



The Interrogation of Ashala Wolf

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ISBN: 978-0-7636-6988-1
\$17.99 (\$20.00 CAN)

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Summary

“There will come a day when a thousand Illegals descend on your detention centers. Boomers will breach the walls. Skychangers will send lightning to strike you all down from above, and Rumlbers will open the earth to swallow you up from below. . . . And when that day comes, Justin Connor, think of me.”

Ashala Wolf has been captured by Chief Administrator Neville Rose, a man who is intent on destroying Ashala’s Tribe—the runaway Illegals hiding in the Firstwood. Injured and vulnerable and with her Sleepwalker ability blocked, Ashala is forced to succumb to the machine that will pull secrets from her mind.

And right beside her is Justin Connor, her betrayer, watching her every move.

Will the Tribe survive the interrogation of Ashala Wolf?

About the author

Ambelin Kwaymullina loves reading sci-fi and fantasy books, and has wanted to write a novel since she was six years old. She comes from the Palyku people of the Pilbara region of Western Australia. When not writing or reading, she teaches law, illustrates picture books, and hangs out with her dogs. She has previously written a number of children’s books, both alone and with other members of her family. *The Interrogation of Ashala Wolf* is her first novel.

How to use these notes

This story works on many levels. The suggested activities are therefore for a wide range of ages and abilities. Please select accordingly.

These notes are for:

- Grade 7 and up
- Age 12 and up

Key Learning Areas:

- English

Example of:

- Novel
- Young Adult fiction
- Dystopian fiction

Themes/Ideas:

- Memories
- Reality
- Environment
- Diversity
- Friendship
- Courage



Discussion questions and activities

- Before reading *The Interrogation of Ashala Wolf*, view the cover of the book. Identify the following:

- The title
- The author
- The publisher
- The summary

- Based on the cover, what do you think this story is about? How do you think it will begin/end?
- “Before *the Reckoning*? There weren’t any Illegals back then. Although there were different peoples—different races, they were called. Ember had told me about it, once—how things like my skin not being the same color as hers or the way Pen’s eyes were almond-shaped, used to mean something. After the end of the old world, when there were so few humans left, everyone stopped worrying about things like that.” (p. 111)

Discuss the implications of the statement that race and physical differences are no longer relevant.

- Even though people are no longer discriminated against because of physical appearance in Ashala’s world, those with different abilities are classified as Illegal (unless they are given an Exemption), and are locked up to protect the Balance. “Humans fear difference, and when they are afraid, they will find a way to destroy what they fear.” (p. 173) Discuss humanity’s need to differentiate people and the inability to then accept the differences.
- What is the Balance? How is the Balance in the world of *The Interrogation of Ashala Wolf* similar to the concerns in our contemporary world of climate change?
- Neville Rose is often described as looking like a grandpa, and Ashala herself feels inclined to trust him because of his looks. How much do you think a person’s appearance can affect our perception of them?
- Ashala says to Neville Rose, “I think your story is the Balance. You tell yourself that everything you do to Illegals is okay because it’s all for the sake of the Balance.” (p. 130) But then she changes her mind: “The reason Chief Administrator Neville Rose imprisoned and tortured Illegals was simply because he *liked* doing it, and he’d never thought his actions were for the good of the Balance. That was just something he said to other people.” (p. 132) What do you think Neville Rose’s motives are? Do you think he believes

in what he is doing? Do you think he would be a bad person if he was just following his beliefs?

- Ashala’s strongest desire is to protect those she loves. Why do you think she feels so strongly about this? Do you think events in her past have influenced this? Do you think this makes Ashala a more appealing character?
- *The Interrogation of Ashala Wolf* often uses metaphors to describe new and difficult concepts, such as the river and pebble metaphor used by Ember to describe how she will alter Ashala’s memories. What are some of the other metaphors used in the book? Do you think they allow you to grasp foreign concepts better?
- Ember says of her ability: “I can take memories from people. And I can share them, change them, and even invent ones that never happened. . . . I can’t forget.” Discuss the positive and negative aspects of Ember’s ability. Is it a power that you would want? Or is the compromise too much? Discuss how Ember’s ability can represent social media and the Internet in our contemporary society.
- “I mean, everyone knew the dangers of advanced tech. It had isolated the people of the old world from nature, shielding them from the consequences of imbalance, and yet they’d believed, right up until the very end, that it would save them.” (p. 267)

Discuss the causes of the Reckoning. Do you think the consequent regulation of technology is right?

- Could technology have a similar effect on our world as it does in Ashala’s? Discuss the dangers that technology represents to our culture and our reliance upon it.
- Ashala allows Ember to rearrange her mind and her knowledge of the world. Discuss the level of trust and friendship that gives Ashala the confidence to allow Ember to do this.
- Draw a time line of the plot. Note who has power at certain points in the novel and who thinks they have power. Are these often different? Why is power such a major theme in this novel?
- In *The Interrogation of Ashala Wolf*, some characters believe that the way to change the world is through changing how people think, and others believe it is more effective to change the world through actions and violence. Set up a mock debate to discuss each of these views.



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Candlewick Press Classroom Ideas

- In what way is the dream figure of the Serpent reminiscent of the Indigenous Australian culture? What other aspects of the novel have drawn from Indigenous Australian culture?
- How is the Indigenous Australian idea of learning from Elders represented in this novel?

Dystopian Fiction

- What is the meaning of *dystopian*?
- Where did the word *dystopian* originate?
- What other novels can you name that are set in a dystopian world?
- In what ways is *The Interrogation of Ashala Wolf* a dystopian novel?
- How does *The Interrogation of Ashala Wolf*'s dystopian setting draw parallels between our contemporary world and Ashala's world? What is revealed about our world from this parallel?
- Create your own dystopian world. Write a short story set in this world.
- Comparative text: Read Thomas More's *Utopia*. What is similar between the utopia in Thomas More's world and the world in *The Interrogation of Ashala Wolf*?

Short and fun

- If you lived in the world of the Tribe, what ability would you want to have?
- If you were to join the saurs, what would your saur name be?
- Which animal would you have a connection with if you were part of the Tribe? And what would your name become?
- Create a movie trailer for *The Interrogation of Ashala Wolf*. How do you convey the plot of the book without giving too much of the story away?
- Draw a map of the world in *The Interrogation of Ashala Wolf*.