

EDUCATOR GUIDE



Listen.

This is a guide for the book *The Ogress and the Orphans* by Kelly Barnhill.

Since you've found this guide, you are probably already thinking that this is an excellent book for group discussion—a real opportunity to give readers a chance to listen to and learn from one another. If so, you are right.

The Ogress and the Orphans is a great book for discovering and exploring themes, developing and asking questions that are personally interesting and relevant, and creating space for wide-ranging and even philosophical discussions.

To help, this guide offers starting points for interactions of all kinds, including conversations around themes such as community building, listening, countering bias, kindness, generosity, belonging, perception, truth, knowledge, power, fear, good and evil, and the strength of stories. The guide also has suggestions for activities that encourage writing, diving into research, creating art, and serving the community.

This guide can also be used as a springboard for just letting readers wonder about what they've read and asking their own questions. For having readers share their questions with one another and look together for common themes and ideas they'd like to discuss. For encouraging them to talk and listen to one another and respond by connecting their thoughts with what others are saying and with what they have read.

It's all good.



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AGES 10+

ABOUT THE BOOK

A BENEVOLENT ALL-KNOWING NARRATOR tells the tale of Stone-in-the-Glen, a once-upon-a-time lovely town, before fires, floods, and other misfortunes caused the close-knit community to lose their beloved library, their school, their park, and even their neighborliness. The townspeople rely on their Mayor, a dazzling fellow who assures his constituents that he alone can help. After all, he is a famous dragon slayer. (At least, no one has seen a dragon in his presence.)

But the Mayor delivers only promises and clever talk. As the townspeople grow wary of one another and gird themselves for additional calamity, they fail to notice that the 15 children and the elderly guardians of the Orphan House need support. A neighboring Ogress observes their plight, as well as how many of the townspeople are also suffering. With the help of some excellent crows, she begins nightly trips to town to deliver wholesome baked goods and boxes of vegetables to her neighbors.

The anonymous gifts are appreciated, but they are not enough. Cass, one of the orphans, leaves so that the others will have more. As the townspeople learn of Cass's disappearance, they turn once again to their Mayor to solve the problem. At the Mayor's suggestion, blame is cast on the Ogress, who, unbeknownst to them, has found Cass and quietly and safely returned her to Orphan House.

The townspeople blatantly ignore the fact that Cass has returned, and the pleas of the orphans to stop villainizing the Ogress go unheard. After an attack on the Ogress and her farm, the orphans take matters into their own hands. They help their generous neighbor, reveal the truth about the Mayor, and mend their broken community.

PRAISE FOR *THE OGRESS AND THE ORPHANS*

★ “As exquisite as it is moving.”—*Kirkus Reviews*, starred review

★ “It is fortunate that her tinkering with fairy tales and fables helped open a path to this novel that champions kindness in a very dark world.”—*Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books*, starred review

★ “Fairy-tale trappings cloak modern lessons and timeless ideals that readers will do well to take to heart, no matter their age.”—*Booklist*, starred review

★ “Newbery Medalist Barnhill incorporates ancient stories, crow linguistics, and a history of dragonkind into an ambitious, fantastical sociopolitical allegory that asks keen questions about the nature of time, the import of community care, and what makes a neighbor.”—*Publishers Weekly*, starred review

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



KELLY BARNHILL lives in Minnesota with her husband and three children. She is the author of six novels, including *The Girl Who Drank the Moon*, winner of the 2017 John Newbery Medal. She is also the winner of the World Fantasy Award and has been a finalist for the Minnesota Book Award, the NCTE Charlotte Huck Award, the SFWA Andre Norton Award, and the PEN/USA literary prize. You can visit her online at kellybarnhill.com or on Twitter: @kellybarnhill.

ALSO BY KELLY BARNHILL



2017 NEWBERY MEDAL

THE GIRL WHO DRANK THE MOON
HC: 9781616205676 / \$17.95
PBK: 9781616207465 / \$9.95
EBOOK: 9781616206567 / \$9.95
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THE WITCH'S BOY
HC: 9781616203511 / \$24.99
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EBOOK: 9781616204334 / \$9.95
AGES 9+



NOTE TO EDUCATORS

This educator guide is designed to offer you support for using *The Ogress and the Orphans* with students in grades 5 and above in a language arts classroom, with cross-curricular connections to social studies. Choose what works for you and what's right for your students from a variety of reflection and discussion questions, prompts for taking a Socratic approach to discussion, writing opportunities, and activities to draw students deeper into the text. Whether you read *The Ogress and the Orphans* as a whole-class novel study or offer it as a book-club title to small groups, you'll find resources here to inspire students to reflect on their reading, think about and share their own experiences, make connections, and be creative.

Ideas Upon Which to Reflect and Write

- Compare and contrast the Ogress's favorite saying, "The more you give, the more you have," with the words of the Mayor, "The more they know you have, the more they will try and take from you" (63).
- The Ogress is looking for a way to belong. What does it mean to belong? Reflect on and write about the different groups you are a part of—your family, friends, school community, teams, neighborhood, religious community, etc.—and how belonging to these different groups affects how you view and feel about the world.
- "The butcher was not a bad man. But he was not a good man, either. Was it necessary, he wondered, to be entirely good or entirely bad? Surely, a person could live a perfectly acceptable life being neither" (205). Compare the butcher's thoughts with Bartleby's dream from *The Altruria* on page 211.
- The Ogress says, "The antidote to anger is tenderness, and the antidote to discord is reconciliation" (283). What does she mean? Explain the components of these antidotes using the format of a recipe.
- Space and time get funny around books and in the Reading Room at Orphan House. Where else does this happen and why? Have you ever noticed a similar phenomenon when reading or working on something intently? Write a journal entry that describes a time you felt completely absorbed and energized by an activity.

Some Questions to Support Reflection and Discussion

- All good books ask questions. What questions are being asked in *The Ogress and the Orphans*? What questions do you find yourself asking? Are the questions more important than the answers? Why or why not?
- Bartleby, who enjoys philosophy, says, “Everything is a both ways situation. All situations contain multitudes” (27). What do you think he means? Do you agree with Bartleby? Why or why not?
- Who is telling this story? The narrator seems to know everything! What advantages and disadvantages did you find to having a narrator who is omniscient (or all-knowing)? When the Ogress uses her periscope, she can see a lot, but not everything. What can she not see? What are you missing when you look at something from just one perspective?
- The townspeople of Stone-in-the-Glen once discussed and debated all kinds of things. What kinds of things did they talk about? What’s the difference between having a debate and having a disagreement? What do people in your community talk about?
- The Mayor “had a wonderful voice” (184), yet the way he talks prevents people from thinking. What are the dangers of listening to him? Is there a way the townspeople could tell what he is really saying?
- What assumptions do the townspeople make about the Ogress because she is an ogre? What assumptions does the Ogress make about the townspeople? Where did these ideas come from? What other characters in the story get treated as stereotypes? How does stereotypical thinking lead to bias and discrimination? How can people challenge and fight against stereotypes?
- “Our favorite philosopher says that anger is just fear in disguise” (268). What has the Mayor done to encourage fear, and anger, in Stone-in-the-Glen? Why does the Mayor prefer his constituents to be in an emotional state of fear or anger? Why are the townspeople more interested in fueling their anger by making the Ogress a scapegoat than in recognizing Cass’s return?
- The Ogress says, “If we want to know what’s true, we need to look with our minds. And then, if we want to know what is vital, we need to look with our hearts” (339). What does the Ogress mean? Do you agree with her? Why or why not?
- “It is important, always, to treat everyone with compassion and respect. This is well known” (3). Do you agree that this is well known? How does someone come to know this? What does treating someone with compassion and respect look like?
- What is a neighbor? What is the essence of neighborliness? What does it mean to be a neighbor? What do you owe to your neighbor? Expand on your answers using ideas you found in the book.
- “In the end, people will only change their behavior and bad ideas through big changes in their thinking. And thinking starts with questions” (349). Why is it important that people ask questions? How does this help the townspeople? How do we get people to start asking questions?

ACTIVITY IDEAS



Treasure from Trash

Several of the characters are good at making use of things they find. Even if they don't think of themselves as enjoying philosophy as Bartleby and Myron do, Anthea, the Ogress, and others often wonder about the essence of things. Just as philosophers do, they examine everyday things and look at them from different perspectives, questioning what they can do and how they can be put to use. Have students further explore the essence of things by reusing and repurposing words to create a found poem.

A found poem is a collage of language. Readers pick and choose words and phrases from an existing work then rearrange them to make meaningful art. Ask them to create a found poem that evokes their feelings about their neighborhoods or community, thinking about what makes it what it is. In creating their found poem, they could use words from *The Ogress and the Orphans* or draw from discarded print material. If old magazines, newspapers, or other print items are available, readers could cut out the words and phrases they want to use and glue them on paper, creating a true collage. Display or have readers share their poetry aloud.

A Lovely Town

Get readers thinking about how towns work. What kinds of economic, governing, and social systems do they see in Stone-in-the-Glen? How would they characterize this community? Is it a democracy? How would readers compare it to the society in which they live? Given the hardships and poor governance people in Stone-in-the-Glen have experienced, what kind of economic, governing, and social system do readers think would work well for them? How does that compare to the society they live in today?

Ask readers to work in small groups to create a society in which every citizen can thrive. They can base their society on whatever principles and ideas they choose, as long as their ideas are not utopian or magical. What sort of a society would it be? What type of systems would they establish? How would they resolve issues of inequality or injustice? How is their society self-sustaining? Readers can be creative in developing their own great charter of their ideal, fair society. Have students present their societies and encourage any revisions based on good ideas found in the societies other readers have created.

RESOURCES

Social Entrepreneurship: 7 Ways to Empower Student Changemakers edutopia.org/blog/empowering-student-changemakers-vicki-davis

Time for Change: Dream, Act, Change Our World fbmarketplace.org/time-for-change/

Kids on the March: 15 Stories of Speaking Out, Protesting, and Fighting for Justice by Michael G. Long workman.com/products/kids-on-the-march/hardback

Making Change

The children of Orphan House see the dire problems of Stone-in-the-Glen and want to help change their community. When they can't get adults in town to listen to them, they collaborate with the Ogress to revive their community. Use the resources below to talk with readers about why big change needs people working together.

Many kids are interested in and concerned about real issues in their communities. Taking action can help them feel empowered and effective, and help build problem-solving skills. Give readers opportunities to voice their concerns and cultivate their interest in a particular problem. Then help them think of ways to use their talents to come up with solutions. Make suggestions for who they might work with to encourage them to plan and carry out service projects in their community.

Art is Magic

Dragons and ogres are found throughout literature and depicted in the artwork of many cultures. Have readers work in pairs to research and identify some examples. Ask them to note historical descriptions and depictions as well as versions in modern media. Have readers compare how the dragons and ogres they find are different from those in the book. Then, have them create their own dragon or ogre (or ogress) using any medium. In an artist's statement, readers should give details about the characteristics, habits, and habitats of the creature they have created.

Who Are the People in Your Neighborhood?

Have readers write a character sketch about somebody from their community that they know well—friend, relative, or neighbor. Ask them to describe traits, thoughts, actions, and feelings to provide a glimpse, not the history, of this individual.

Next, have them use their skills to create a character sketch about a character in the book. In choosing a character to describe, ask readers to start by selecting one character and using just one word to describe them. Then have readers look for the qualities of the character they've chosen. Have readers focus on what makes this character who they are.

Extend the exercise by having readers think and write more about what drives their character's thoughts, actions, and reactions. Have readers look in the book for evidence of their ideas. If they don't find motivations for particular thoughts or actions, have readers create backstories for their characters.

Have readers share their sketches with others and discuss:

- What are some ways that fictional characters reflect real people?
- How would their character interact with real people?

RESOURCES

Character Map: readwritethink.org/classroom-resources/printouts/character

Five-Step, Never-Fail Character Sketching: middleweb.com/41629/five-step-never-fail-character-sketching/v

MORE QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION: GET PHILOSOPHICAL

The Altruria “was, according to the introduction, the last work that the philosopher Timaeus had ever written, and was largely disregarded by historians and scholars, as it was short, imaginative, and not satisfactorily conclusive. All throughout, the speakers interrupt one another, digress, threaten to leave the room, and never actually answer any specific questions directly. Instead, they slyly slide this way and that, forcing the readers to find the answer on their own” (86).

Like literature, Bartleby’s favorite work of philosophy pokes at our thinking and asks important questions without always offering concrete answers.

The topics and questions below were inspired by questions and issues touched on in *The Ogress and the Orphans*. You can use the questions below to help initiate philosophical discussions with readers that explore answers to fundamental questions about the nature of the world and the process of finding our way in it.

This guide offers several questions for each topic. The questions can help connect themes in the book to philosophical issues. Sometimes you might want to ask readers to answer a few as a way to get to a bigger philosophical question. But the idea is not to ask them all one right after another or even worry about asking all of them. The idea is to ask a question and use the answer to launch discussion. That requires listening on everyone’s part and using follow-up questions, answers, and reasons for those answers.

You can also help readers think about how to think by encouraging them to generate their own questions about the below topics or other issues from the book. Additionally, Bartleby has some thoughts on thinking like a philosopher on pages 348-349.



RESOURCES

A Framework for Whole-Class Discussions: Philosophical Chairs edutopia.org/article/framework-whole-class-discussions
Exercising the Mind: Classroom Activities For Doing Philosophy canvas.uw.edu/files/32542248/download?download_frd=1

Discuss: Nature of People

The orphans have several theories about the problems of Stone-in-the-Glen and believe that there must be an answer to why their town is not lovely.

- Why is it important to the orphans to find an answer to their question?
- Would you like to live in Stone-in-the-Glen? Why or why not?
- Do you believe that people who were once good and kind could become mean and cruel? What might change them?
- Do you believe that people who were once mean and cruel could become good and kind? What might change them?
- Are there any ways that you are different than you were a year ago? What changed you?
- How do you think you will change when you grow up? Would you like to be different than you are now? In what ways?
- What does it take to make change?

Discuss: Kindness

Bartleby asks, “Is kindness sometimes a trick? If the reason for the kindness isn’t kind, do we still call it kindness?” (90). These questions lead to more questions and discussion with Myron: “the reason for the kindness is never as important as the fact of the kindness . . . We can choose to be filled with suspicions, or we can accept grace, and then continue to extend kindness to others. Which do you choose?” (91).

- How would you answer Bartleby’s questions?
- Do you choose suspicion or grace in accepting kindness? What are your reasons?
- If you do a kind act with the knowledge that you will receive something in return, is it still kind?
- Do you have to love someone to be kind to them?
- Can you do kind acts without caring?
- When you’ve helped someone you didn’t know, how did you feel?
- How do you expect someone to respond when you carry out a random act of kindness for them?
- Was there ever a time where you did something, and then afterward you wished you had been kinder?

Discuss: Gratitude

The cobbler’s wife says, “It doesn’t matter who did it. The thing that matters is that it happened. The thing that matters is that this act of kindness and generosity could have been done

MORE QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION: GET PHILOSOPHICAL CONTINUED

by anyone. Anyone at all! The world is filled with goodness, and our response should not be silence and suspicion. You have a responsibility to be grateful. You have a responsibility to do good as a result” (286).

- Do you have a responsibility to be grateful?
- Is it sometimes hard to be grateful? Why or why not?
- What is gratitude?
- Is gratitude owed? What if someone gives you something you don't want? Do you have to be grateful?
- What might cause you to feel ungrateful?

Discuss: Disagreement

At the market, Bartleby argues with another vendor that the notion that ogres are prone to wickedness is nonsense, which leads to violence (123).

- What is violence? How does it happen?
- When you had an argument or disagreement, how did you settle it?
- Did you change the other person's mind or did that person change your mind?
- Can you think of situations in which everyone who is arguing is right, and situations in which there is only one right answer?
- If there can be only one answer, how do you know which is right?
- Is it ever appropriate to use violence to end an argument?

Discuss: Generosity

The Ogress spends all of her time gardening and baking, only to give everything away. She says, “After all, the more you give, the more you have. It is the only true thing I know” (20).

- Would you be happy to do all that work and then give it all away? Why or why not?
- Do you have to give an actual thing, such as a pie or book, to make someone happy, or is there another way of giving?
- What is generosity?
- Is there an obligation to give?

Discuss: Truth

In trying to process the butcher's angry denial about Cass's return, Anthea asks, “What is the use of truth when people refuse to believe verifiable facts?” (268).

- What is truth?
- What is it to know a fact? Or rather, what relationship to facts is worth having?

MORE QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION: GET PHILOSOPHICAL CONTINUED

- Can something be true because you believe that it is true?
- Can something be true if there is no proof of it?
- Can people have their own opinions of an idea that is true to them? Are opinions truths? Can truth be relative?

Discuss: Power

“For to trick another creature—to give them a version of the world that was upside down and inside out and to then let it all come crashing down with delightful chaos—well, that was power indeed. Delicious power. And the Dragon was hungry for it” (167).

- What are some types or sources of power?
- Does the Dragon have a problem with greed or power?
- How can power over one person be strengthened by the presence of a group?
- Is power good or evil?
- What power do you have?

Discuss: Stories

The narrator says, “A story, in the mind of a reader, is like music. And discussing stories among other minds and other hearts feels like a symphony” (327).

- How is a story a gift?
- Do people need stories? Are they important? Why or why not?
- Was having stories as important as having food for the townspeople? Why or why not?
- Why is it important for people to have stories and art? How do these things help people in hard times?
- Can things we read about in stories be real?
- What are some things in this story that are real and some things that aren't? How do you know?

Discuss: Crows and Other Animals

Crows play an important role in this story. (They would probably say extraordinarily important.)

- How do the crows in the book think of themselves? What characteristics are typically associated with crows in nature?
- Why do you think the author chose to have crows as friends to the Ogress?
- Do animals have thoughts? Feelings? How can you tell?
- Do animals communicate? How?

Discuss: Magic

- Elijah replies to Anthea, “I think a lot of things are magic if you think about it right. And some things might not be magic exactly, but they’re pretty close” (44). Do you agree with Elijah? Why or why not?
- Where else do you find magic or near magic in the book?
- Is everything that is magical simply something that is unexplained?
- What makes something magic? Is magic something that has to be seen?

Discuss: Neighbors and Community

- What does it mean to be a good neighbor? What does belonging have to do with being a good neighbor?
- What makes a community?
- Try to think of some communities you are a part of. How do you know they are communities?
- Your school is a community, and everybody contributes something to it. Think of ways that you or a friend contributes to your school community.
- What do you need from your community?
- Does your community’s happiness affect your own happiness?
- Does everybody have to contribute to their community?

Discuss: Names

- The Ogress is only called “the Ogress.” Why doesn’t she have a name? Why, except for Harold, do the crows not use the names the Ogress has given them?
- What other characters in the book do not have names? How is that significant?
- What is the purpose of names? Why do we have them?
- Is a name just another word or is it something more? Why?
- Do names have a meaning?
- How does your name help or not help to make you who you are?