*The Storyteller’s Daughter: Where the Story Begins*

Reading Comprehension Questions

The following questions are designed to enhance student understanding of *The Storyteller’s Daughter: Where the Story Begins.* Students are asked not only to summarize events and identify important plot points, but to extend their thinking to consider character development, cause and effect relationships, and underlying themes. These questions can be adapted and differentiated to suit different readers; they can also be used to stimulate discussion and direct critical inquiry. They can also be adapted to augment the other “alternative” style of assignments provided in the teacher resource centre.

Objective:

* Students will answer the following questions to demonstrate their knowledge of the text, focus their critical thinking, and extend their analysis of the novel to consider underlying issues and to relate the events/characters to their own experiences.

Learning Outcomes:

* **Demonstrate** understanding of the text
* **Summarize** and **describe** important characters and events
* **Focus** critical inquiry on larger issues and questions
* **Extend** analysis to relate the fantasy novel to “real life” and individual experience

Begin by determining how you wish to use the questions in the classroom: will students be given the questions all at once, or in stages? Will they answer all of the questions? Will they be expected to write in full paragraphs or make jot notes? Will they follow a specific timeline, or work at their own pace? Individually or in groups?

* As the students go through the questions, it is helpful to provide feedback: this can be oral feedback as a larger group (which can lead to fruitful discussion and unexpected insights) or it can be written feedback in the form of marks and/or individual comments.
* Consider defining terms such as **foreshadowing** (“refers to the use of indicative word or phrases and hints that set the stage for a story to unfold and give the reader a hint of something that is going to happen without revealing the story or spoiling the suspense. Foreshadowing is used to suggest an upcoming outcome to the story”), **imagery** (“[i]n literature, one of the strongest devices is imagery wherein the author uses words and phrases to create “mental images” for the reader. . . Imagery is not limited to only visual sensations, but also refers to igniting kinesthetic, olfactory, tactile, gustatory, thermal and auditory sensations as well”), and **symbolism** (“contains several layers of meaning, often concealed at first sight, and is representative of several other aspects, concepts or traits than those that are visible in the literal translation alone. Symbol is using an object or action that means something more than its literal meaning”). Definitions from [Literary Devices.com](http://literary-devices.com/), a great resource for examples and more terms.
* A discussion of setting and the juxtaposition of the “real” world with the story world can provide an effective entry point for student reflections on the extent they can relate to the characters’ experiences, as well as how themes of identity, storytelling, memory, and loss can be identified in their own experiences. It is important to be aware that discussions of loss can act as “triggers” for some students, and may need to be carefully navigated.
* Keep in mind that not all students need to do all of the questions: students can work in groups and share their answers; the questions can be adapted to provide topics for journal entries or short reflections; some questions can be mandatory while others are optional or for extra credit; some questions can simply be used to guide discussion.

**Part One: The Changer**

Friday 2 July, Manitou Motor Inn (p. 3 - 73)

1. What news does Skye receive on the evening of her 17th birthday?
2. What detail from the police report does Skye fixate on (page 5)? Why is this detail so disturbing to her?
3. How would you describe each of the three girls? Provide examples from the text to support your response.
4. How would you describe the home lives of the three girls? Does knowing about their families give you any further insight into their personalities? Explain.
5. Describe Skye’s encounter with Mr. Duncan and the movers. List at least three things that strike Skye as **surreal** or strange.
6. Describe Mrs. Schnout. What are your impressions of Skye’s neighbour (and new guardian)?
7. What does Skye learn at her meeting with Mr. Duncan in his office downtown? What had she been hoping to hear instead? Why does she have such a hard time accepting this information?
8. Why do you think Skye is so reluctant to talk to her friends about what she is going through?
9. The memorial service brings all the characters that we have met thus far together. What is the most interesting thing that you learned about a particular character or a relationship between characters?
10. What happens when Skye returns to her family’s home after the memorial service? What do you think is going on here? Make at least one prediction of what this could mean.
11. When Skye receives a letter from a lawyer she has never heard of about an inheritance from a grandfather she never met, she makes the decision to go to see him without her friends. Why does she make this decision? What happens to cause Amy and Fran to join her on this journey?
12. Describe Mr. Selby. How is Skye’s meeting with him different from her meeting with Mr. Duncan? What does she receive from him? Why is this meeting important?
13. Describe the girls’ first encounter with the Morríghana. What are your impressions of these women? Predict the role they might play in Skye’s story.
14. How do each of the girls react to the Morríghana? To the contents of the envelope that Skye received from Mr. Selby? Is there a connection between these items and the Morríghana?
15. How would you describe the three girls’ friendship? What role does each girl play in this relationship?

Saturday 3 July, The Hall of the Norns (p. 74 - 108)

1. Why does Skye return to the little yellow house? Why does she go alone?
2. What is the significance of “The Changer,” the second card that Morrigan deals from the deck of tarot cards? How does Skye react to this card?
3. How does Morrigan convince Skye that she and her sisters are more than what they seem? Describe briefly what Skye experiences.
4. What is a seannachie?
5. What is a changeling?
6. What does Skye learn about the people she thought were her parents?
7. What happens when Fran and Amy come looking for Skye?
8. What does Skye learn about her *true* parents?
9. Summarize in more detail what happened to Skye’s father. How does Skye react to Morrigan’s story about him?
10. Describe Skye’s mother’s encounter with the Changer, Taranis. What deal does Maggie make? Why does she make this deal with a god she knows she cannot trust?
11. Who is Bertram?
12. Make a prediction about what will happen next.

Saturday 3 July, Pelican Lake (p. 109 - 125)

1. What are two things that Skye learns about her mother?
2. Describe the powers of a seannachie. Does this seem like magic to you? Do you see agree with Skye’s assessment that regular people in real life have a similar power?
3. Describe the power of the changelings. How is it different from the seannachie’s power?
4. What does Morrigan mean when she says that memories can “decay”? How does this explanation relate to Skye’s experiences thus far?
5. What does Skye decide the next step on her quest must be? What difficulty does she encounter? Why is Skye so relieved that Bertram will accompany them?
6. What is the significance of the last two cards that Morrigan has dealt?
7. What does Skye learn about her friends when they insist on accompanying her on her quest?
8. How does Skye feel at the end of this section about everything that has happened, and about what she has to do? How would you feel in her place?

**Part Two: The Adventure of Art**

Saturday 3 July, Pelican Lake (p. 129 - 219)

1. In Part Two, the novel shifts from a first person perspective to a third person perspective. How did you react to this shift? What is the effect of this change?
2. What does Skye learn from Bertram about her changeling parents? About Duncan and Schnout? How is she affected by this new information? Why does it affect her so strongly?
3. What strategy do the girls come up with to get into the Sanatorium? What secret does Amy reveal in the process of planning? How do her friends react? Why?
4. What tensions begin to rise between the three girls as they put their plan in motion? Why do these tensions occur? What concerns does each girl have?
5. The girls find Skye’s mother much more quickly than they anticipate. However, things do not go entirely according to plan. What difficulties do the girls encounter? In what ways does their plan go awry? How do things get back on track?
6. How do Skye and her friends finally enter the story? What happens when they do so?
7. Who is Randall? Describe his character. What predictions can you make about his identity and his role in the novel?
8. Who is Morag? What is she doing in Maggie’s story? What is the significance of her role?
9. Briefly describe the final battle with Taranis. Were you surprised by how this climactic event transpired? Why or why not?
10. Briefly describe Skye’s meeting with her mother on the beach. Why is it so hard for Skye to explain the situation to her mother? What clues are there that Maggie is resisting the truth? How does Skye finally get through to her?
11. How do you feel about Maggie as a character at the end of this section? Is she sympathetic (someone you can sympathise with) or not?
12. What was the most surprising or interesting or exciting event in this section of the novel? Why?

**Epilogue: The Courtship of Battle**

Sunday 11 July, Manitou (p. 223)

1. Looking back, how do the four Tarot cards that Morrigan drew from the deck influence the way the story unfolded?
2. Reconsider the question, who is Bertram? What did you learn about his history? What does this tell us about his character? What is the significance of his role in the novel?
3. What do you think happened to Randall, both in the story world and the real world?
4. Describe the final meeting with Morrigan. What questions do the girls ask? Why do they ask these questions? What would you have asked?
5. What is the relationship between the Fates and the characters’ free will in the novel? Was Skye destined to succeed? Looking back, can you see clues where the Morríghana might have interfered to help? Could Skye’s quest have ended differently?
6. What issues do Skye, her mother, and her friends face in the end? Are these challenges realistic? Why or why not?
7. How would you describe the tone of the epilogue? Was the ending of the novel satisfying? Why or why not?
8. Would you recommend this book to others? Why or why not?