

SHADOWGHAST

DISCUSSION GUIDE

AN EERIE-ON-SEA MYSTERY

SHADOWGHAST



THOMAS
TAYLOR

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THOMAS TAYLOR

DISCUSSION GUIDE FOR WALKER BOOKS

ABOUT THE BOOK

Shadowghast, the wonderfully inventive third story in the series *The Eerie-on-Sea Mysteries*, sees the continued adventures of Herbert Lemon, Lost and Founder at the Grand Nautilus Hotel, and his best friend, Violet Parma. With Ghastly Night – the local Halloween tradition – fast approaching, a new magic act arrives in town, promising the greatest Ghastly Night performance Eerie-on-Sea has ever seen. But is there more than just local superstition to the legend of the Shadowghast – the horned and grinning shadow man? Could there be an element of truth in his shadowy powers? Taylor deftly weaves new stories and characters into the ever-growing fabric of Eerie-on-Sea and its motley inhabitants, in this charming, fast-flowing joy of a novel.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Thomas Taylor is an award-winning author-illustrator for children. He illustrated the cover for the very first *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* and has since gone on to write and illustrate several picture books and young novels; most recently he illustrated *Scarlett Hart: Monster Hunter*, written by Marcus Sedgwick. This is his third title in the *Legends of The Eerie-on-Sea Mysteries*; the first, *Malamander*, was published to huge acclaim in 2019 and was followed in 2020 with the equally popular *Gargantis*. Thomas lives on the south coast of England and can be found on Facebook and Twitter: @ThomasHTaylor

GENERAL INTRODUCTION:

There are many interesting themes and discussion points in *Shadowghast* – from speculation about Herbert Lemon's past, or the deeper secrets of Eerie-on-Sea, to the way Taylor creates and builds suspense, and the nature of friendship, family and loyalty. Wherever possible, children should have the opportunity to interrogate questions, exploring their own interests and ideas, with some structure and scaffolding from the group leader. Where conversation leads towards potentially sensitive areas, for example, family, abandonment and changing friendships, then be sure to provide support as required and make all group members comfortable to contribute towards the discussion.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Getting started:

If reading *Shadowghast*, then the likelihood is that the group has already read *Malamander*, and *Gargantis*. It may be worth quickly recapping the story of these, in support of discussion, or having the books to hand in case useful. If anyone has not read the first two books, then agree amongst the group how to deal with revealing spoilers from those novels.

Begin by asking what the group thought of *Shadowghast*. Who enjoyed it? Why? What did they particularly like? Does anyone want to expand on their answer? How did the book make them feel?



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1. Drawing in the reader

'Do you remember your first Ghastly Night?' - p. 13

Read the very first page of the novel out loud together, again. How does Taylor draw in the reader? Consider the language he uses – who is it addressed to? Could anybody reading the book really remember their first Ghastly Night? What effect does this create?

2. The Shadowghast

'Throughout the spectacle, just at the edge of sight, many thought they saw an extra shadow, one not mentioned in the stories and narration – the shadow of a grinning man with horns upon his head.' - p.91

Did anyone think there might be some truth in the legend of Mayor Bigley? What did group members think of the shadowghast? Can anyone describe how the idea of a shadow that eats your shadow makes them feel? Did the description remind anyone of other creatures, or stories, or myths?

3. Herbert Lemon

'"!" I blurt out, because I can't help myself. Bacon and finished are two words that never go well together.' - p.24

What effect does Taylor's writing have on how the reader feels about Herbert Lemon? Look at the quotation. How does anyone in the group think that should be read out loud? What effect does this have? How do the group feel towards Herbert? Can anyone explain why they feel that way?

4. Caliastra

'And I see...

Something!

Something wrong with the scene...' - p.21

What did members of the group think of Caliastra and her troupe? Were they convinced by Caliastra's story? Look at the scene on page 21 – how does Taylor suggest that not everything is quite as it seems early on?

5. Building suspense

'It looks a lot like the poster for Ghastly Night. But something important is different.' - p.288

Look at pages 287-288 together, where Herbert finally opens the piece of paper from 'The Subtle Mask'. How does the chapter end? What effect does this have? How has Taylor managed to build up the suspense as the story continues? Can any members think of another example where this has happened?

6. Trickery

'Unless that trick of the light is actually a trick of the dark.' - p.16

What sort of word play can readers remember from the book? Can anyone think of any examples where Taylor has made something familiar slightly 'eerie' or different? You might want to think about character names, or the names of shops and places, even the name of the town itself. You might like to create a list together, and explore how words have been changed or played with – what effect does this have?

7. Changing friendships

'"But you must always be careful of others being jealous, Herbie."' - p.121

Discuss how the friendship between Herbert and Violet is threatened in the book. Look again at the passage on page 121. How does Caliastra affect Herbert and Violet's relationship? What impact do the little suggestions she makes have on Herbert?



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8. Home

“Your long wait in this strange little town is over, Herbert Lemon. You are finally going home.” - p.67

What does the idea of ‘home’ mean to Herbert? What about Violet? Do they have ‘homes’, even if they’re not the homes they came from? What sort of a home is Eerie-on-Sea? Do members like the idea of living in the Lost-and-Foundery? What about in a bookshop? How did readers feel at the end, when Herbert doesn’t go to live with Caliastra?

9. What is still to come?

“It’s an old tale,” Violet replies.’ - p.176

Go to page 176 again, and look at what Herbert and Violet find in Sebastian Eels’ secret chamber. What do the group think of the mention of another tale, that the reader hasn’t heard before? Do we get to find out what Fargazer means? What could Taylor be hinting at?

10. Finding answers

“Maybe if you actually read the book, you’d find some answers for yourself.” - p.173

Why is Herbert Lemon so reluctant to read the book he was prescribed by the Mermonkey? What do group members think he might find if he did read it?

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