

BETWEEN BEFORE & AFTER

BY

MAUREEN DOYLE McQUERRY



Maureen McQuerry is an award-winning poet, novelist, and teacher. Her YA novel, *The Peculiars* is an ALA Best Book for YA 2013, Bank Street and Horn Book recommended book, and a winner of the

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PRE-READING QUESTIONS

Before reading the novel, discuss these questions with your students. It may be helpful to have your students record their thoughts in order to allow them to reflect when they finish reading the novel.

1. Is there ever a good reason to steal?
[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.2; W.9-10.10]
2. At what point is it better for children to be removed from their homes?
[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.2; W.9-10.10]
3. When is it okay to snoop through someone else's life, even though you know there may be consequences?
[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.2; W.9-10.10]
4. What is a miracle?
[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.2; W.9-10.10]
5. Is there more to living than merely surviving?
[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.2; W.9-10.10]

PRE-READING ACTIVITY

Before reading the novel complete the task below as a class or have students work independently.

1. Research *Hansel and Gretel* online. Read versions of the story and research the origin of the work.
[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.2, W.9-10.9, W.9-10.8, W.9-10.10]

POST-READING QUESTIONS

After reading the novel, discuss these questions with your students. If you had your students record their responses to the pre-reading questions, then have them review their responses and respond to the following post-reading questions on the same sheet of paper.

1. Describe the juxtaposition between the story Molly's researching and her mother's retelling of *Hansel and Gretel*. Discuss the similarities, differences, and why it is important for both stories to be told.
[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.1, W.9-10.9; CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.1, RL.9-10.9]
2. Explain why you believe the author chose to write novel in a split Point of View, alternating between Elaine and Molly.
[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.1, W.9-10.9; CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.1, RL.9-10.5]
3. Molly's uncle insists every story must have a miracle. Describe the miracle in this story and explain how you know it is a miracle.
[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.1, W.9-10.9; CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.1]
4. If you were placed in the same situations as Elaine, is there anything you would have done differently? Explain.
[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.1, W.9-10.9; CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.1, RL.9-10.3]
5. Describe the climax of Elaine's story and the climax of Molly's story. Discuss how the two contrast and compare.
[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.1, W.9-10.9; CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.1, RL.9-10.5]

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6. Review the novel and find elements of foreshadowing. Explain what each moment of foreshadowing is leading towards.

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.1, W.9-10.9; CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.1, RL.9-10.4, RL.9-10.5]

7. The author focuses on dichotomies in this novel. For instance, she tends to showcase her characters in pairs and contrasts the two. Here are some examples of her pairings. Choose one pairing to closely analyze the dichotomy presented, finding evidence from the text to support the conclusions you draw about the characters.

- a. Mother | Daughter
- b. Elaine | Stephen
- c. Angus | Molly

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.1, W.9-10.9; CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.1, RL.9-10.3]

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Discuss these questions with your students while reading and after completing the novel.

1. Consider at which moments in the story irreversible changes occur. Describe those moments and discuss how the story would be different if those changes did not occur.

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.9-10.1, SL.9-10.4, SL.9-10.6; CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.1; RL.9-10.5]

2. Describe why it is necessary for Elaine to tell her story, as opposed to having it told for her by Molly.

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.9-10.1, SL.9-10.4, SL.9-10.6; CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.1, RL.9-10.3]

3. Describe the facades that are apparent in the novel. Specifically, consider how certain characters strive to present themselves to the world.

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.9-10.1, SL.9-10.4, SL.9-10.6; CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.1; RL.9-10.5]

4. Discuss in what ways you feel Elaine is breaking expectations for young women at that time. Explain whether you agree with her actions rebuking the expectations or not.

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.9-10.1, SL.9-10.4, SL.9-10.6; CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.1; RL.9-10.3]

5. Consider the implicit societal implication of what Jesse means in chapter twenty-six when he tells Molly, "But let me give you some advice. Let all of this go. Guys don't like girls who are different, girls who overthink things." Describe how you would respond to his statement.

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.9-10.1, SL.9-10.4, SL.9-10.6; CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.1; RL.9-10.3, RL.9-10.4]

6. Discuss how Elaine's actions may have been different if Stephen had died, as well.

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.9-10.1, SL.9-10.4, SL.9-10.6; CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.1; RL.9-10.3, RL.9-10.5]

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THINK-PAIR-SHARE: COMPARING AND CONTRASTING *BETWEEN BEFORE & AFTER* TO *HANSEL AND GRETEL*

Directions: Have students write their responses to each question before sharing with a partner.

1. Compare the two stories. Describe similarities and differences.
[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W9-10.9, W.9-10.10; CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.9-10.1, SL.9-10.4, SL.9-10.6; CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.1; RL.9-10.9]
2. Explain whether you feel the children in *Between Before & After* struggled more than the ones in *Hansel and Gretel*.
[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W9-10.9, W.9-10.10; CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.9-10.1, SL.9-10.4, SL.9-10.6; CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.1; RL.9-10.3; RL.9-10.9]
3. Compare the antagonists in the stories.
[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W9-10.9, W.9-10.10; CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.9-10.1, SL.9-10.4, SL.9-10.6; CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.1; RL.9-10.3; RL.9-10.9]
4. Consider the main characters in *Between Before & After*. Which character do you most identify with Hansel? Explain.
[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W9-10.9, W.9-10.10; CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.9-10.1, SL.9-10.4, SL.9-10.6; CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.1; RL.9-10.3; RL.9-10.9]
5. Consider the main characters in *Between Before & After*. Which character do you most identify with Gretel? Explain.
[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W9-10.9, W.9-10.10; CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.9-10.1, SL.9-10.4, SL.9-10.6; CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.1; RL.9-10.3; RL.9-10.9]

ACTIVITIES

Students may complete the following activities while reading or after reading the novel.

1. Write journal entries as though you are Elaine upon first moving in. Describe what she thinks of her new surroundings. Express how she feels upon being saved and learning of her origins.
[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.1; CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W9-10.3; W.9-10.10]
2. Choose a character from the novel to analyze. Create a layered foldable. Decorate each layer to represent part of your character's personality. To create a five-layer foldable, take three pieces of paper. Align the long edges of the paper, and stagger the short edges about one finger-width apart. Keeping the stack neat, fold the papers horizontally, so the staggered edges are on the same size. You should now have five flaps. To hold the foldable together, you may either staple or glue the edge.
[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.1; RL.9-10.3; CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.10]
3. In groups of 3-4 review your responses to the pre-reading questions. Discuss whether your opinions have changed after reading the novel. Explain why or why not.
[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.9-10.1, SL.9-10.4, SL.9-10.6; CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.1]
4. Create your own adaptation of *Hansel and Gretel*. Create a book out of craft supplies including images and your adaptation in a neat presentation.
[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.3, W.9-10.6]