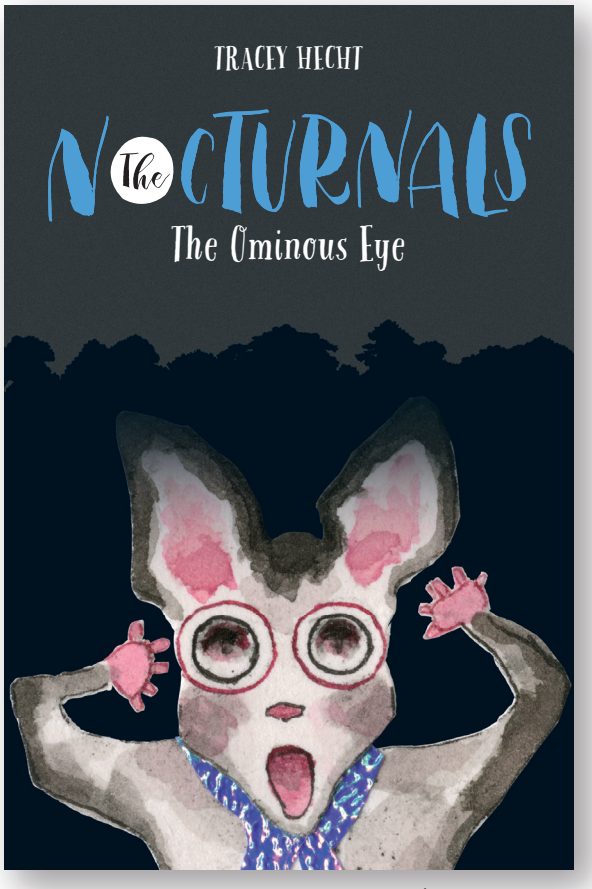
EDUCATOR'S SCIENCE GUIDE

The Nocturnals: *The Ominous Eye*



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By
TRACEY HECHT
with illustrations by
KATE LIEBMAN

A Flabbergastifying Adventure Under the Stars!

About The Book

In *The Ominous Eye,* when a violent jolt fractures the earth, the Nocturnal Brigade sets out to investigate its source. Along their journey, Dawn, Bismark and Tobin meet an unfamiliar reptile—a tuatara named Polyphema—who reveals that a giant beast caused the destruction and will soon strike again. The tuatara, with her special insights, is the only one who can help them stop this fearsome predator…but can she be trusted? With help from an owl, the jerboas, and a few kiwis, a trap is set since surrender is not an option against this relentless beast.

Common Core State Standards addressed by the discussion questions and activities in this guide are noted throughout. For more information on the Common Core, visit corestandrads.org.

Series Overview

The Nocturnals series features three unlikely friends: Dawn, a serious fox, Tobin, a sweet pangolin and Bismark, the loud mouthed, pint sized sugar glider. The stories all play out in their nighttime world with teamwork, friendship and humor in every adventure.

EXPLORE THE WORLD MAP OF *THE OMINOUS EYE*

http://www.nocturnalsworld.com/map/

For More Information: www.nocturnalsworld.com

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New York City
www.fabledfilms.com

I. Pre-Reading Activity

Lead a class discussion about the characteristics of mystery, horror and adventure fiction. How might a novel fit all three genres? Define the word "ominous". Think about the title of the novel and write a one-page paper that establishes the genre(s) to which The Ominous Eye belongs.

Correlates to Common Core Language Arts Standards in Speaking & Listening: Comprehension & Collaboration SL. 3-5.1, SL. 3-5.3; Writing: Text Types & Purposes W. 3-5.1.

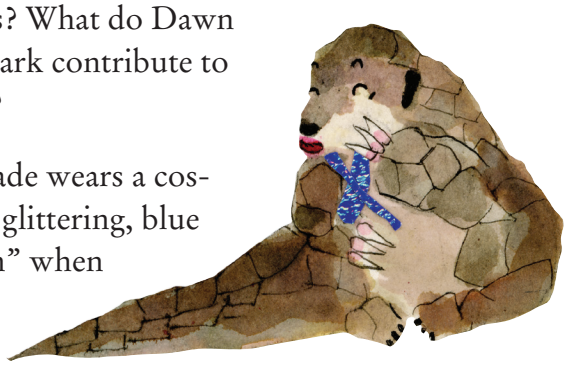
II. Classroom Discussion

These discussion questions ask students to think critically about plot, character and theme to ensure an understanding of how these elements combine to form a work of literature.

The conflict of a novel is often established in the first chapter. What is the conflict of *The Ominous Eye?* How is the conflict revealed? What is the climax, or turning point, in the novel?

Foreshadowing is a literary device that gives a hint about something that happens later in the story. "The earth! It's moving," says Tobin. (p. 17). What does his observation foreshadow? Discuss the emotional response of the Brigade when Tobin issues his warning.

Tobin has a very long tongue that coils inside his stomach when not in use. How does Tobin use his tongue to help the Brigade escape dangerous situations? What do Dawn and Bismark contribute to the team?



The Brigade wears a costume of "glittering, blue snakeskin" when they go on a mission. What is the purpose of the costume? Debate whether the costume gives them courage and makes them brace. Identify the brace acts of the Brigade. Which animal(s) shows the most courage as the story advances?

Dawn wants to warn the animals of the valley about the impending danger, but she doesn't want to create panic. Explain her plan. How is this the mark of a leader? Debate whether she succeeds in keeping the animals calm.

Why does Bismark accuse Dawn of being jealous of Polyphema? How does Dawn react to his remarks?

Discuss how Dawn deals with Polyphema. Why is it difficult for Dawn to maintain order when Polyphema has such control over the others?

At what point in the novel is "the team" threatened? Why does Polyphema tell the birds that Dawn demanded the "no-fly zone"? Discuss Dawn's anger when she discovers that Polyphema trapped the birds under the net at the bottom of the crater. Why is it important for Dawn to control her temper?

Dawn insists that the only way to solve the problem is to go directly to the source. Tobin thinks the source is "the beast". Who is the real source? Discuss how Dawn discovers the source.

How is Dawn the voice of "reason and truth"? Discuss how the "beast" almost destroys these qualities in Dawn. Debate whether the dangerous situation that looms over the valley strengthens Dawn as a leader by the end of the novel.

Explain how Polyphema uses Otto, the owl, to create further panic. Discuss what Bismark means when he says, "We'll be the beast's midnight mincemeat". (p. 144)

What is the first hint that there is no "beast"? How do the marks on Otto provide a clue to the "real beast" in the situation?

Dawn issues a statement, "We cannot let our fear control us". (p. 189) Debate what the animals learn about fear from Polyphema's false story. What does Polyphema learn from the Brigade? How are these lessons similar to lessons learned in animal fables?

Humor in novels is usually revealed in dialogue, or specific scenes within the plot. Discuss humor in *The Ominous Eye.* Which character is the most humorous? Explain how humor breaks the seriousness of the dire situation of the animals.

Correlates to Common Core Language Arts Standards in Reading Literature: Key Ideas & Details RL. 3-5.1, RL. 3-5.3; Craft & Structure RL. 3-5.4, RL. 3-5.5, RL. 3-5.6; Integration of Knowledge & Ideas RL. 4-5.9; Speaking & Listening: Comprehension & Collaboration SL. 3-5.1, SL. 3-5.3; Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas SL. 3-5.6; Language: Conventions of Standard English L. 3-5.1; Knowledge of Language L. 3-5.3.

III. Curriculum Connections

Discuss the following simile: "Like water escaping a dam, the birds rushed from the gap." (p. 127) Find other examples of simile in the novel. Then have students write a simile that best describes the Brigade's reaction to Polyphema's babies.

Correlates to Common Core Language Arts Standards in Vocabulary Acquisition & Use L. 3-5.5.

It's illegal to scream "fire" in a public arena because it creates hysteria and panic. How might Polyphema be charged with a similar illegal act? Put Polyphema on trial. Think about the personalities of the animals, and assign them to the following roles: judge, defense attorney, prosecutor, court bailiff, jurors, and witnesses. Make specific references to the events in the novel when building the oral arguments.

Correlates to Common Core Language Arts Standards in Reading Literature RL. 3-5.3; Speaking & Listening: Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas SL. 3-5.4; Language: Conventions of Standard English L. 3-5.1; Knowledge of Language L. 3-5.3.

Polyphema convinces the animals that the "third eye" gives her special powers. Think about the physical characteristics of the other animals. Then write a short story about one of the animals and how they might use a unique physical characteristic to their advantage.

Correlates to Common Core Language Arts Standards in Writing: Text types & Purposes W. 3-5.3; Language: Conventions of Standard English L. 3-5.1, L. 3-5.2; Knowledge of Language L. 3-5.3.

At the end of the novel, Dawn says, "Let's go home. All of us." (p. 191) As a class, brainstorm the habitat of the following animals: Dawn, Tobin, Bismark, Otto, and Polyphema. Instruct students to use HOME as the spine word and write an acrostic poem that best describes the habitat of one of the animals.

Correlates to Common Core Language Arts Standards in Writing: Production & Distribution of Writing W. 3-5.4.

Tobin thinks the outline of the animal at the bottom of the crater is a dragon, a creature he has heard about in myths. Dawn thinks that dragons are an "invention of storytellers". Use books in the library or sites on the internet to find a dragon myth. Then prepare an oral presentation of the myth. Include an explanation about the origin of the myth.

Correlates to Common Core Language Arts Standards in Writing: Research to Build & Present Knowledge W. 3-5.7; Speaking & Listening: Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas SL. 3-5.4; Language: Conventions of Standard English L. 3-5.1; Knowledge of Language L. 3-5.3.

Review the elements of mystery, horror and adventure fiction that were discussed in the Pre-Reading Activity. Then divide the class into three groups, and instruct them to write a favorite scene from the novel as a one-act play in one of the above three genres. Allow time in class for group performances.

Correlates to Common Core Language Arts Standards in Writing: Text Types & Purposes W. 3-5.3; Language: Conventions of Standard English L. 3-5.1; Knowledge of Language L. 3-5.3.

Ask students to use books in the library or sites on the internet to find out information regarding the reproductive habits of the tuatara. The following website is helpful: **http://www.teara.govt.nz/en/tuatara/page-1**. Consider the facts, and write a defense for the behavior of Polyphema.

RELATED WEBSITE

http://bitly/TuataraHatchinge

This YouTube video shows a tuatara hatching at Victoria University of Wellington.

Correlates to Common Core Language Arts Standards in Writing: Text Types & Purposes W. 3-5.3; Research to Build & Present Knowledge W. 3-5.7; Language: Conventions of Standard English L. 3-5.1m L. 3-5.2; Knowledge of Language L. 3-5.3.

IV. Vocabulary/Use of Language

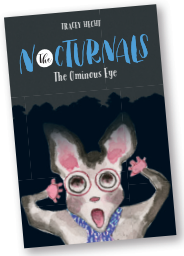
The exercise below has a word search activity sheet to share with your students on page 5.

Students should be encouraged to jot down unfamiliar words and try to define them taking clues from context. Such words may include: *bulbous* (p. 25), *fiend* (p. 33), *angular* (p. 36), *mesmerized* (p. 40), *shards* (p. 46), *wary* (p. 50), *nimble* (p. 51), *mustering* (p. 55), *chided* (p. 56), *stalked* (p. 76), *antics* (p. 83), *silhouettes* (p. 87), *erupted* (p. 89), *distraught* (p. 90), *celebratory* (p. 91), *elite* (p. 93), *catapulted* (p. 102), *bewilderment* (p. 102), *recoil* (p. 104), *instituted* (p. 106), *perfectionism* (p. 116), *guttural* (p. 119), *stampede* (p. 121), *quake* (p. 129), *ascent* (p. 132), *tawny* (p. 134), *convulsed* (p. 135), *camaraderie* (p. 137), *intimidating* (p. 151), *bereaved* (p. 152), *punctuated* (p. 156), and *retch* (p. 162).

Remind students that adjectives are descriptive, and adverbs show action. Then ask them to identify the part of speech of each word.

Correlates to Common Core language Arts Standards in Language: Vocabulary Acquisition & Use L. 3-5.4.

The discussion questions and activities in this guide were written by Pat Scales, Children's Literature Consultant and retired school librarian.



The Ominous Eye Word Search

S	T	I	C	O	N	V	U	L	S	E	D	M	O	W	S	Y
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L	G	G	G	T	H	L	M	P	Z	I	J	J	A	D	Y	W
H	U	U	V	J	I	E	N	B	N	G	O	M	A	I	E	A
O	A	T	C	T	D	M	F	O	L	Y	P	C	Q	S	O	T
U	R	T	E	B	E	W	I	L	D	E	R	M	E	N	T	C
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S	C	I	T	N	A	Y	R	A	S	C	E	N	T	E	B	U
I	D	E	T	A	U	T	C	N	U	P	G	M	K	D	Y	M

ANGULAR
ANTICS
ASCENT
BEREAVED
BEWILDERMENT
BULBOUS
CAMARADERIE
CATAPULTED
CELEBRATORY
CHIDED
CONVULSED
DISTRAUGHT
ELITE
ERUPTED
FIEND
GUTTURAL
INSTITUTED
INTIMIDATING
MESMERIZED
MUSTERING
NIMBLE
PERFECTIONISM
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