

About *THE MAGPIE'S LIBRARY*

Silva and her family visit her grandfather, only to find his health has taken a bad turn. As they struggle with this news, Silva seeks escape in books at the local library.

But she gets more than she bargained for when a magpie guides her to a secret, magical room containing books that she can not only read, but that she can live. Silva finds herself in the worlds of the characters ... who all turn out to be real people. People she knows.

There's a catch, though: she soon discovers that the magpie has lured her to these books for selfish and dark reasons. Going back to the books could mean losing her soul ...

About Kate Blair

Kate Blair is a native of Hayling Island, UK, and is now a Canadian citizen living in Toronto. Her first novel, *Transfer-ral*, was a finalist for the Manitoba Young Readers Choice Award and the Saskatchewan Young Readers Choice Snow Willow Award, and her second novel, *Tangled Planet*, was a finalist for the Sunburst Award for Excellence in Canadian Literature of the Fantastic. *The Magpie's Library* is her third book.

Curriculum

Grade 4, 5, 6 Language (Reading, Writing)

Student Objectives

After reading *The Magpie's Library*, students should be able to:

- Make inferences about texts based on textual evidence.
- Draw conclusions based upon implicit information in the text and construct meaning.
- Identify literary techniques that help them to understand the text.
- Predict and solve unfamiliar words and concepts based on their place in the text.
- Explain how elements of the text — narrative, characters, point of view, theme — build upon the text and contribute to a reading of it.
- Identify how elements of style — word use, sentence structure, differences in dialogue — help to build upon the narrative and make the text convincing.

Getting Started

1. Discuss the history of the nursery rhyme “One For Sorrow”.
2. Explain the concept of symbolism.
3. Discuss why magpies have historically been associated with evil and bad luck.

Discussion Questions

1. What is wrong with Silva's grandfather?
2. Have you ever read a book where the words seemed to leap off the page and pull you in? Which book?
3. Whose life would you like to enter and live? Why?
4. How is Margaret related to Silva?
5. How do you think the magpie chooses its targets or knows who is susceptible to it?
6. Why does Silva's Grandpa not want to take his medicine?
7. Discuss Silva's mother's and Chloe's behavior. In what ways are they similar or different?
8. Does the magpie really represent the devil? Is it responsible for what happens?
9. Contrast and compare Chloe's reaction to learning the truth of the magpie with Silva's. How are they similar or different? How would you react in a similar situation?
10. What is the magpie's name, and how long has he been a magpie?
11. Discuss symbolism in *The Magpie's Library*. What do you think the Whisper represents?
12. How many lives can you enter with the magpie before it kills you?
13. Would you risk losing your soul for your brother or sister?
14. What kind of room would the magpie turn into if it was you he was targeting?

Classroom Activities

1. Draw the magpie's library. How do you picture it?
2. Discuss your family tree. How far back do you know? Where are your ancestors from?