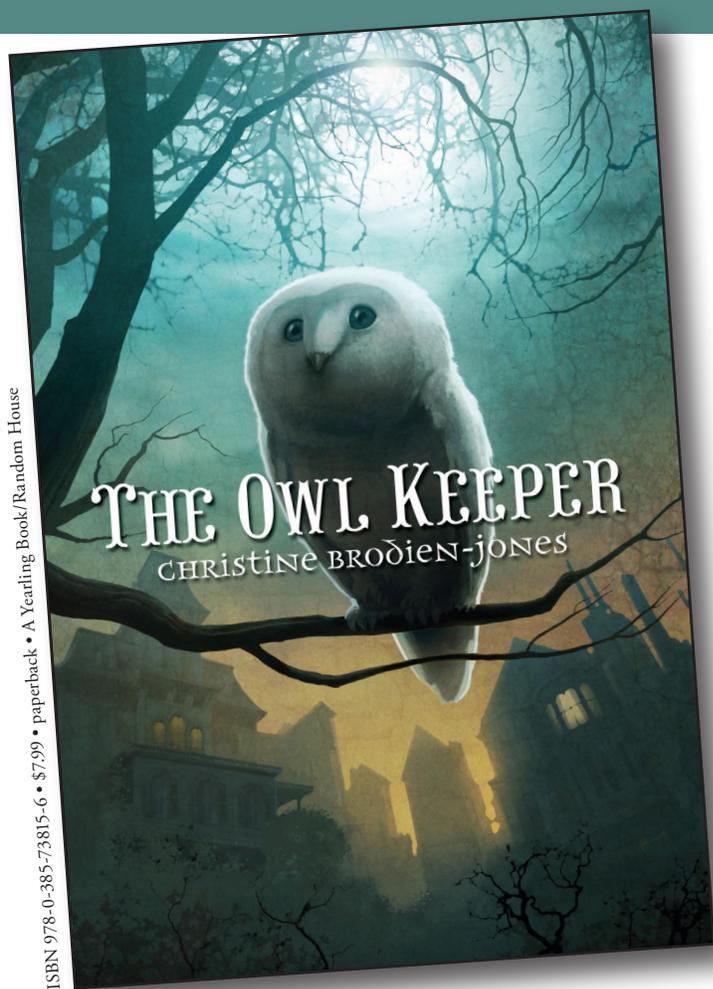


DISCUSSION GUIDE



THE OWL KEEPER

BY
CHRISTINE
BRODIEN-JONES

MAXWELL UNGER HAS ALWAYS loved the night. He used to do brave things like go tramping through the forest with his gran after dark. He loved the stories she told him about the world before the Destruction—about nature, and books, and the silver owls. His favorite story, though, was about the Owl Keeper.

According to Max's gran, in times of darkness the Owl Keeper would appear to unite owls and sages against the powers of the dark. Gran is gone now, and so are her stories of how the world used to be. Max is no longer brave. The forest is dangerous, the books Gran saved have been destroyed, and the silver owls are extinct. At least, that's what the High Echelon says. But Max knows better.

Maxwell Unger has a secret. And when a mysterious girl comes to town, he just might have to start being brave again. The time of the Owl Keeper, Gran would say, is coming soon.

Christine Brodien-Jones's thrilling story will keep young readers turning the pages to discover if Max and Rose prevail despite the evil that surrounds them.

BEFORE READING

Picture what the world would be like in the year 2066 given the state of our world today. How would our environment have stayed the same or changed? Would we face the same issues we face today concerning dwindling fossil fuel supplies, climate change, and wars between nations? Draw a quick sketch of the world you imagine in the year 2066. Share sketches and comments about your vision of the future.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- ① Max, a timid and frail boy, makes for an unlikely hero. Max's fascination with the wounded silver owl drives him outdoors each night to the owl tree. Together the owl and Max establish an important bond that leads them into rebellion against the government. How are the silver owl and Max alike as heroes in *The Owl Keeper*?
- ① What does the phrase "a wolf in sheep's clothing" mean? How does this phrase apply when describing the characters of Mrs. Crumlin and Dr. Tredegar?
- ① There are two strong female influences in Max's life: Mrs. Crumlin, who cares for Max each day while his parents are at work; and Max's gran, who though not currently present in Max's life, has left him with tales of the Silver Prophecy and a sense of wonder and imagination. Compare and contrast Gran and Mrs. Crumlin. How does each character shape Max into the person he becomes from the beginning to the end of the story?
- ① Max isn't sure that Rose is a real person when she appears by the owl tree one evening. Rose is fierce and feisty and likens herself to Artemis, goddess of the moon and of wild animals. Greek deities are known for their cleverness and inventiveness. Artemis in particular was known for being fearless, independent, and quick in the chase. How do Rose's actions in the story complement her namesake, the goddess Artemis?
- ① When they sneak into Cavernstone Hall, Max and Rose make terrifying discoveries about the experiments the High Echelon is conducting. What important discoveries do the two make? What is the significance of the sun tattoo on Max's neck in relation to what the two find in Cavernstone Hall?
- ① What is the transmutation that Mrs. Crumlin and Dr. Tredegar are committed to facilitating? How have they been preparing Max for this event? Why are the two interested in having Max change from good to evil?
- ① As Rose and Max journey to find the Owl Keeper, they meet Vivian who shares with Max that the tattoo on his neck is no longer a sun but an owl. Max feels as if a terrible curse has been lifted. Vivian tells Max that he once again carries the symbol of the Night Seer. How is the change in Max's tattoo significant as he discovers his true identity?
- ① Rose and Max complete their quest to find the owl tower and, more importantly, the Owl Keeper. The story concludes with the convening of the Sages, silver owls, and the children:
"Snow kept falling, falling. The children shivered in the cold light of dawn. Max brushed a twig from Rose's hair. He thought of magic and hope and mystical places, and of Rose beneath the owl tree, the first time he'd ever seen her."

Why do you think the author decided to end the story on this hopeful note? What do you predict may happen next for Max, Rose, and the silver owls in relation to the High Echelon?

ACTIVITIES

OWLS RuLe!

Owls are amazing birds. These silent fliers rule the night skies in rural areas. Research owls and learn all you can about them. Using grey or silver construction paper, craft a flock of silver owls and create a classroom bulletin board dedicated to *The Owl Keeper*.

CHOCOLate taste test

Cavernstone Grey is known throughout the land for its delicious chocolate. Have a chocolate taste test in your classroom. Buy several different types of chocolate—from the darkest you can find to milk and even white chocolate. Break the bars into small chunks. Have each student take a small taste of each type and write a list of adjectives to describe each sample. Once all the samples have been tried, have each student note his/her favorite and then share the results as a class. Which type of chocolate was most preferred? Which was the least favorite? Graph the results.

CHARACTER sketch

The author uses vivid language to describe the characters in *The Owl Keeper*. Use the Portrait of a Character worksheet to invite your students to study Rose's character in detail and to create a sketch of her based on the ways she's described in the book.

PROPHETIC VOICES

The Owl Keeper opens with a poem called "The Way to the Owl Keeper," an excerpt from *The Silver Prophecies*. Discuss the role of prophecies in this story and in other books your students have read (the Harry Potter novels, for example). Read "The Way to the Owl Keeper" aloud once you've finished the novel and discuss how each element of the prophecy in the poem was fulfilled by Max and Rose in the course of their journey to the owl tower.

GOVERNMENT PROPAGANDA

The High Echelon used traditional forms of propaganda to keep citizens in line in *The Owl Keeper*. Use the Propaganda worksheet to explore how these techniques were employed by the High Echelon to promote harmony and stem revolt.

spot art

Study the black-and-white drawings by Maggie Kneen that appear on the first page of each chapter in *The Owl Keeper*. How do these illustrations add to your enjoyment of the story? Pick a scene, setting, or character from the novel that is not depicted in the existing chapter openers and create your own black-and-white illustration in an oval format. Display these on your classroom bulletin board dedicated to *The Owl Keeper*.

CHRISTINE BRODIEN-JONES studied writing at Emerson College in Boston and has worked as a reporter, an editor, and a teacher. Her other middle grade novels include *The Scorpions of Zahir*, a fast-paced fantasy adventure set in the Moroccan desert, and the forthcoming *The Glass Puzzle*. Scheduled to publish in July 2013, *The Glass Puzzle* tells the thrilling story of two cousins who discover a mysterious puzzle that unleashes ancient forces that threaten all they hold dear. Ms. Brodien-Jones divides her time between Gloucester, Massachusetts, and Deer Isle, Maine. Learn more about her life and work at her website: www.cbrodien-jones.com

The activities in this guide were created by Leigh Courtney, PhD. She teaches in the Global Education program at a public elementary school in San Diego, California. She holds both master's and doctoral degrees in education, with an emphasis on curriculum and instruction.

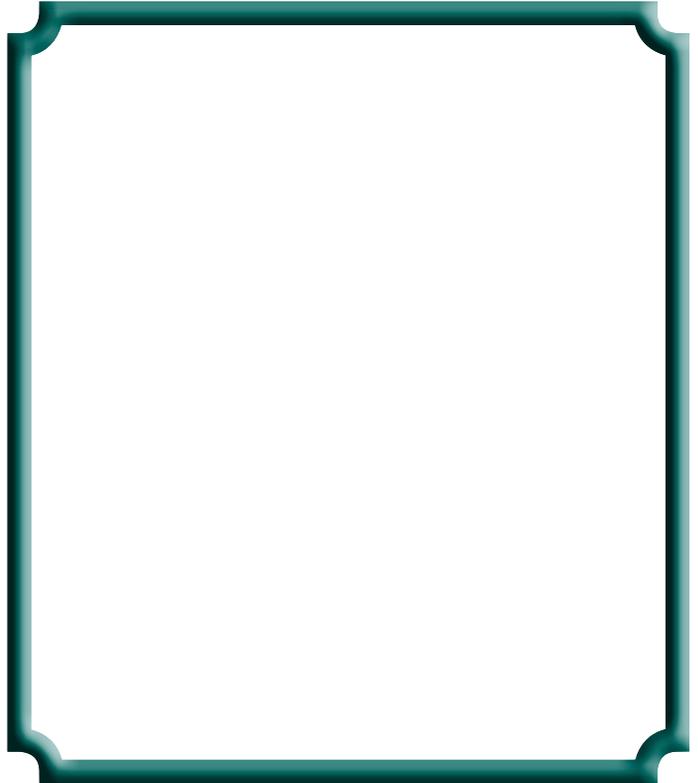
PORTRAIT OF A CHARACTER

artemis rose eccLes

The character of Rose is vividly described in the opening paragraphs of *The Owl Keeper*:

“She was tall—string-bean skinny, as Gran used to say—with an oval-shaped olive face. Her hair fanned from her head in a burst of coppery orange, and leaves were tangled all through it. . . . Max had never seen anyone so disorderly. . . . Looking into those green eyes, too big for her face, Max could see that the girl was different in a scary kind of way. Those eyes had a lean, hungry look. Her woolly black coat hung to her ankles, a spider dangling from the hem. Sticking out from under it were long, bumpy toes. Nobody around here dressed like that, and nobody Max knew would dream of going barefoot in this damp climate.”

Based on the rich description the author provides, draw a sketch of Rose. Fill in the chart below your sketch with key descriptive elements and describe what each reveals about Rose’s character.



DESCRIPTIVE ELEMENT	WHAT IT REVEALS ABOUT ROSE
example: Leaves in her hair	example: Spends a great deal of time outdoors

PROPAGANDA

Propaganda is defined as “information, ideas, or rumors deliberately spread to help or harm a person, group, movement, institution, or nation.” It typically has a negative connotation.

In *The Owl Keeper*, the High Echelon controls citizens through jingles on the radio, declarations of animals becoming extinct, and borders being sealed. The government uses propaganda tools to communicate with its citizens. Complete the chart below by finding examples from the story of each type of propaganda the High Echelon employs to keep control over its people.

TYPE OF PROPAGANDA	EXAMPLE OF ITS USE IN THE STORY
<p>transfer The act of relating something or someone we like or respect with a product.</p>	
<p>GLITTERING GENERALITIES The act of referring to words or ideas that evoke a positive emotional response from an audience.</p>	
<p>BANDWAGON An attempt to persuade the target audience to take a course of action because everyone else is doing it.</p>	
<p>NAME CALLING The use of names that evoke fear or hatred in the viewer. This technique links a person or idea to what is perceived as a negative symbol or image.</p>	