



Walker Books Classroom Ideas



The Good Hawk (Shadow Skye, Book One)

Joseph Elliott
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*Notes may be downloaded and printed for regular classroom use only.

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Outline:

If everything was taken from you, what would you do to get it back? Agatha patrols the sea wall with pride, despite those in her clan who question her right to be there, because of the condition she was born with. Jaime is a reluctant Angler, full of self-doubt and afraid of the sea. When disaster strikes, the pair must embark on a terrifying journey to a land where forgotten magic and dark secrets lurk in every shadow...

Thrilling and dark, yet rich with humour and compassion, this novel marks the debut of a wonderful new voice in fantasy and a welcome new kind of protagonist - perfect for fans of *The Girl of Ink and Stars*, Garth Nix and Michelle Paver.

Author/Illustrator Information:

Joseph Elliott is a writer and actor, well-known for his work in children's television including CBeebies series "Swashbuckle". His commitment to serving children with special education needs was instilled at a young age: his mother is a teacher trained in special needs education, and his parents provided respite foster care for children with additional needs. He has worked at a recreational centre for children with learning disabilities and as a teaching assistant at Westminster Special Schools. The heroine of his first book, *The Good Hawk*, was inspired by the many incredible children he has worked with, especially those with Down's syndrome. Joseph lives in London. Say hello to Joseph on Twitter: @joseph_elliott.

How to Use These Notes:

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

These notes are for:

- Secondary years 7-8
- Ages 12+

Key Learning Areas:

- English

Example of:

- Novel

Themes/Ideas:

- Loyalty
- Honesty/Trust
- Adventure
- Myth



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Discussion Questions and Activities:

Before Reading

The tagline for *The Good Hawk* is “When darkness falls, heroes rise.” Write a definition of “hero.” In small groups or pairs, share and discuss your definitions. Use the following questions to guide your discussion:

- What or who do you think of when you hear the word “hero?”
- What are some of the characteristics you attribute to a heroic person?
- Do you have any personal heroes?

In small groups, partners, or as a class, create a mind map of all the words you associate with the word “hero.”

The main character in the novel has Down syndrome. What do you already know about this disorder?

Exploring the story

What are some of the themes in this novel? As a class or in small groups identify and list the themes. Individually write a statement of belief about each theme.

Identify the orientation, complication and resolution of the story. Ask students to try to identify this structure in other books or movies. As a class, discuss how these narrative features give meaning to stories.

Discuss the title of the book. Do you think this is a good title? Why or why not? If you were asked to choose an alternative title for the book, what would it be? Remember, a good title should capture the audience’s attention and give them some idea of what the book is about.

Consider the fantasy world Joseph Elliot has created in *The Good Hawk*. What real time period do you think it is closest to? What elements in the world seem real, and what seems fantastical?

In small groups, make a mind map of some of the characteristics of the fantasy genre. Consider settings, characters, events and themes. In what ways does *The Good Hawk* resemble a typical fantasy novel? How is it different?

The story is primarily told through Agatha and Jaime’s perspectives. How did this affect you as a reader? How were the two voices similar or different, and how did the author achieve this? How would the book have been different if it had only been told through Agatha’s eyes?

Revisit the “hero” mind maps you created before reading the novel. Choose five of the words on the map that you think might apply specifically to Agatha or Jaime. Locate evidence or events in the novel that support your choices.

The Good Hawk is set in a mythical version of Scotland. Research Scotland (make sure to include the Isle of Skye) and make a list of the ways they are similar and different to the world of *The Good Hawk*.

Agatha has Down syndrome, but her condition is never named in the novel. Why do you think Joseph Elliott chose not to do so?

How does Agatha develop as a character over the course of the novel? Identify specific points in the book which signal growth or change, then present these on a timeline.

Discuss the relationship between Agatha and Jaime in the novel. How does it start? How does it change throughout



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the story? What do they learn from each other? What conflicting emotions does Jaime feel about Agatha?

Choose a clan from *The Good Hawk* and create a fact-sheet with everything we know about them. Which characters do we know in that clan? Where do they live? What are their beliefs and traditions?

“Fear should be acknowledged, accepted. Embraced, even. Otherwise it’ll always control you.” (Cray, page 229). This novel explores fear through several of the characters. Are our fears caused by our environment or are we born with them? Is fear contagious? Can fear be used as a weapon?

Choose a scene from the novel where a character is afraid (you could use Agatha and the bulls or Jaimie and Cray with the sgàilean for example). Consider how they act and respond, and what that can tell us about fear and bravery.

In groups, discuss how the following values are demonstrated in the novel:

- Courage
- Compassion
- Conscience
- Honesty
- Loyalty
- Bravery

Are there any other values you would add to this list?

Keep a “Vocab Journal” while reading the novel. Make a note of any words you come across that are unfamiliar and look up their meaning. Also keep track of any words or phrases that you particularly like and write a note next to each explaining why you like that word/phrase.

Read “A Note About the Languages” at the back of the book, and research more about Scottish Gaelic. What makes it different to other languages students may know? How has it evolved over time? In what ways is it still used today?

Creative Responses to the Text

Design your own cover for the book with new imagery and a new tagline that will persuade and interest people in reading the book.

A novel will describe the setting and action in words, allowing the reader to visualise using their imagination. A comic strip or graphic novel uses illustrations to show the reader the setting, action and character’s emotions. Create a comic strip of a key scene from *The Good Hawk*.

Choose a scene in the novel that we read from Agatha perspective, and rewrite it from Jaime’s. Focus particularly on the character’s attitudes and feelings, rather than simply recounting events. How might Jaime see events differently to Agatha and why?’