

FOLLOWING FRANKENSTEIN

Teaching Pack



CATHERINE BRUTON

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Introduction

A brilliantly-conceived and hugely imaginative 'sequel' to Mary Shelley's masterpiece.

Following Frankenstein is an epic adventure, spanning the icy wastes of the Arctic Tundra to the vaudeville circus of New York, from the award-winning author of *No Ballet Shoes in Syria* and *Another Twist in the Tale*.

Maggie's father has dedicated his life to a single pursuit: hunting down the monster created by Victor Frankenstein. It has cost Maggie and her family everything – and now her father is staking all they have left on one last voyage to the Arctic, with Maggie secretly in tow, where he hopes to find the monster at last.

But there they make a shocking discovery: Frankenstein's monster has a son...



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We have put together some activities for you to use with your class alongside *Following Frankenstein*, allowing you to explore important themes such as the influence of stories, otherness and kindness.



Catherine Bruton studied English at Oxford University and has been juggling life as a teacher, children's author and mum for the past fifteen years. As an English teacher she sees first-hand the impact stories can have on young readers – expanding their horizons, making them ask questions and see the world differently.

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Lesson One: The Influence of Stories

EXTRACT (pp. 1-2):

I could burn the letters, but I could never destroy them. The story they contained was etched upon my soul – it had shaped my life so far, just as it had shaped my father's, and just as it would continue to shape the course of my destiny long after the yellowing parchments were turned to dust. "Burn the letters, Maggie!" my aunt whispered again, clutching my hand with paper-thin fingers. "Promise me that the story ends here!" I made my promise. But I knew even then that it would not be the end of the story.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- When we first meet Maggie she tells us that the story of Frankenstein has shaped her life so far. What do you think has happened to her up to this point?
- Maggie tells the story of Frankenstein to the dock children. Why do you think they are all so enthralled by the tale?
- Maggie thinks her father might be obsessed with the monster because 'he believed it represented the opposite of death, the chance to hold the spark of life in your hands and resurrect the dead' (p. 10). What do you think about this?
- Ishmael says that Maggie's father has an insatiable desire: 'If he finds what he is looking for, it will not bring him the peace he desires. And yet he can have no peace until he has found it.' (p. 34) How do you think he can get out of this dilemma?
- The story of Frankenstein influences the author's writing. Why do you think they chose to write a sequel to this book in particular?

ACTIVITY: CLASSIC TALES

- As a class, make a list of stories that are described as 'classics'. Discuss what you think makes a book a 'classic'.
- Split the class into groups. Each group should be given a classic tale to research. What are the key themes of the book? When was it written? Have there been any recent retellings? Each group should create a poster on their classic tale.
- Ask the groups to present their posters to the class. Discuss why the class thinks these books are viewed as 'classics'. Are there any overlapping themes?

ACTIVITY: GLOSSARY

Following Frankenstein is inspired by Mary Shelley's book but also features lots of different settings and characters. Use the worksheet on the following page to create a glossary for the book. Some words are already on the sheet to define, but add any others that you're not sure about. Also, make a note of what you think influenced the author to include each word – did it come from *Frankenstein* or somewhere else?



Following Frankenstein Glossary

Word	Definition	Where did the word come from?
Expedition		
Inuit		
Atiq		



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Lesson One: The Influence of Stories

ACTIVITY: WRITING A SPIN-OFF

Following Frankenstein is a sequel to Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*. Write your own spin-off with a twist and have a go at building tension.

- Choose a character from a book you love. It could be the main character, a minor character, or you could dream up a character who never actually appears, like Dracula's mum, Harry Potter's long-lost twin sister, Lyra Belacqua's brother, Sherlock Holmes' son...It's up to you!
- You are going to write from that character's point of view – but DON'T tell the reader who you are right away! Instead, drop in clues as you go along – leaving your reader to puzzle it out for themselves. Keep them guessing till the very last line, the final twist and the big reveal! Use the plan below to structure your writing.

WRITING PLAN

- **Lines 1 and 2** – You are looking out of the window. What can you see? (Remember: drop in some clues but don't give it away too easily! E.g. Don't say, 'I am looking out over Hogwarts and the Forbidden Forest' – do say, 'I can see the turrets of the ancient building where I reside, and the dark forest where strange creatures loom.')
- **Lines 3 and 4** – You turn back into the room. What can you see around you? (Again – drop in clues without giving away too much at this stage!)
- **Lines 5 and 6** – Somebody comes into the room. What relationship are they to you? Describe what they look like and what they are wearing. (Pick out surprising or unusual details of clothing and appearance – but DON'T say any names!)
- **Lines 7 and 8** – The person who just entered the room says or does something. What do they say/do and how do you react? (Again – no names but DO try to drop in quite a big clue at this point!)
- **Lines 9 and 10** – You see something that triggers a memory from the past. What does it make you think of? (Go back in time and describe a key memory from your past. Was it a happier time? Was it when you first came to this place? Met this person? Was it before something terrible or wonderful happened to you?)
- **Lines 11 and 12** – Tell us how you have changed since then. (Have you risen in power, fallen into poverty, have you committed heinous crimes, found friends, found love, found treasure...?)
- **Lines 13 and 14** – You come back to the present and you react to the person who entered the room. (Perhaps you respond to what they said to you. Perhaps you try to kiss them, or kill them? Thank them for saving your life, accuse them of ruining your life, ask them to spare your life?)
- **Lines 15 and 16** – If you had one wish, what would it be? (the final clue before the big reveal!)

End by telling us who you are!

Once you have written your first draft, read it out to a teacher, family member or friend – see if (and when!) they figure out who you are! If they guess too early, go back and remove some give-away clues. If they can't guess at all, then perhaps add a few more clues in as you go along!



Lesson Two: Otherness

EXTRACT (p. 85):

“Why?” asked Kata.

It was a big question, the answer made up of a story that stretched back two generations behind him. A story of prejudice and cruelty and indifference. I did not know how to begin to tell it, so all I said was, “I suppose it’s because you are different.”

“Because I am ... different.” It was clear to see that all of his existence so far had been shaped by this one simple truth.

EXTRACT (p. 91):

That first day I taught him noughts and crosses, and draughts, which we played with coloured pebbles on the dusty floor of his cage, Victor nudging the stones along with his nose. A few days later I borrowed a pack of cards from the Russian midshipman and we played snap and cheat and other games I had seen the mariners play in the quarterdeck. We talked of our families and our childhoods. It turned out we had much in common: both of us having lost our mothers in childbirth, both brought up by a female relative, both longing to know absent fathers. It became clear that Kata had imagined his father as a traveller, an explorer, a great adventurer...

I looked at Kata and wondered how I had ever seen him as anything other than human. And now his words made me see the story of Victor Frankenstein and his creation differently too. For who was the greatest villain in the story – Kata’s father, the scientist who created him, or the society that named him a monster?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Ishmael says of the monster, ‘Some talk of him as one of their own; others say he took one of their own. Some speak of him as protector – others, of the curse his grief spreads over all he touches.’ (p. 34) Why do you think there are many different tales of the monster?
- Kata’s life has been shaped by the fact that he is different – he has been captured because of ‘prejudice and cruelty and indifference’ (p. 85). Why do you think people often treat people who are different to them cruelly?
- Maggie gets to know Kata and sees him as human. Why do you think she changes her mind?
- Maggie and Kata end up at the circus – a place where people who looked different were put on show. What do you think about this?
- Natty says, ‘Wherever there are people who see men by the colour of their souls, and not the colour of their skin or the shape of their features – there you will be welcomed, cared for, kept safe.’ (p. 179) Why is it important to judge people not by the way they look but for the way they are?



Lesson Two: Otherness

ACTIVITY: GETTING TO KNOW THE CLASS

- Kata is judged and treated differently because of the way he looks and where he comes from. Discuss as a class why this is wrong.
- When Maggie gets to know Kata, she comes to like him and realises that they are similar. Pair up children in the class with someone they might not usually talk to.
- Give everyone 10 minutes to talk to their partner and get to know them. You could provide some question prompts such as, 'what is your favourite hobby?', 'who do you live with?' and 'what is your biggest ambition?'
- When the 10 minutes are up, have each person share something new that they found out about their partner. Discuss if learning these things made the children view each other differently.

ACTIVITY: CELEBRATING DIFFERENCES POSTER

- Kata and the people at Florenzo's circus are put on display to entertain and disgust viewers. Their differences are exploited and treated as being 'wrong'. Discuss how you think we should view people's differences, focusing on how they should be celebrated.
- Discuss what you found out about each other in the previous activity, and how we are all different. For example, we like different foods, have different eye colours, have different families etc.
- Ask each child to create a poster that celebrates our differences. This could be a circus-themed poster, but instead of inviting people to be entertained, invites them to enjoy everyone's unique traits and differences.



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Lesson Three: Journeys

EXTRACT (p. 170-171):

Wraithmell decided we needed to move faster, and that meant taking risks, moving by day, taking routes that crossed human habitation or open plains. The going was harder than ever – more walking, more difficult terrain, more danger. But the mood was a little lighter, the atmosphere more convivial now that Natty Bumpo accompanied us...

Wraithmell went ahead, Natty went last, disturbing leaves, grass, breaking twigs to distract the slave-catcher, Loker, whose hot breath I could almost feel down our necks. We trailed pine branches behind us, and Natty also had a jar of civet – the secretions of a wild cat that were particularly noxious to smell and which caused Victor great alarm – and he marked trees and rocks as we passed to disguise our scent.

“Loker has dogs,” he said. “And a gang of trackers who know these woods better than any. He will find us – no doubt of that. But we need to get you to safety before he does.”

Safety. Freedom. Home. Those three words I whispered to myself in the long days and nights. Safety. Freedom. Home. That’s what we were doing this for. That’s what lay at the end of this journey – if we could ever reach the end.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- After fleeing the circus, Maggie and Kata go on a long journey. They stop talking to each other – why do you think this is? What might they be thinking about?
- When they leave the circus, Maggie has to leave her father behind. How do you think this feels?
- Maggie wants to find ‘Safety. Freedom. Home.’ (p. 171) Discuss what these words mean to you.
- Kata and Maggie also join the Underground Railroad. What other things do you think the people they meet here have been through?
- Which part of Maggie’s journey do you think is the hardest and why?

ACTIVITY: LETTERS HOME

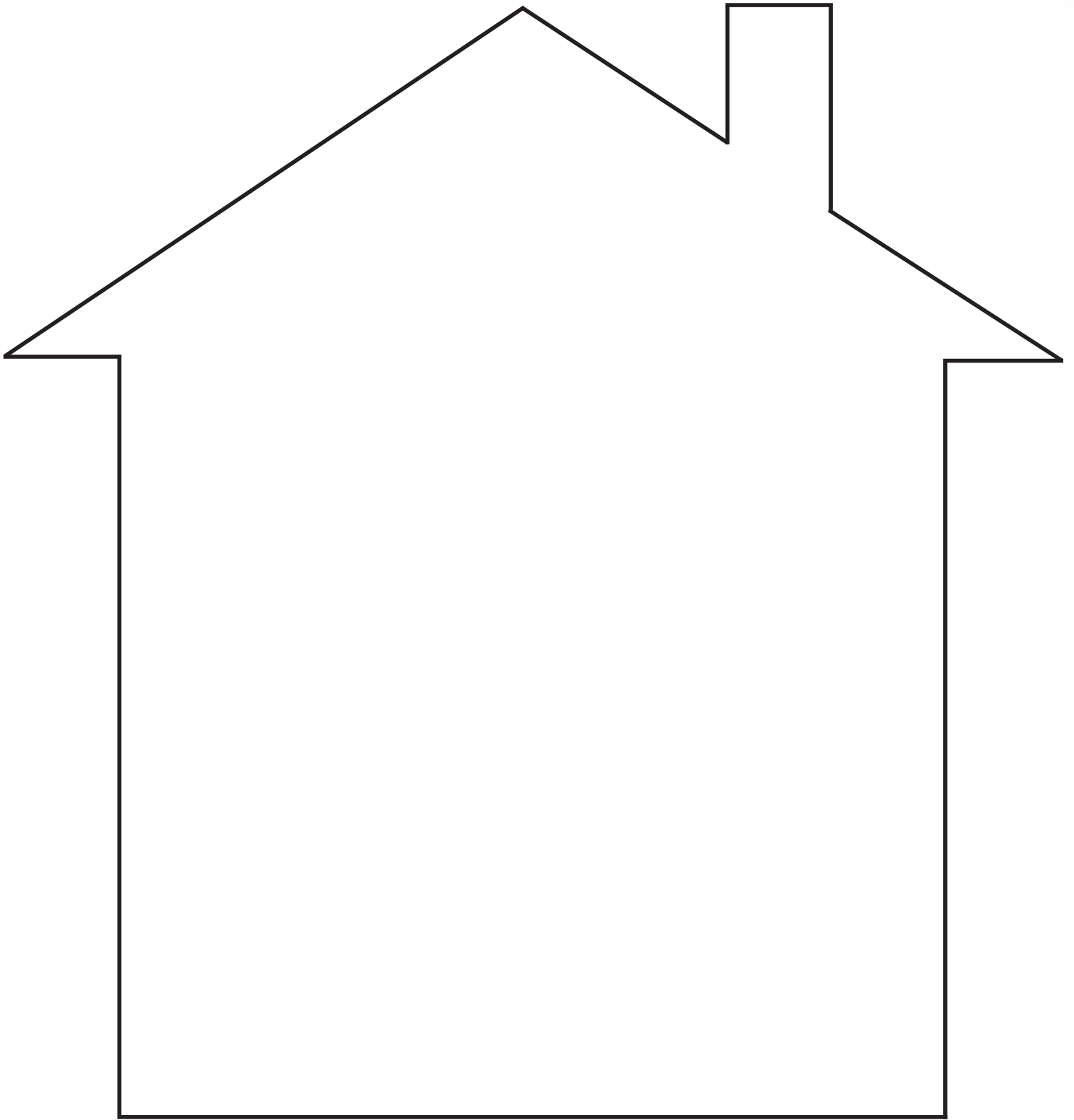
- Ask the class to choose a character from the book – this could be Maggie or someone she meets on her journey such as Wraithmell, or Simeon from the Underground Railroad.
- Write a letter home from the chosen character, telling their family or friends about the journey they have been on.
- Think about the different things each character might have seen on their journey. What has been hard? Has anything been good about the journey? Who have they met? Have they encountered kindness or cruelty?

ACTIVITY: HOME MEANS...

- Maggie is searching for home and freedom. Hand out the outline of a house on the following page to each pupil.
- Ask everyone to write inside the house what home means to them. This could be a collection of words, a paragraph or they could draw some pictures.
- Once everyone is finished ask some pupils to share their houses with the class. Are there any common themes?



Home is...



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Lesson Four: Kindness

EXTRACT (p. 226-227):

“This is Hunkapi – the ceremony for the making of relatives,” she explained. “One of the seven Lakota rites given to us by the Sacred White Buffalo Calf Woman. Now you are part of the Oglala forever. Part of the Great Nation and the great wind that blows freedom from coast to coast.”

I did not know what to say to express my gratitude. I thought of Pearl Dimesdale, who had been adopted by the Inuit; I thought of how Madame La Barboule had made us part of her family at the emporium; I thought of the Krajeks, risking everything to help others to safety. I thought that, for all the cruelty in this word, we had encountered so much kindness, so much goodness, so much love on our journey – more than enough, surely, to defeat the hatred?

I looked at her then, really looked. And I seemed to see a halo of licking flames encircling her head, her whole form – as I had seen when she stood framed in the doorway of the derailed train. I blinked and it was gone but I was sure I had not imagined it, nor had it been a trick of the light. For a second I had seen Winona as Natty Bumppo described – as the spirit, not the skeleton; the soul, not the poor cage that trapped its mortal form.

My fingers found the beads again now as I sat in the prow of the boat pushing out into the great lake, Krajek at the helm. The moon was low on the horizon. The beads lay across my chest where Victor had once nestled. They did not fill the void but they lent it a new colour. That was the only way of describing it. A bit of warmth touched the grief in my heart and lightened it – just a little.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Kata and Maggie encounter many kind people on their journey who help them – what is it about these people that make them kind?
- By helping Maggie and Kata, some of the characters put their own lives at risk – why do you think they do this?
- Do you think, as Maggie says, that kindness can ‘defeat the hatred’?

ACTIVITY: ACTS OF KINDNESS

- Ask the class to make a list of characters from the book, including Maggie’s Aunt, Madame La Barboule, Will Wraithmell, Natty Bumppo and Winona.
- Write down next to each of their names the acts of kindness they carried out in the book and add the impact this had on Maggie and Kata’s lives. Why were these acts so important?
- Have the children add to their list some acts of kindness that they could carry out themselves. How can they help someone else to feel welcome or safe?

ACTIVITY: KINDESS JOURNAL

- Set the class the task of keeping their own kindness journals for a week, making a note of any acts of kindness they carry out.
- Ask them to make a note of how their act made someone else feel and how it also made them feel.
- At the end of the week, have some time for the students to reflect on their journals. What have they learnt?



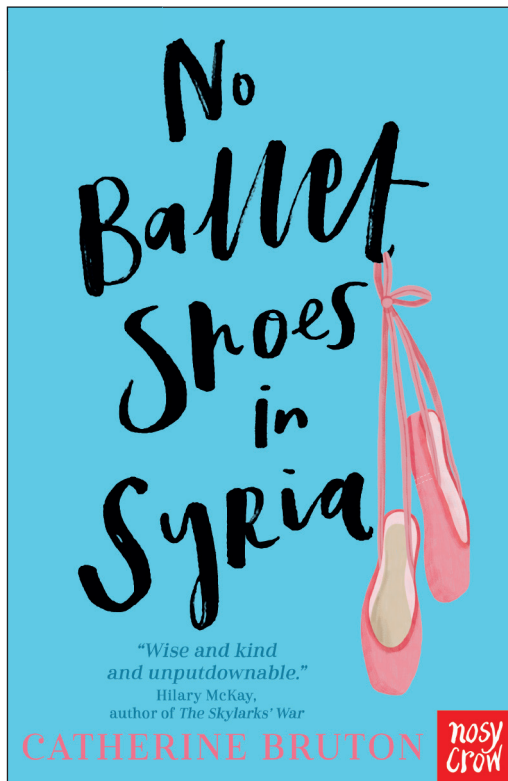
We hope you have enjoyed
using these resources!

We would love to see any work you create!

Share it with us on Twitter

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Don't miss Catherine Bruton's other brilliant books:



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