRTEEN.'

'I asked Gavin Squires if I could join the Beastly Division and you know what he told me?' Thaddea barrelled on. 'He said we had to start proving ourselves if we want to join the big kids. All of us. *We* have to prove ourselves as a *unit*.'

'I don't care what Gavin Squires said!'

'Well, maybe you should,' she spat. 'Since out of all of us, *you're* the one who's got the most to prove. *Wundersmith*.' (p 235)

Is cooperation essential in overcoming challenges?

*Discussion Point:* As the series has progressed, Morrigan has grown in her confidence: 'the



sensible voice in Morrigan's head seemed to be getting quieter by the day. Some days she could scarcely hear it at all.' (p 101)

In this third book, what incidents reveal how much she has matured?

*Discussion Point:* Read these two quotes:

'Small sparks make big fires.' (p 334)

OR

'Now is not the time to be small!' he roared. 'Where is the Morrigan Crow who reignited the dead fireblossoms? The girl who brought down the Ghastly Market, who conducted a glorious symphony of death in the Museum of Stolen Moments? Where is *that* Morrigan Crow? Bring her back!' (p 473)

How do these quotes relate to Morrigan's actions in this novel?

*Discussion Point:* 'She had to make the other choice instead. The hard choice.' (p 410)

When Morrigan signs the contract (pp 516–18) has she set herself on a course which will prove even more challenging than what has come before?

- **Forces of Good and Evil**

*Discussion Point:* Read these quotes:

'After what happened in Courage Square, when there were no more Wundersmiths to protect people against Squall and his monstrous army . . . there was a brief, very dark period when it seemed he had won. That he'd conquered Nevermoor. And in that time, *Wundersmith* became synonymous with Ezra Squall, who had himself become synonymous with evil. A Wundersmith became a monstrous thing – something to be feared instead of loved and admired.' (p 225)

OR

'The Wondrous Society's purpose now is to protect Nevermoor – and the greater Free State – from the corrupt and dangerous creations of Wundersmiths past. From the chaos that still thrives here. The chaos we ourselves allowed into this city, through our weakness and our failure to act in time. "We must right our past wrongs," boomed Elder Quinn's disembodied voice. "We must close old wounds, even if the scars remain."' (p 26)

What do these quotes explain about human nature's battle between good and evil?

*Discussion Point:* "It was an extermination," he said. "It wasn't supposed to be for Nevermoor, it was for the Republic, but she saw an opportunity to use it to force her way into the Free State." (p 457)

How often do governments employ such shocking tactics in order to suppress or invade their neighbours? Examine some of the diplomatic and confrontational actions of contemporary leaders in this context.

*Discussion Point:* Wunder is a metaphor for energy and power. What do these novels suggest about the importance of energy in the battle between good and evil forces?

- **Politics, Bureaucracy and Public Discourse**

*Discussion Point:* In this series, the novelist enjoys satirising and criticising government bureaucracy, for example: 'As Elder Wong called their names, representatives from the Unusual Engineering & Infrastructure Advisory Board, the Architectural Anomalies Association, and the Gobleian Library all stood up from their seats and waved, acknowledging brief applause.' (p 33)



OR

'For more than one hundred years the Republic and the Free State have been at an impasse, with little communication and no cooperation in either direction. Even if I could persuade *my* party to do the right thing – and I'm not saying I won't try – there's no guarantee Steed and *his* government would come to the table. Once upon a time, when I was a young idealist –' She paused to raise one sardonic eyebrow

in Morrigan's direction. '– I'd hoped to change things. I've been trying for years to seek an audience with Steed. Even so-called enemy nations should have an open dialogue, but he's been utterly unwilling to engage. I'm afraid I can't imagine the Hollowpox has changed his attitude.' (p 423)

OR

Even a teaching hospital comes in for a bit of satire: 'Nurse Tim managed their comings and goings with a stoic resignation that suggested this was all merely business as usual – making sure the sorcery scholars sterilised their healing amulets, dimming the lights for the clairvoyant who came to check how Morrigan's aura was mending, and so on.' (p 158)

OR

'Could Steed *really* open the border to Squall? Certainly he could stand down the Ground Force, the Sky Force, the Stink, the Stealth, the Royal Sorcery Council, the Paranormal League and every other organisation that watched over the borders.

But what about the ancient magic of Nevermoor that supposedly kept Squall out? Would it still matter, would it *work* without all that other help? Morrigan had no way of knowing.' (p 454)

Discuss how bureaucracy is portrayed in this novel.

*Discussion Point:* 'Darling, you know better than anyone, people hate what they are afraid of, and they are *most* afraid of what they don't understand. Wunimals are still something of an enigma, I suppose, and therefore some people see them as a threat.' (p 172)

What does this quote suggest about human nature?

*Discussion Point:* "'We don't ignore bigotry, Jack,'" said Fenestra. "That's how cowardly bigots turn into brave bigots.'" (p 299)

Discuss prejudice as one of the topics raised in this novel and series.

*Discussion Point:* The article about Morrigan's powers (pp 364–5) is a satire of the sort of headlines which appear in the tabloid press. 'Wunimal Shock at Nevermoor Opera Horse!' (p 170) Such 'shock jock' journalism relies on eye-catching headlines, employing word play and jokes. Read some of the headlines in a range of newspapers and discuss how they work. Discuss the way such stories are framed to obscure rather than to reveal the 'truth'.

*Discussion Point:* 'Laurent St James is out there talking about you all day, every day, and if we don't respond, we are letting him control the narrative. You don't know how this works. Nor does Captain North. But I do. The more you hide from these people, the more they want to hunt you.' (p 393)

How does one 'control the narrative' in journalistic discourse?

*Discussion Point:* In Book 3 government handling of the Hollowpox pandemic is rased. 'If we could at least prevent some of the attacks before they happen . . . but it's *impossible* because we don't know who's infected or how they get infected. We can't have eyes on every Wunimal in the city.' (p 206) One of the aspects of the Covid-19 health crisis was that there were so many unknown aspects of Covid-19, which made responses to it a little like guesswork. Compare this comment to public statements made by government medical officers about Covid-19.

*Discussion Point:* Laurent St James founds the Concerned Citizens of Nevermoor Party:



'Forgetfulness, increased appetite, fidgeting, aggression? That described half of Unit 919 on a good day. How many Wunimals would be wrongly accused of having the pox, Morrigan wondered, when *these* were the symptoms people were watching for? It was that last bit of the poster that really spooked her. *Watch Your Neighbours. Don't Hesitate. Act on Your Suspicions.* It was like these "Concerned Citizens" were just trying to turn everyone against Wunimals Any Wunimals. All of them.' (p 280)

Compare this quote to some of the interstate and international rivalries which were expressed during the pandemic.

*Discussion Point:* Read and discuss these two quotes:

'As the Hollowpox took hold of Nevermoor, event after event had been scaled back or postponed or, in most cases, altogether cancelled. Jupiter didn't want to put any of the guests or staff at risk, nor could he bear to hurt his Wunimal friends by singling them out and asking them to stay away.' (p 292)

OR

'The Prime Minister, Gideon Steed, took the extraordinary measure of declaring a state of emergency in Nevermoor, and ordered that a sunset curfew be put in place for all Wunimals in the city.' (p 325)

What ethics are challenged by the tough decisions which have been made to deal with a public health crisis such as Covid-19?

- **Individual Talents, Privilege and Responsibility**

*Discussion Point:* 'Jupiter had warned Morrigan about this, two whole years ago, when he'd first explained to her what the Wondrous Society was offering. Respect, adventure, fame! Reserved seats on the Wunderground! *Pin privilege*, he'd called it. But it was a privilege the Society expected you to earn not just once, not just in the entry trials, but *over and over again, for the rest of your life*. She hadn't thought about it much at the time. But he *had* warned her.' (pp 42–3)  
Discuss the demands made on Morrigan due to her status as a Wundersmith.

- **Energy Crisis**

*Discussion Point:* How in this novel is the energy crisis raised?

## BOOK 4:

- **Family, Friendships and Love**

*Discussion Point:* Morrigan discovers her mother's family (the Darlings) and for a time that threatens her relationship with her adopted family at the Hotel Deucalion. 'She felt like a cup being filled to the brim with hot tea. Holliday grabbed her shoulders and squeezed them, eager to get the message across. 'Morrigan. You are *Silverborn*.' (pp 94–5)  
What does finding this family mean to Morrigan?

*Discussion Point:* 'Morrigan,' he said quietly but fervently. 'You have a family who cares about you. I care about you. So very much. Jack cares about you. Fen, Kedgerree, Dame Chanda. Hawthorne and Cadence and—'

'I mean a proper family,' she said flatly, cutting him off. 'A real family.' (pp 135–136)  
How wounded must Jupiter have felt in hearing these words from Morrigan?

- **Coming of Age and Rite of Passage Trials and Tests**

*Discussion Point:* 'Part of Morrigan felt smugly superior, knowing she and her friends shared a terrible and thrilling secret with the older Society members. That they were grown-up enough to be trusted with the most frightening of truths, while these younger scholars – these mere children – were still being kept in the dark. Another, quieter part of her wished she was still one of them. A mere child, kept safe in the dark.' (p 4)

How does Morrigan mature in this series?

*Discussion Point:* 'I'm not your magical butler, Morrigan Crow. That's not the nature of this arrangement. How will you find the courage to stand on your choices if I clean up every mess you make?' (p 122)

Morrigan is a classic heroine in that despite having two very different mentors (Jupiter and Squall) she has to learn to stand on her own two feet alone. Discuss her growth in each of the novels.

*Discussion Point:* 'The thing is, Morrigan, once you've had your debut, the chain thinks you're an adult, and it won't let you go lintel-hopping anymore.' (p 351)

Discuss the role of magic (eg lintel-hopping) as metaphor for human challenges here.

- **Forces of Good and Evil**

*Discussion Point:* 'And there was another, much more pressing thing. She was deeply ill-at-ease with the idea of feeding one monstrous thing to another. Something about it made her feel like she was playing judge, jury and executioner. Now that she knew what the Black Parade was really about, it had taken on a whole new grotesque meaning.' (pp 71–2)

Discuss how in this book (and in others in the series) the author plays with the idea of the ambiguous border between good and evil.

- **Politics, Bureaucracy and Public Discourse**

*Discussion point:* 'My mother was a traitor. That's what all of this added up to, she realised, connecting the dots in her mind. Meredith Darling had left the Free State and married a member of their enemy nation's ruling political party. That was treason. When Lady Margot said it was complicated, she'd been understating it.' (pp 119–120)

Discuss the nature of a person's commitment to a particular state or country and how that might come into conflict with your individual allegiances.

*Discussion point:* This series tackles bigotry and xenophobia as Morrigan struggles with forces that consider her cursed and who seek to deny her freedom. 'The Nevermoor public are afraid of you. I think the protest last night at the Black Parade has driven that home for all of us.' (p 91) What parallels do you see between her struggle and those suffered by public figures in our own society?

- **Individual Talents, Privilege and Responsibility**

*Discussion point:* 'Ezra Squall had shown her that to truly be a Wundersmith was to have a universe inside.' (p 55)

What does Morrigan mean when she thinks this?

*Discussion point:* "'Wh-what? No!' sputtered Miss Cheery. 'None of them are misfits. They are nine incredibly talented and well-rounded children in the Free State's most elite organisation of remarkable people!'" (p 86)



Is Miss Cheery's assessment of Unit 919 born out by their actions?

- **Energy Crisis**

*Discussion point:* How can Morrigan's powers be equated metaphorically with the need for energy, and the climate crisis afflicting society today?

## **ENGLISH LANGUAGE & LITERACY**

<<https://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/f-10-curriculum/english/>>

Study the writing style employed in this narrative, and examine the following sub-topics:

### **NARRATIVE PERSON, NARRATIVE PERSPECTIVE & TENSE**

*Discussion Point:* This is a third-person subjective account of Morrigan's experiences. How might it have changed had the series been written as a first-person narrative?

### **LITERARY DEVICES**

*Activity:* Find examples of the use of literary devices in this series, using the table below to identify examples.

#### **Book 1:**

<b>Simile</b>	'Elder Quinn smiled. It was a tiny smile, but Morrigan saw it. It was like a very small flower in a bed of hopeless weeds.' (p 195)
<b>Metaphors</b>	'She'd once heard a maid whisper that Grandmother was a "savage old bird of prey dressed up as a lady."' (p 18)
<b>Personification</b>	
<b>Symbolism</b>	
<b>Word Play</b>	'We'll blow up that bridge when we come to it.' (p 169) Morrigan's oral test (pp 193–5) is a masterful example of how words can have different meanings.
<b>Other</b>	

**Book 2:**

<b>Simile</b>	'Cool green light filtered through the sheets of water and cast rippling patterns across the floor. The building was huge and empty. Silent. Like a cathedral made of sea glass.' (p 354)
<b>Metaphors</b>	
<b>Personification</b>	
<b>Symbolism</b>	
<b>Word Play</b>	'WELCOME TO THE NEVERMOOR BAZAAR ... You've Never Seen Anything More Bizarre' (pp 248--249)
<b>Other</b>	

**Book 3:**

<b>Simile</b>	'She stepped through the strange rippling sensation again. The fabric of the world shook itself out like clean laundry.' (p 122)
<b>Metaphors</b>	'Miss Cheery was the only person Morrigan knew who utterly lived up to her name: she was pure sunshine. She was fresh linen, birdsong at twilight, perfectly cooked toast.' (p 3)
<b>Personification</b>	
<b>Symbolism</b>	
<b>Word Play</b>	Hawthorne's mistakes in speaking Dragontongue (p 135) is one example.
<b>Other</b>	



**Book 4:**

<b>Simile</b>	'Her mind unravelled itself like a knot, unclenched like a fist.' (p 46)
<b>Metaphors</b>	'Swift's future in dragonriding looks brighter than ten thousand wood-burning stoves.' (p 205)
<b>Personification</b>	'But while the houses and businesses of Ogden seemed to hang over the water like heavy brows, squat and dilapidated,' (p 100).
<b>Symbolism</b>	
<b>Word Play</b>	<p>The title of Chapter Four is 'Monsters Welcome Never More' (p 25). The title of Chapter Five is 'Creepover' (p 35).</p> <p>'You really think Frank would let you turn fourteen without a shindig of some description? Shins will be dug, believe me.' (p 542)</p> <p>'Hillary D'Boer was an anagram of Lady Horrible.' (p 595)</p>
<b>Other</b>	<p><i>Alliteration</i>: 'churches, courthouses and cemeteries.' (p 24) 'Malcontent, Misanthrope, Menace' ( p 446)</p>

**HUMOUR**

**Activity:** Humour in this series is abundant, subtle, often tongue-in-cheek, and cunningly topical. Identify techniques by which humour is provoked and add quotes to the following tables:

**Book 1:**

<b>Sarcasm</b>	<p>'Morrigan sat up straight. This should be good. Maybe Ivy was going to apologise for making her wear that frilly, itchy chiffon dress to the wedding. Or maybe she was going to confess that although she'd scarcely spoken a dozen words to Morrigan since moving in, truly she loved her like a daughter, and she only wished they could have more time together, and she would miss Morrigan terribly and would probably cry buckets at the funeral and ruin her makeup, which would streak ugly black rivers all down her pretty face but she wouldn't even care how ugly she looked because she would just be thinking about lovely, lovely Morrigan. Morrigan arranged her face in an expression of humble serenity.' (p 49)</p>
<b>Irony</b>	<p>'As often happened when Morrigan spoke, everyone turned to face her with vague looks of surprise, as though she were a lamp that had suddenly grown legs and started tap-dancing across the room.' (p 19)</p> <p>'Camembert Crow (her father's prize greyhound – chewed through a box of soap suds and died foaming at the mouth).' (p 352)</p>
<b>Exaggeration</b>	Jupiter's list of achievements (p 173).
<b>Black Humour</b>	<p><i>'My sweetheart is a garrotter, my sweetheart loves to strangle. Her hands are wrapped around my throat, but my heart is in a tangle . . .'</i> (p 265)</p>
<b>Other</b>	



**Book 2:**

<b>Sarcasm</b>	<p>'Morrigan didn't like the sound of the Goal-Setting and Achieving Club for Highly Ambitious Youth, which met on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday evenings, and all day Sunday. But she thought she could probably get on board with Introverts Utterly Anonymous, which promised no meetings or gatherings of any sort, ever.' (p 77)</p> <p>'Good. You'd be surprised how much it can help in a frightening situation if you just remember to <i>keep breathing</i>.'</p> <p>Cadence turned to Morrigan and rolled her eyes.</p> <p>'Brilliant,' she muttered. 'I would have forgotten this basic involuntary bodily function if he hadn't mentioned it. I'll write that down.' She made a stupid face and pretended to write it in the air with an imaginary pen.' (pp 204–5)</p>
<b>Irony</b>	
<b>Exaggeration</b>	
<b>Black Humour</b>	
<b>Other</b>	

**Book 3:**

<b>Sarcasm</b>	<p>'This parody of petty theatre jealousies: "He's very ambitious, Victor," said ensemble actor Stephen Rollins-Huntington. "Very <i>driven</i>, you know. I'm just saying, he'd do anything to get his teeth into a bigger part. No one's quite sure how he got to play 'Horse', to be honest – plenty of people have told me I'd have been a natural for it, and of course I've much more experience in the theatre. What happened there, that's what I'd like to know.'" (pp 171–2)</p> <p>"Will you be conquering all of Nevermoor at once, do you think?" Arch asked, holding out an imaginary microphone to catch her answer. "Or taking it borough by borough?" (p 212)</p>
<b>Irony</b>	<p>"And – and I could cut out your liver with a SCALPEL!" This last, nervy declaration came from the most unlikely source.</p> <p>"Anah!" Morrigan cried in shock.</p> <p>"Well . . . I could," Anah insisted, and there was only the tiniest tremor in her voice. "In sterile conditions, obviously, and only if they were under a general anaesthetic." (p 45)</p> <p>The fearsome group of old ladies chasing the leopardwun off the train (pp 71–2) is another hilariously unexpected scene.</p>
<b>Exaggeration</b>	<p>Dame Chanda Kali's reaction to the news of Juvela De Flimsé's coma' (pp 86–7) is greatly exaggerated.</p> <p>"Did you just see that bloke with a <i>pitchfork</i>?" Hawthorne's voice had jumped up half an octave, his eyes grown wide. "Who even <i>owns</i> a pitchfork? I don't even know what a pitchfork is <i>for</i>!" (p 348)</p>
<b>Black Humour</b>	<p>' "Me? I bring dead things to life." Sofia ran her paw down the page nonchalantly, as if she'd just imparted the most mundane piece of information. As if she'd said, <i>Me? I make cheese sandwiches.</i>' (p 189)</p>



<p><b>Satire</b></p>	<p>'Morrigan, Hawthorne and Cadence shared a look. It was a very <i>specific</i> look of mingled bemusement, horror, exasperation and resignation. The kind of look one reserves for special occasions, such as when you've just learned that trains can come to life and hold other trains hostage, and that you've unwittingly joined an organisation full of people who have for some reason decided to nose into this sort of business, and you don't really feel like getting involved but you're just going to have to go along with it because everybody else is. That kind of look.' (pp 41–2)</p> <p>Roshni's instructions for entering her Gobleian Library: 'You must stay with the group <i>at all times</i>. You must pay attention, and listen to my instructions, and the instructions of my bookfighters. If we tell you to run, you run. If we tell you to drop to the ground, you drop to the ground. If we tell you not to pat the bunny in the waistcoat, then <i>trust me</i> – you do NOT want to pat the bunny in the waistcoat.' (p 246)</p>
<p><b>Other</b></p>	<p><i>Hyperbole</i>: "Right!" Jupiter snatched up his coat. "Come on then, Dame Chanda. To the hospital!"</p> <p>The soprano rose gracefully and headed for the parlour door, glancing back over her shoulder at him in a deeply dignified manner. "To the florist, Jove. <i>Then</i> to the hospital. We are not <i>monsters</i>." (p 90)</p>

**Book 4:**

<b>Sarcasm</b>	<p>'The trouble was, there was no way for Morrigan to publicly reassure people that <i>she</i> wasn't planning to murder a bunch of people and conquer the city, without sounding quite a lot like someone who's maybe planning to murder a bunch of people and conquer the city.' (p 28)</p> <p>'Well, never mind. No need to practise. No need to learn the Wondrous Arts at all! You're only the sole heir to a legacy of nine bloodlines spanning hundreds of years of tradition, power and craft. Whyever should you take such a trivial matter seriously? What could possibly—' (pp 56–7)</p> <p>'He called it her 'reach', and was constantly telling her to use her reach, remember her reach, extend her reach, sense with her reach. Sometimes she felt like whacking him over the head with her reach.' (p 59)</p>
<b>Irony</b>	<p>'Dogs, according to Jupiter, were some of the most powerful and cost-effective buffers against psychological harm. Morrigan wished she could have tucked a Chihuahua into her pocket.' (p 26)</p>
<b>Exaggeration</b>	
<b>Black Humour</b>	
<b>Satire</b>	<p>Eddie and Tofty, the commentators on the dragon riding Winter Trials are deliberately satirical. (p 197)</p>
<b>Other</b>	<p><i>Hyperbole</i>: 'A powerful urge to dance brought on by the noodles was dampened by the broth that accompanied them, which Francis said was meant to 'evoke the sense that one has forgotten something very important and must sit still and look inwardly to remember what it was.' It made them all gaze into the middle distance for some time – except Hawthorne, whose inner dancer was too powerful for any broth. (pp 38–9 )</p>



## STRUCTURE

The structure of the novels in this series can be analysed in terms of key narrative features used to engage the reader's attention and to shape the work:

a) *Strong beginnings and endings to chapters* are one way of structuring a narrative, for example:

### Book 1:

*Beginning:* 'Something woke Morrigan in the night.' (Chapter 8, p 121)

*Ending:* 'She could see it. She could see her death coming.' (Chapter 3, p 62)

### Book 2:

*Beginning:* "'Dragonriding ALL MORNING!' shouted Hawthorne the next day, throwing a fist in the air. "YES!"' (Chapter 6, p 95)

*Ending:* '... then all nine of you will face expulsion from Wunsoc. For life.' (Chapter 2, p 42)

### Book 3:

*Beginning:* 'They came from everywhere. Swarming out from the gaps between books, crawling up from storm drains and pouring from shelves in a monstrous, chittering tidal wave of wings and eyes and legs . . . *so many legs.*' (Chapter 20, p 263)

*Ending:* 'She was instead watching Griselda, who turned to the boy with a warm smile and said, "Excellent question, Mr Squall."' (Chapter 16, p 215)

### Book 4:

*Beginning:* 'Agony. Shame. Guilt. Fear. Existential dread. Deepest horror at the unending ignominy and pain of an eternity you can never escape. Imagine what those things might feel like . . . then slap 'em on a nasty old ghost face and you'll have a rough idea of what the Unresting look like.' (Chapter 3, p 19)

*Ending:* 'A strange, quiet discomfort from the knowledge that somewhere, a giant had woken.' (Chapter 1, p 7)

Which other opening or closing sentence was particularly gripping, in your opinion?

b) *Suspense* is the key to any narrative's structure, as evinced in these examples:

### Book 1:

Morrigan is desperate to find out what 'knack' she has before The Show Trial. She and Hawthorne are on edge wondering what Mr Jones is planning to do.

### Book 2:

'Then, what felt like half a second later, she was awake.

She was awake, and not in her bed.

She was awake, and not in her bed, and not alone. (p 22)

OR

'This was the third disappearance she'd heard about that week. Cassiel, Paximus Luck, and now the Magnificub.' (p 98)

OR

'*Calling. Dying. Freezing. Burning. Flying.*' (p 421)

### Book 3:

'Was that such a ridiculous idea? There *used to* always be nine, after all – that's what Elder Quinn had said. Could there be seven others out there somewhere? Could one of them be the jolly man in a red suit who brought presents at Christmastime?' (p 74)

#### Book 4:

“You,” she whispered, gripping the door handle. “What do you want?” A hunter made of smoke sat astride a horse made of shadow. Red eyes glowing like embers, the hunter extended an open hand in invitation. Morrigan took it without thinking, out of instinct or muscle memory, and— Oh, she thought, the moment their hands met. At last, the shy little fox inside her head stepped boldly into the glow of the streetlight. Now I remember. She sighed. “I’ll get my coat.” (pp 49–50)

‘It was not Aunt Modestine’s voice.’ (p 190)

‘Were it possible, I would gladly trade ten years of my future to have shared just one week of your past!’ (p 478)

‘It was so obvious, Morrigan could hardly believe she hadn’t seen it sooner. Who better to write about the intrigue and scandal of Silverborn society, than one of the Silverborn themselves? (p 481)

There are many instances of such suspense in this series. Discuss some of them.

c) *Using a ‘framing story or idea’* makes a narrative more cohesive but sometimes can be used as a foil to trigger a major surprise or turning point in the action. Morrigan’s cursedness lay at the heart of the first novel, but her unknown powers as a Wundersmith were at the heart of the second. Her doubts regarding her ability to be a ‘good’ Wundersmith when so many seem to have been ‘bad’ lies at the core of the third novel, in which she faces her old demon, Ezra Squall, but also learns from other Wundersmiths and gains in her powers. The framing story is the virus Hollowpox which she must defeat, an action which leads to unexpected consequences in future. In *Silverborn*, she discovers that she is a member of the Darling Family and attempts to unravel her mother’s history, which brings her into conflict with her beloved Jupiter North. Meanwhile she is taking Wundersmith lessons from her former arch-enemy Ezra Squall, so conflict becomes the framing story.

Discuss the use of a framing narrative as a ‘camouflage’ for an underlying secret in this series.

## SETTING

*Discussion Point:* Description in setting can be evoked via a complex range of literary devices, for example:

**Book 1:** ‘The cobbled stretch of Empire Road had swelled from a merry hum of good spirits in the morning to raucous, uncontainable revelry in the final hours before midnight. Street bands played for coins on every corner, competing for the attention of passersby. Coloured lanterns jostled with streamers and strings of tiny lights, and the air smelled of beer, burnt sugar and meat grilling on the spit. The blackened Skyfaced Clock loomed above the celebrations.’ (p 46)

**Book 2:** ‘A shimmering establishment of white marble and gold, Morrigan thought it looked a bit like a cathedral and a bit like a wedding cake.’ (p 3)

**Book 3:** ‘Trees had grown up from the lobby floor again, reminding Morrigan of the Christmas forest – but these were the leafy, deciduous kind. They swayed in a breeze that seemed to come from nowhere. Early in the evening it smelled of jasmine, citrus and the ocean, then later as the sun set and the leaves began to curl and change colour, it smelled of rain and apples and rich, dark soil. By midnight, the leaves were a thousand shades of orange and red, the temperature in the lobby had subtly dropped, a fire was roaring in the hearth and the scent of wood smoke filled the air.’ (p 294)



**Book 4:** 'The most striking thing to Morrigan was how instantly the colour of the water changed. Once they were through the gates it was like they'd sailed into a blue lagoon, so clear and sparkling she could see schools of fish darting deep beneath the surface. It reflected the perfect sky above, bright azure and streaked with peachy-purple sunset clouds.' (p 100)

**Activity:** Choose a passage that vividly describes any locale in any of these novels. Discuss the passage with the class.

## CHARACTERS

### Book 1:

**Major Characters:** Morrigan Crow; her father, Chancellor Corvus; his wife, Ivy; Morrigan's grandmother, Ornella; Mr Jones (alias Ezra Squall and the Wundersmith); **Hotel Deucalion:** Jupiter North ('Great and Honourable Captain Sir Jupiter Amantius North, Esquire.' (p 103); John Arjuna Korrapati (Jack), Jupiter's nephew, who attends Graysmark School for Bright Young Men; Fenestra, a Magnificat and housekeeper at the Hotel Deucalion; Hawthorne Swift, dragonrider; Kedgerees Burns, concierge at the Hotel Deucalion; Frank, a dwarf vampire ('Frank's my official party planner. Roof-Raiser-in-Chief.' (p 105); Dame Chanda Kali, a Grand High Soprano and Dame Commander of the Order of Woodland Whisperers; Cadence Blackburn, a mesmerist.

**Minor Characters:** Martha, the housemaid at the Hotel Deucalion; Charlie McAlister, the chauffeur at the Hotel Deucalion; Baz Charlton, a nasty sponsor of candidates; Noelle Devereaux; Nancy Dawson, Hawthorne Swift's sponsor; High Council of Elders: Gregoria Quinn, Helix Wong and Alioth Saga; Anah; Inspector Flintlock; Francis John Fitzwilliam.

### Book 2:

**Major Characters:** **Hotel Deucalion:** Morrigan Crow, a Wundersmith, whose patron/sponsor is Jupiter North. [See above.] **Unit 919:** Archan Tate, a pickpocket; Anah Kahlo, a healer, whose patron is Sunata Mishra; Cadence Blackburn, a mesmerist, whose patron is Baz Charlton, a nasty sponsor of several candidates; Francis Fitzwilliam, a chef, whose patron is his aunt Hester; Hawthorne Swift, a dragonrider (and Morrigan's best friend), whose patron is Nancy Dawson; Lambeth (Lam) Amara, a short-range oracle whose patron is Wayra and who in Book 3 is revealed to be 'the Princess Lamya Bethari Amati Ra, of the Royal House of Ra, from the Silklands in the state of Far East Sang.' (Book 3, p 15) ; Mahir Ibrahim Mahir Ibrahim, a linguist whose patron is Miss Mulryan; Thaddea Macleod (No-Retreat of Clan), a fighter, whose patron is Side Macrae; Miss Marina Cheery, conductor for Unit 919. **Other:** Mr Jones, alias Ezra Squall, the evil Wundersmith.

**Minor Characters:** The Angel Israfel; Dulcinea Dearborn and Maris Murgatroyd, The Scholar Mistresses for the School of Mundane and Arcane Arts; Paximus Luck, Plucky, the famous master illusionist slash stealth prankster slash vigilante street artist; Cassiel, a celestial being; Professor Hemingway Q. Onstald; Mr Henry Mildmay; Hester, Miss Dawson's colleague; 'the three esteemed members of the Wunsoc's High Council of Elders – Elder Gregoria Quinn, Elder Helix Wong and Elder Alioth Saga; Dr Bramble, Professor Kempsey, and Professor Dresser; **Bullies (The Charlton Five):** Carl, Heloise and Alfie Swann; Will Gaudy, a fighter, Unit 916; Magnificub, a baby Magnificat.

### Book 3:

**Major Characters:** **Hotel Deucalion:** Morrigan Crow, a Wundersmith; her patron/sponsor, Jupiter North [See above.] **Unit 919:** [See above.] **Other:** Ezra Squall, alias Mr Jones, the evil Wundersmith.

**Minor Characters:** **Wunsoc School:** Dulcinea Dearborn and Maris Murgatroyd, the 'shapeshifting' Scholar Mistresses for the School of Mundane and Arcane Arts, who also become Rook Rosenfeld, Scholar Mistress for the School of Wondrous Arts; Heloise Redchurch, a bully,

and the leader of *The Charlton Five*; Gavin Squires of Unit 899; the three esteemed members of the Wunsoc's High Council of Elders – Elder Gregoria Quinn, Elder Helix Wong, and Elder Alioth Saga. **Sub-Nine Academic Group (Basement Nerds):** Conall O'Leary, Morrigan's *Opening a Dialogue with the Dead* teacher (p 106); Sofia, a foxwun; Ravi, a teenager. **Hawthorne Swift's family:** Mother, Cat; father Dave; elder sister Helena; elder brother Homer; and baby sister Davina (baby Dave). **Gobleian Library:** Roshni Singh, 'youngest librarian in Gobleian history' (p 234), and Miss Cheery's friend; Colin, an Osttrichwun bookfighter (Wunimal). **Wunimals:** Juvela De Flimsé, the leopardwun; Brutilus Brown, a bearwun; Theobold Marek, the moosewun tenor. **Wundrous Society Teaching Hospital:** Nurse Tim; Dr Lutwyche; Dr Bramble. **Government:** Maud Lowry, President Wintersea, leader of the Wintersea Party; Gideon Steed, Prime Minister of Nevermoor; Guiscard Silverback, Opposition Leader, Nevermoor; Laurent St James, founder of the Concerned Citizens of Nevermoor Party; Holiday Wu from the Public Distraction Department. **Nine Wundersmiths of Squall's generation whom Morrigan meets in the Ghostly Hours:** Griselda Polaris. Rastaban Tarazed; Decima Kokoro; Mathilde Lachance; Brilliance Amadeo; Owain Binks; Elodie Bauer; Odbuoy Jemmit. **Morrigan's Family:** Wolfram and Gunthram Crow; stepmother Ivy and grandmother Ornella.

#### Book 4:

**Major Characters:** **Hotel Deucalion:** Morrigan Crow; Jupiter North [See above.] **Unit 919:** [See above.] **Grand Old House of Darling, in the Silver District:** Meredith "Malcontent" Darling, Morrigan's deceased mother; her aunt Miriam and her wife Winifred; her aunt Modestine and groom Dario Rinaldi; her aunt Lady Margot and her husband Tobias; their mother, Lady Mallory Darling; Sunil Ghoshal, best man to Dario.

**Minor Characters:** **Clocksmiths:** Olly Wainwright, a clockmaker's apprentice; Alejandra Rojas, one of Nevermoor's greatest living clocksmiths, Sir Benjamin Church; Woman in tweed coat; Dafydd, a young clockmaker. **Wunsoc School:** Elder Gregoria Quinn, Elder Wong and Elder Saga; Conall O'Leary, the retired clairvoyant, and teacher to Unit 919; Judith (assistant at school); Rook Rosenfeld, Scholar Mistress for the School of Wundrous Arts. **Silver District:** Laurent St James – founder of the Concerned Citizens of Nevermoor Party, campaigner against Wunimal rights, and also father of the twins, Lottie and Louis St James; Crispin Stirling, wedding planner; Marigold Darling, Margot's daughter; Cosmo Rinaldi, Dario's brother; Olivia and Vincenzo Rinaldi, parents of Dario and Cosmo; Vesta, Dario and Cosmo's eleven year old sister; Mr Smithereens, The Vulture (aka Bertram Crow); Gigi (Georgette) and Noelle Devereaux and their parents; Mr Hounslow, employee of the Darling House; Lucinda Hallewell. **Government Officials:** Holliday Wu from Wunsoc's Public Distraction Department; Carlos Aguilar, Holliday's assistant.

**Activity:** Draw up a character chart and find key quotes that give a clear picture of any-of these characters, and isolate events that demonstrate their natures. Then write a brief character study using these quotes and events to illustrate the points made.

**Discussion Point:** Which character was most intriguing and why? Which character would you like to have heard more about? For example, Nurse Tim is one of the most hilarious and memorable characters in **Book 3**. What makes him so memorable?

## GENRE

This novel contains features of both the **A. Fantasy** and **B. Mystery** genres:

**A. Fantasy as a genre has several recurring features** [See Jane Mobley's 'Toward a Definition of Fantasy Fiction' in Bator, Robert, *Signposts to Criticism of Children's Literature*, Chicago, ALA, 1983, pp. 249–260]. Teachers might examine each of these features in relation to this series, as below:

a) It relies on **creating convincing and entertaining detail in creating a 'secondary world'**.



There are many examples of such detail in this series:

**Book 1:**

'But if you want entertainment, we've got the Trollosseum. You'll love that. If you love violence. Troll fights every Saturday, centaur roller derby Tuesday nights, zombie paintball every second Friday, unicorn jousting at Christmas and a dragonriding tournament in June.' (p 83)

OR

"The gentlemen from Paranormal Services came in on Thursday to see about our wee haunting on the fifth floor; I've sent the invoice to accounting. The Nevermoor Transport Authority sent a messenger yesterday – they're after your advice, something about echoes on the Gossamer Line. Oh, and someone's left four alpacas in the conservatory; shall I have the front desk make an announcement?" (pp 89–90)

OR

The Hotel Deucalion's peculiarly transformative capacities: the Smoking Parlour where smoke is scented with special essences which provoke a change in mood or temperament; the chandelier crashing to the ground, and then a new chandelier 'growing out'; Morrigan's bedroom changing constantly in response to her desires (pp 174–5); when Morrigan and Hawthorne explore and find the theatre: 'Actually, not the theatre itself but rather the dressing room backstage. The walls were lined with hanging costumes, and each one came with an accent and a funny walk that took ages to fade.' (p 179)

OR

'The Gossamer is an invisible, intangible network that . . . hmm. Imagine a *web*. Imagine a vast and delicate spider's web laid over the entire realm, like . . . no. You know what, forget the Gossamer, all you need to know is that I see things other people don't.' (p 137)

OR

When Jupiter and Morrigan travel via The Brolly Rail (p 143).

OR

The examination paper on which questions mysteriously appear and which self-combusts if wrong answers are given. (pp 184–9)

**Book 2:**

'He handed her a folded paper square. It was a dark silvery-black, as thin as a dried leaf, but soft and supple. 'If you ever need me – a proper emergency, I mean, not just some nonsense – if you're in trouble and you need help, write down an address, or a landmark, on the paper. Somewhere I can come and find you. Then say my full name – John Arjuna Korrapati – three times, and burn the paper. It's bonded to me, so no matter where you are, it'll show up in my hand.' (p 195)

OR

'Wunimals were sentient, self-aware, intelligent creatures capable of complexities such as language, invention and artistic expression, just like humans. Unnimals were not.' (p 104)

OR

'Swindleroads. Tricksy Lanes. Shadowstreets. Ghostly Hours,' (p 201) and pocket realms (p 276).

OR

"The Bonesmen?' Morrigan asked. 'What are they?'

'The "Skeletal Legion", they're also called.' He rolled his eyes. 'Proper bogeyman stuff.'" (p 221)

OR

The *Decoding Nevermoor* classes run by Mr Mildmay are bewitchingly full of details regarding the strange geography of the area.

OR

The Wretched Arts: *Nocturne, Weaving, Tempus, Veil*. (p 221)

OR

‘According to Onstald’s book, the Wondrous Act Spectrum only has five classifications – Missteps, Blunders, Fiascos, Monstrosities and Devastations. It doesn’t say anything about Spectacles or Singularities. But they obviously exist, because... well, because we’re standing in one.’ (p 356)

### **Book 3:**

The fact that the rooms in the Hotel Deucalion can transform themselves according to the season and to their whims (pp 51–2); that Morrigan’s bed can transform into something else every night. (pp 79–80) and the indoor ice-skating rink which suddenly appears on the ninth floor of the Hotel Deucalion on Christmas morning. (p 82) or what Jupiter calls The *Grand Sulk* describing the Deucalion’s current, rather strange state. Ever since they’d closed the place down, things in the hotel had started going a bit *weird*. Just little things at first; rooms you’d expect to find in one place would show up somewhere else entirely. Or some ornate wallpaper replaced with bare brick walls.’ (p 358)

OR

‘Vools, trees of the Whinging Wood and slinghousls.’ (pp 27–28)

OR

‘Morrigan had heard of the Nevermoor Scaly Sewer Beast, but she’d never seen it before, and truthfully, she’d never been certain it was real ... and a forked, blackish-blue tongue.’ (p 35)

OR

“Golders Night,” Holliday echoed, and her expression grew thoughtful. She tapped a finger against her mouth. “There’s a thought . . . what’s it been, twelve years since the last one?” “Fourteen, I believe,” said Jupiter. “Spring of Seventeen in the Age of Poets. A Wunderground train had gained sentience and was holding the other trains hostage underground. It required an extraordinary distraction.” (p 41)

OR

‘A ghostly hour is a little parcel of time that has been plucked from the annals of history, to be witnessed and observed in the present day, in the exact same place.’ (p 125)

OR

The peculiar capacity of Miss Dulcinea Dearborn to become Miss Maris Murgatroyd is another fantasy detail in Books 1, 2 and 3: ‘Morrigan swallowed, picturing the Arcane Scholar Mistress warping into her ice-cold Mundane counterpart, Ms Dearborn. The transformations were unscheduled and unpredictable – like a roll of the dice. If you sought out one, you were just as likely to get the other.’ (p 96) But in this third novel they actually morph into a third person: ‘Rook Rosenfeld. Scholar Mistress for the School of Wondrous Arts.’ (p 100) Later, Morrigan learns that there are many more inside her: ‘Have you ever seen a set of nesting dolls, Wundersmith? You open up one, and there’s another inside her, and another inside *her*, and another . . .’ (p 198)

### **Book 4:**

‘Olly had only recently learned about the Disturbances: three unusual, spontaneous, and highly visible events which signalled – to those who knew what to look for – that the phase of Morningtide was coming to an end. The kind of signs that clocksmiths watched for, waited for, obsessed over, but most regular folk had never heard of. Ms Rojas made Olly memorise them on the first day of his apprenticeship.



*The First Disturbance is a Rising Tide.  
The Second Disturbance is a Falling Star.  
The Third Disturbance is a Waking Giant'* (p 5)

OR

'It's hard to describe, but the Unresting exude a sort of . . . uneasiness. And they have an unhelpful tendency to gather, like the grit and grime that collects in the seams of the city. Leave them to build up in one place and they'll quickly drag down the emotional health of a neighbourhood. People start having funny dreams. Find themselves getting angry for no reason. Crime rates go up. Folks feel anxious, unsafe . . . They move away, the neighbourhood empties. In the long run, it's better for everyone if we intervene before that happens. Sweep out the grit before the machine breaks down.' (p 23)

OR

'She had not expected her ceiling to rise sixty feet higher than normal, and a gnarled, twisting tree to grow all the way up to meet it, spreading upwards and outwards to push back the retreating bedroom walls. She certainly hadn't expected a staircase to carve itself into the trunk, curving around and around and up and up until it was obscured from view.' (p 34)

OR

'Value in this case refers to the relative depth of lightness and darkness in any given context. We'll discuss it in another lesson. Likewise your stamina,' he continued before she could get a word in, 'which remains abysmal. You should be able to keep yourself shadowed for hours. You should be able to conceal entire buildings under darkness!' (p 61)

OR

'And . . . you're saying this thing, this . . . Guiltghost. It eats the Unresting?' 'In a manner of speaking.' 'It eats . . . ghosts?' 'It eats guilt.' (p 66)

*Discussion Point:* Discuss these details with students and invite them to comment on those they found most enticing and why they like them. Then invite them to come up with their own fantasy details which could conceivably form part of the world created here.

b) **Essential Extravagance** or spectacle is another aspect of the fantasy genre. There are many scenes in this series that are lavish in detail, for example:

#### **Book 1:**

"Step boldly!" the woman in the silk gown shouted. Then without hesitation, she leapt from the roof and floated down, down, down all thirteen storeys. Morrigan turned to Jupiter with alarm, but he looked utterly untroubled. She waited for a cry of pain or a loud splat from below, but neither came. The woman landed on the ground, stumbled a bit, and gave a shout of triumph. *Impossible*, thought Morrigan.' (pp 94–5)

OR

'But Christmas in Nevermoor was a monthlong celebration that didn't stop, with festive parties and themed suppers to attend almost every night. Choirs and brass bands performed carols in Wunderground stations all over town. The River Juro froze over completely, turning it into a traffic-free highway snaking through the city, and scores of people began ice-skating to school and to work.' (p 312)

#### **Book 2:**

Nevermoor Bazaar: 'You've Never Seen Anything More Bizarre' (Chapter 15)

OR

"Well, I suppose the Ghastly Market itself *might* have been real enough many years ago. It was a black market – a secret, illegal trading place where you could buy almost anything

you can think of – weapons, exotic unanimal parts, human organs, outlawed sorcery ingredients...”  
“Even Wunimals,” said Cadence.’ (p 220)

OR

‘Frank threw a pool party almost every weekend, complete with epic make-your-own sundae bars and water balloon wars. Jupiter had a waterslide installed, and brought in realistic inflatable polar bears that tossed people high in the air, caught them in their soft rubber arms and dunked them underwater, to endless screams of delight from Morrigan, Hawthorne and Jack.’ (pp 283–284)

### **Book 3:**

The Gossamer-Spun Garden: ‘It wasn’t so much a garden, as a thousand different gardens. Or a thousand different drawings of a garden, from a thousand different imaginations, rendered in three dimensions by a thousand different artists...with funny little red toadstools.’ (p 192)

OR

The Gobleian Library: ‘This was Nevermoor, but not. The streets were just the same. Courage Square was there, with its golden fish-statue fountain in the middle ... And instead of people, birds and breeze . . . the library-city was filled with books.’ (p 248)

OR

‘One by one, down both sides of the drive from Proudfoot House to the gates of Wunsoc, dozens of long-dead trees roared into life. The flames arched overhead to form a canopy above the two clashing groups, who stilled and fell silent at the spectacle. After more than one hundred years of extinction, the fireblossoms had returned.’ (p 353)

OR

‘The Kindling. The Hearth. *Inferno*. Could this be one of the Wondrous Divinities Elder Quinn had talked about, all those months ago when Unit 919 had first entered the Gathering Place? She’d said the Wundersmiths were gifted above all others, *chosen by the Wondrous Divinities themselves, the ancient deities who watched over our realm*. Morrigan had thought about these deities, but hadn’t ever imagined they were real people. It *certainly* hadn’t occurred to her that one of them might be a large talking bonfire.’ (p 403)

### **Book 4:**

‘He beckoned her onwards and the quiz continued, with Morrigan scrambling to remember all she’d learned. She gathered up a small stretch of footpath and shook it out like a rug (her new favourite trick). She threw her voice so that it bounced around the buildings like a chorus of birds. She took a puff of steam from a passing Wunderground train and a film of condensation from a window and wove them into a little raincloud that hovered in the palm of her hand.’ (p 59)

OR

‘Everyone looked up to see a dragon, roughly the size of two elephants, rising higher into the sky. It screeched again and breathed a great plume of bright orange fire; Morrigan could feel the heat of it on her face.’ (p 193)

*Discussion Point:* What other ‘extravagant’ details made this an enticing fantasy world for you?

c) **Poetic quality** is evinced in the language used in this series, for example:

### **Book 1:**

‘The Skyfaced Clock was changing. Morrigan watched as the dusky twilight blue deepened to sapphire, to navy and finally to a profound, unfathomable black. Like an inkpot in the sky. Like a black hole, come to swallow up the world. The bells were ringing for Eventide.’ (p 42)

### **Book 2:**



'When Morrigan tried to recall – days and weeks and years later – the sound of that single note, the *feeling* of it, she would remember being warmed by the sun in winter, and held by a mother she'd never known. She'd remember a joyful, bone-deep certainty that she had never hurt another living being. That nobody had ever truly hurt her, and nobody ever could. She'd remember the smell of earth after rain.' (p 439)

### **Book 3:**

'That had been her second favourite moment so far, after the cloud of twinkling fireflies the Yule Queen had conducted to fly above Courage Square like a murmuration of starlings, a hypnotising dance of light.' (p 59)

### **Book 4:**

'The silence that followed Mr Hounslow's departure was not a filled cup; it was a swoop in the stomach when you miss a step.' (p 106)

Townsend has also revealed that the name 'Nevermoor' derives from Edgar Allan Poe's poem 'The Raven' in which the word 'Nevermore' appears a number of times.

*Discussion Point:* What other scenes were described poetically in this series?

d) **Multidimensionality where time and space overlap**, for example:

### **Book 1:**

'Jupiter looked at her sideways. "Technically we're still in Nevermoor. At least, our bodies are. The Gossamer Line is supposed to be decommissioned, but as an interrealm explorer with a level nine security clearance, I have . . . certain privileges."' (p 346)

### **Book 2:**

Professor Hemingway Q. Onstald is a Timekeeper who can stretch time. 'What's a Timekeeper?' 'A very rare knack,' said Mildmay. He was still gazing at the door Onstald had disappeared through, shaking his head, eyes wide. 'There are different strands of Timekeeping, different ways to use and manipulate time – preservation, shrinking, looping, stretching. Seems like old Onstald is a *stretcher of time*. I can hardly believe it.' (p 367)

### **Book 3:**

'It was the strangest sensation. Like she was made entirely of water, and she'd somehow . . . rippled.' (p 119)

OR

'Tempus is the manipulation of time in various ways – moving through it, recording and preserving it, looping it, shrinking it, stretching it—' (p 127)

### **Book 4:**

'Mmm. This is a full stop. Onstald's work was an ellipsis at best. The tortoisewun could stretch time, but stopping it completely was a skill he never mastered.' 'Then how have I mastered it already?' (p 117)

*Discussion Point:* Where else does time and space overlap in this series?

e) **A spirit of carnival** enriches fantasy which is a 'playful form kin in its structures to ritual and dance.' (Mobley, in Bator, 1983, p 257) But note, too, that this carnival spirit can be dark or grotesque, as well as light, for example,

### **Book 1:**

The witches who capture Morrigan and Hawthorne on Hallowmas night.

**Book 2:**

'The Museum of Stolen Moments. Crafted by the Wundersmith Mathilde Lachance. Sponsored by the Honourable E.M. Fairchild. A gift to the people of Nevermoor. Winter of One, Age of Thieves.' (p 328)

**Book 3:**

'Frank had chosen his "Sunset Gala" theme to celebrate the end of summer and usher in the autumn chill. The lobby had transformed from floor to ceiling into the most beautiful sunset Morrigan had ever seen ... seemed to grow.' (pp 293–4)

**Book 4:**

'A menagerie of painted boats bobbed calmly in the canal. Moored alongside a flock of Darling House swans with their slender white prows were striped tigers with roaring mouths full of teeth, elephants with noble grey trunks, dragons in a rainbow of colours, and foxes with curling red tails.' (p 159)

*Discussion Point:* What scenes in this series were particularly evocative of the Carnavalesque?

f) **Mythic dimension** and the inclusion of archetypes, for example, The 'Morrigan' is a figure from Irish mythology and her name means 'great queen or phantom queen'. She is also associated with war and fate and with foretelling death or victory in battle.

**Book 1:**

Hawthorne explains to Morrigan the battle between Saint Nick and the Yule Queen: "They battle each other on Christmas Eve to see who has the best Christmas spirit. If the Yule Queen wins, her promise is a blanket of snow on Christmas morning and a blessing on every house." "And if Saint Nick wins?" "Presents in every stocking and a fire in every hearth.'" (p 315)

**Book 2:**

Hallowmas is an ancient ritual (also known as All Hallow's Day or All Saint's Day) which is celebrated in this novel. 'In 844 Pope Gregory IV, in an attempt to supplant and replace the Pagan winter solstice festival of Samhain (Day of the Dead) moved the feast of All Saints Day to November 1st and extended the celebration to the entire Roman Catholic Church.'

[See: 'Hallowmas/Halloween' <<http://jacksonsnnyder.com/arc/New%20Century%203/Hallowmas.htm>>]

[See also: 'Allhallowtide' Wikipedia <<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Allhallowtide>>]

**Book 3:**

The Battle of Christmas Eve between Saint Nicholas and the Yule Queen (p 50) held in Courage Square and witnessed by thousands also derives from mythology. (pp 59–62)

**Book 4:**

'Hundreds of years ago, most people in Nevermoor paid tribute to one, or some, or all of the Wondrous Divinities. The Silver District's founding families chose the Manyhands as one of four patron deities they paid tribute to throughout the seasons: the Manyhands in winter, the Nightingale in spring, the Sisters in summer and the Kindling in autumn.' (p 337)

*Discussion Point:* What other archetypes or myths were referred to in this series?

**B.** There are also elements of the **Mystery Genre** in the clues, red herrings, disappearances, false identities, and other tropes of mystery included in this series. And in **Book 4**, when Dario Rinaldi is murdered, the members of Unit 919, led by Cadence Blackburn, become detectives! (Ch 19, pp 210 – 219)

'She shot a guilty glance at Cadence, who looked exasperated. This wasn't the plan. They were supposed to take their audience through all the clues one by one, just like Inspector Gravely



would do. To slowly reveal all they knew, lulling their suspect into a false sense of security, before putting them on the backfoot with some leading questions, and then finally letting them incriminate themselves in front of all the gathered witnesses.’ (pp 596–7)

*Discussion Point:* What other features of the mystery genre did you discover in this-series?

## WRITING TASKS

*Activity:* Write an acrostic poem using the letters in the titles of any of the novels in the series.

### Book 1:

*Activity:* Read Morrigan’s letters of apology (pp 10–11, p 12, p 13, p 15, and then create a similarly humorous letter in response to one of these ‘crimes’.

*Activity:* Write a diary entry by Jack about meeting Morrigan.

*Activity:* Write a letter as if it was written by Hawthorne to Morrigan.

### Book 2:

*Activity:* Read the signs which appear at the entrances to the tricky lanes. Come up with your own inventive signs like them.

*Activity:* ‘Thaddea Millicent Macleod.

*You have a fight scheduled in tomorrow afternoon’s Combat Club,  
against an unknown opponent.*

*You will throw the fight.*

*If you do not deliberately lose, we will reveal the secret of Unit 919.*

*Remember:*

*Tell no one.*

*Or we will tell everyone.’ (p 174)*

Write a note issuing a demand, like this one.

*Activity:* Write a letter as if it was written by Morrigan to Jack, from her school, explaining her new classes.

### Book 3:

*Activity:* Read the text of the poster which appears on the Proudfoot Station (pp 201–2) warning the public about Hollowpox. Write a text for a similar sign warning the public about a deadly virus.

*Activity:* Write a letter as if it were written by Jupiter to Morrigan while he is away on one of his frequent working trips, explaining his activities.

### Book 4:

*Activity:* At the Creepover, Unit 919 tell each other scary and exaggerated stories (pp 41+). Invite students to make up such stories of their own.

*Activity:* Cadence draws up a table of suspects as Dario’s murderer (pp 253–4) and (pp 377–8) and (pp 475–6) with motives and opportunities listed beside their names. Invite students to add further names to this table and outline the motives and opportunities.

*Activity:* Write a newspaper article (in tabloid journalism style) describing the events that take place at Morrigan’s Birthday Ball.

## VISUAL LITERACY

<<https://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/f-10-curriculum/the-arts/visual-arts/>>

*Activity:* Create a graphic novel interpretation of an incident in any of the novels.

*Activity:* Design a new cover template for this series.

*Activity:* Create a book trailer for this series. [See **Bibliography.**]

*Activity:* Draw a scene depicting Hawthorne competing in the Winter Trials based on how it is described in **Book 4.**

## FURTHER QUOTES FOR DISCUSSION

### Book 1:

1. “Imagine, Miss Crow,” he whispered. “*Imagine* how it must feel to be so beloved. So respected and *needed*. One day, if you work hard and do as Mr Squall teaches . . . that will be you.” She could imagine it. She *had* imagined, a hundred times over, how it would feel to be liked instead of feared. To see people smile instead of flinch when she walked into a room. It was one of her favourite daydreams.’ (p 37)

2. ‘Hear me when I tell you this: *you are not a curse on anyone*, Morrigan Crow. You never have been. And I think you’ve known that all along.’ (p 141)

3. ‘*That nobody will remember me. That my family won’t remember me because* Morrigan paused, her pencil hovering above the smoky page—*because they’d rather forget that I ever existed.*’ (pp 188–9)

4. ‘Perhaps she had a higher threshold for scariness than most people.’ (p 290)

5. “The gathering is underway. Wunder has noticed you, and you are at its mercy.”

“What does that mean?” Morrigan asked. “What’s the gathering?”

“You were born a Wundersmith, but if you do not learn how to harness Wunder, it will harness *you*. If you do not learn to control Wunder, it will control *you*. It will burn you slowly from the inside, and eventually . . . it will destroy you.” (p 435)

6. ‘He made *Wundersmith* a dark and terrible word, but it wasn’t always. You can change its meaning again, Mog.’ (p 440)

### Book 2:

1. ‘Oh, I know you can,’ said Miss Cheery. ‘I saw your trial. But all that time you’ve been learning how to make a dragon understand *you*, have you ever tried to understand a dragon in return?’ (p 96)

2. ‘Morrigan frowned. She sometimes felt that her true knack had nothing to do with being a Wundersmith. That it was, in fact, her remarkable ability to assume the worst. To see the disastrous in the day-to-day. It came, of course, from a lifetime of believing she was cursed, and it seemed to be stitched into the very fabric of her being, even now. Telling her not to worry about bad things happening around her was like telling Hawthorne not to get excited about dragons, or Jupiter not to be ginger.’ (p 153)

3. ‘Sometimes you just have to know which rules to obey, and which ones to break,’ said Morrigan, remembering something Jupiter had once told her. ‘When to follow the plan, and when



to improvise.’ (p 308)

4. This was what it had been waiting for. She’d thought it would be difficult to summon Wunder, but it was like... it *wanted* to be summoned. It gathered fast – a hundred tiny threads made of a million tiny specks of light, surrounding her head and body... swimming, skimming lightly over her. It was quick and curious. It felt *alive*. (pp 325–326)

5. ‘I don’t know what to tell you, Mog.’ Jupiter sighed. ‘Some people are brave bullies. Some people are friendly cowards.’ (p 443)

6. ‘Miss Crow has shown herself to be a force for good – a useful, interesting, good person, whom we are delighted to call one of our own. She may be a Wundersmith, but truly from today onwards, she is *our* Wundersmith.’ (p 462)

### Book 3:

1. ‘For many years,’ Elder Quinn’s voice echoed around them, ‘the Wundrous Society has had one mission. One unified, secret purpose, expressed in two discrete yet equally important tasks. We call this purpose, for want of a grander title, Containment and Distraction.’ (p 20)

2. ‘When the disease – or the *Hollowpox*, we’re calling it, for want of a better name – when the Hollowpox leaves the body,’ he continued, ‘it seems to take almost everything with it. It wouldn’t necessarily be obvious to anyone who isn’t like me, who isn’t a Witness. But they’re not *just* comatose, they’re . . . sort of . . . *empty*. No sense of self, no brain activity. Completely unresponsive. We remain hopeful that these effects may be temporary, but right now it’s impossible to know for sure.’ (p 184)

3. ‘The thing about numpties, Mog, is that they can always find plenty of other numpties to believe their numpty nonsense. You know what they say: you’re never more than six feet away from a numpty.’ (p 205)

4. ‘It’s dreadful of Steed to arrest people for something that shouldn’t be a crime. It’s only going to make people more frightened.’ (p 328)

5. ‘Maud steepled her fingers together and held them to her lips, looking thoughtful. ‘I’m not unsympathetic, Morrigan. It’s a terrible and dangerous disease, but a decision like this – to offer aid to a state that considers itself our enemy – must be made by my entire government, and I’m afraid the Wintersea Party is something of a dragon. A big, weighty old beast that can be difficult to reason with and impossible to steer.

They’ll never agree to help the Free State without some sort of quid pro quo. A deal,’ she clarified, noting Morrigan’s look of confusion.’ (pp 422–3)

6. ‘But this wasn’t that at all. Instead she felt her personhood ballooning and stretching, as if she had finally been granted permission to take up space in the world. There was nothing frightening about it, not the way it was before. Her powers weren’t being hijacked without her knowledge; this was a collaboration.’ (p 510)

### Book 4:

Food is lovingly described in this and other books in the series. Compare these three quotes:

1. ‘They got to work unpacking paper parcels of bacon chops and beef sausages, clean linen teatowels folded around freshly baked flatbreads, various pickles and chutneys in little jars, and jacket potatoes wrapped in foil. From one case emerged hand pulled noodles and a flask of steaming savoury broth. From another: tiny, speckled quail’s eggs and a bag of foraged mushrooms (Mahir and Morrigan sought double confirmation that they weren’t from the little shop at Eldritch Murdergarden). Meanwhile, Francis laid out boxes of his best treats, from petite pink fancies (Arch’s favourites), to diamond-shaped pockets of flaky pastry stuffed with soft

white cheese, sultanas and almonds, and sprinkled with cinnamon and honey. ('You made Evening Stars!' Lam shouted in rhapsodic delight when she spotted them.) Then, finally, the main event— 'Firecracker-candy rosemary pineapple cake!' Francis announced proudly, pulling a bright yellow confection from a cardboard baker's box. The two-tiered cake was covered in little dried pineapple slices that curled artfully upwards to look like sunflowers, with a sprinkle of shimmering black sugar crystals at the centre of each one. Unit 919 burst into applause at the sight of it. 'Aren't we a bunch of swells?' (pp 37–8)

2. 'Dinner was served next – an endless number of strange and unexpected courses, each no more than two bites. The wait staff brought silver tray after silver tray, announcing such dishes as, 'cold soup of sea urchin in a golden garlic broth' and 'warm salad of hand-foraged wood-ear mushrooms on a bed of salted riverweed', all of which sounded absolutely foul to Morrigan, and all of which tasted exquisite. (She tried to keep a mental list of the textures and ingredients so she could give Francis the rundown on Monday.)' (p 170)

3. 'There were platters of pastries and towers of tarts, many tiered stands stacked with tiny cream fancies and chocolate truffles. A whole rainbow of marzipan delicacies and chocolate eclairs were monogrammed with the bride and groom's initials in gold leaf. An immense white-cake centrepiece, taller than Morrigan, was crowned with two-foot toffee shards painted to look like the stained-glass windows of the chapel. A pair of life-size meringue swans floated down the middle of the table on a river of chocolate. A two-metre-high dragon carved from sugar rock stood on its haunches with spun-caramel wings outstretched and, thanks to some clever engineering, blue and pink clouds of fairy floss floated dreamily above the whole display' (pp 181–2)

What other feasts in this series did you particularly enjoy?

4. 'What's a liberationist?' 'A champion for the underdog. You liberate money and goods from the unworthy and give them to the needy.' (p 87)

5. 'This woman was trying to steal something from her. Something she'd kept safe all her life. Of course Meredith Crow was her mother! She'd stared at her portrait a million, billion times. She knew her by heart.' (p 110)

6. 'If . . . Jack's mum is in your unit,' she began haltingly, 'and that makes her your sister, which makes you Jack's uncle . . . and Bertram is my uncle, and he's your brother . . . then doesn't that— ' She paused, suddenly feeling shy. 'Doesn't that make you . . . sort of my uncle, too? A bit?' (p 659)

## FURTHER ACTIVITIES

1. **Compare this series to other young adult fantasy series** such as Philip Pullman's *His Dark Materials*, Garth Nix's *The Keys to the Kingdoms*, or Isobelle Carmody's *Obernewtyn Chronicles*. [See **Bibliography**.] This series has won several major awards and been widely acclaimed. Why do you think it has struck such a chord with readers?

2. **Design a poster to promote this series.**

3. Discuss the **titles of each of the novels**. For example, *Hollowpox* refers to the virus. What other title might each of the books have had?

4. **Debate any of the topics** covered in these notes, or suggested by the novels, for example, in Book 4, Conall puts three options to the students regarding dealing with the Guiltghast (pp 386–7).



5. In **Book 4**, Cadence introduces Morrigan and Hawthorne to the Silverborn Saga (pp 141–4) and later the novel about her mother is given to her by Noelle Devereaux. Book 4 satirises the tropes of this type of fiction, for example when Morrigan delivers her speech at her Birthday Ball: 'Because the truth – that Dario's murderer is with us right now, in this very room – feels much too dangerous?' There was a satisfying gasp, just as Cadence had promised there would be when she wrote this line down for Morrigan to memorise, borrowed from Inspector Gravely and the Killer of Castle Kell' (p 588). At Morrigan's birthday ball we also witness the fury of the Darling Family's neighbours when they discover that Margot Darling is Hillary D'Boer, the author of the scandalous genre fiction novels (p 618). Why does genre fiction attract such criticism?

6. Imagine what might possibly happen to Morrigan and her friends and **write a synopsis for the next novel in this series and give it a title and sub-title**. (For example in Book 4, the phrase 'the Deductions of Morrigan Crow' appears (p 586).

## CONCLUSION

*Nevermoor: The Trials of Morrigan Crow* is the first novel in the series by Jessica Townsend. With its inventive creation of a fantasy world and the strength of its central characters, it entices young readers into its extravagant world of magic, mesmerism and breathtaking adventures across time and space. Morrigan is a feisty heroine and her eccentric mentor Jupiter North, his nephew Jack and her friend Hawthorne provide a cast of engaging heroes to accompany her on her journey.

*Wundersmith: The Calling of Morrigan Crow* is the second novel in which we met our heroine Morrigan again, along with her patron, Jupiter North, her old friends, Jack and Hawthorne, and new friends, Cadence and the rest of Unit 919, and discover more about her capacity to 'call Wunder'. We discover more magical details of this inventive fantasy world and learn more about these complex characters. And we also meet some new ones such as the delightful Miss Cherry and the ghastly Dearborn and Murgatroyd.

*Hollowpox: The Hunt for Morrigan Crow* is the third novel in which we once again meet our heroine Morrigan Crow, along with her patron, Jupiter North, his nephew (and her friend) Jack, and all who live at the Hotel Deucalion, her old friends, Hawthorne, Cadence and the rest of Unit 919, and their conductor, Miss Cheery, and Mog discovers more about her capacity to 'call Wunder'. And we meet some new characters such as the foxwun, Sofia, the intrepid librarian, Roshni, Nurse Tim, and the alarming Rook.

*Silverborn: The Mystery of Morrigan Crow* is the fourth novel in Jessica Townsend's exhilarating series. It will leave Townsend's readers anxiously anticipating the fifth book.

'Is that all being a Wundersmith IS?' Her raised voice echoed in the vast, silent room. 'Is it just about killing and . . . and death? First the Museum of Stolen Moments, then the Hollowpox, now the Guiltghast. Am I just meant to be an exterminator? Because if that's all this is, you can forget it! I don't want to be your apprentice anymore. If that's all this is, I don't even want to be a WUNDERSMITH.' (p 626)

# ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**JESSICA TOWNSEND** lives on the Sunshine Coast in Queensland with her dogs, Vivien and Rik. Her pet fascinations include public transport, ancient cities, hotels, opera singers, Halloween, secret societies and gigantic cats – all of which have weaselled their way into *Nevermoor*, her first series and a city that feels like it belongs entirely to her. (Except now it belongs to you, too.) She was a copywriter for eight years, and was once the editor of a children's wildlife magazine for Steve Irwin's Australia Zoo. *Nevermoor: The Trials of Morrigan Crow*, her award-winning first novel was released in 2017. It won a number of awards including the 2018 ABIA for Book of the Year, Book of the Year for Younger Readers and Matt Richell Award for New Writer of the Year; the 2018 Indie Book Awards Book of the Year and Children's Category; the 2017 Aurealis Award for Best Children's Fiction; the 2018 Waterstones Children's Book Prize for Younger Fiction and was named a CBCA notable book. *Wundersmith: The Calling of Morrigan Crow* (2018), *Hollowpox: The Hunt for Morrigan Crow* (2020) and *Silverborn: the Mystery of Morrigan Crow* (2024) followed.

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR OF THE NOTES

**Dr Robyn Sheahan-Bright AM** operates *justified text* writing and publishing consultancy services, and is widely published on children's literature, publishing history and Australian fiction. Her publications include *Paper Empires: A History of the Book in Australia 1946–2005* (co-edited with Craig Munro) (UQP, 2006). In 2011 she was recipient of the CBCA (Qld) Dame Annabelle Rankin Award, in 2012, of the CBCA Nan Chauncy Award for Outstanding Services to Children's Literature, and in 2014, the QWC's Johnno Award. In 2021 she was appointed a member of the Order of Australia.