

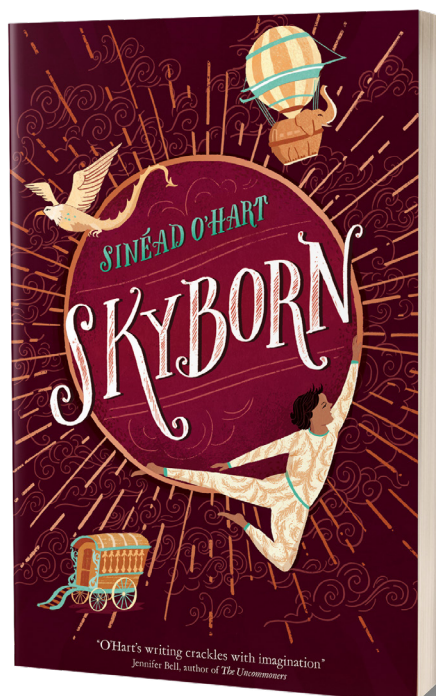


# SINEAD O'HART

A fast-paced and atmospheric fantasy adventure for fans of NEVERMOOR, THE UNCOMMONERS and SKY SONG.

The circus has seen better days, but for Bastjan it's home. He will do anything he can to save it, even if it means participating in a death-defying new act. But when that fails to draw in the crowds, the ringmaster makes a deal with a mysterious man by the name of Dr Bauer.

In exchange for his help, Bauer wants a box that belonged to Bastjan's mother and came from her birthplace – the faraway island of Melita. Bastjan is desperate to keep his only memento of his mother out of Bauer's hands. And as he uncovers more about the strange objects contained within, he realizes it's not only the circus that's in terrible danger...





*SINÉAD O'HART*

## FRONT COVER

Cover art by Sara Mulvanny  
Design by Sophie Bransby

### COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

Ask children the following when looking at the front cover:

- Based on the cover, what do you think the book will be about?
- What things can you see on the front cover?
- Why do you think the book has the title Skyborn?
- Where do you think it will be set?
- What kind of story will it be? What genre do you think it belongs to?
- Who might enjoy it? Based on the cover, who might you recommend it to? Why?

Now read the blurb on the back cover:

- Does the blurb confirm your thoughts or has it changed your mind? Why?
- Were any of your predictions correct?

### WRITING OPPORTUNITIES

Complete an **Observe, Infer, Wonder** grid to encourage book talk:

**Observe:** What can children see? Children could write their own sentences using 'I see...' to focus on descriptions.

**Infer:** Can children make connections to the cover using their own reasoning? Children could start their sentences with 'I think...' using 'because...' to explain.

**Wonder:** What questions do children have, based on the front cover? They could start their sentences with 'I wonder who/what/where/when/why/how...' etc to generate their own questions.

### CROSS-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

**ART** • After reading the book, use what you now know to draw alternative covers for the book.



## PROLOGUE

Pages 1-10

### COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

Before reading the chapter:

- What is a prologue? What is its purpose?
- Can you remember any other stories you have read that feature a prologue?

After reading the chapter:

- What does it mean to be 'afraid of her own shadow'?
- Who is Ester? Choose two adjectives to describe her in this chapter. Why did you choose these adjectives?
- How old do you think Ester is? Why do you think this?
- Why does the author choose to include that Ester's soles were 'third-hand'? What does this say about her?
- Who is the Slipskin child? How might the child and the bracelet play an important part later on in this story?

### WRITING OPPORTUNITIES

Who might the Slipskin be? Write a character prediction detailing what effect this mysterious character might have on the rest of the story.

### CROSS-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

**ART** • Based on the initial description in this part of the book, draw or paint a picture of The Silent City.







## CHAPTER ONE

*Twenty Years Later*  
Pages 11-20

### COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

- Which type of nut does the boy like to eat?
- What does 'pilfered' mean?
- Who was the original 'Annabella'?
- List two ways in which the audience show their disinterest in the circus and its final act.
- What do we learn about the boy and Cyrus Quinn during this chapter? What do you think the relationship between them is?
- Which other characters are we introduced to in this chapter? What do we notice about them?
- Explain why Rosie was reluctant at first and then refused to perform the Dance of the Snowflakes.

### WRITING OPPORTUNITIES

Imagine you are in the audience at one of these circus performances. Nothing quite like it has ever been seen before. Write a letter to a friend describing your experience. What things do you see that are new to you? How do you feel when watching the show? Take inspiration from the author's description in the book to help you.

### CROSS-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

**HISTORY** • Learn about the history of the circus.

**MATHS** • Draw a Venn diagram to compare and contrast the features of a circus from the nineteenth century and a modern-day circus.





## CHAPTER TWO

Pages 21-28

### COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

- What does 'preposterously large' mean? Use a dictionary to help you if you need to.
- Which kind of boots does Crake wear?
- How else is Crake described? What can you infer about his character?
- On page 22, Crake 'harrumphed'. What sound is this? What does this show? Can you mimic this with a partner?
- Put yourself in Rosie's shoes: would you refuse to do the act like her or choose to do it instead? Why?
- Why does Bastjan like to hear the sound of his name when it was spoken with kindness?
- How do you think Bastjan is feeling at the end of this chapter as he waits for Quinn to answer?

### WRITING OPPORTUNITIES

Write a character profile for Cornelius Crake including all the information that you know about him already and anything you can infer so far.

### CROSS-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

**DRAMA** • In pairs, re-enact the scene between Crake and Bastjan. Think about how each of the characters would speak to each other, and the body language, expression, tone and volume that each would use. You may even want to think about their dialects to add authenticity.

**ENGLISH** • Write this chapter as a playscript to help you with the above drama task.





## CHAPTER THREE

Pages 29-36

### COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

- How can the reader tell from the way that Quinn speaks at the start of this chapter that he is the ringmaster when he welcomes Bastjan to his wagon?
- What is revealed early on about the relationship between Bastjan and Quinn on page 29? Predict what this might mean for the development of both of these characters as the story progresses.
- What term of endearment does Quinn call Arabella? How does this show a different side to his character?
- What do we learn about the significance of the title of the book, Skyborn, in relation to Bastjan?
- How does Quinn use emotional blackmail to manipulate Bastjan in this chapter?

### WRITING OPPORTUNITIES

Rewrite the chapter from the perspective of Cyrus Quinn. What would he be thinking and feeling when he is talking to Bastjan about the act, his mother and her belongings?

### CROSS-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

**HISTORY** • Research and create a fact file about the role of ringmasters throughout circus history. Do ringmasters exist today? Share what you learn together.







## CHAPTER FOUR

Pages 37-44

### COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

- Why does Bastjan head for the animal enclosures?
- How does Mammoth feel in his cage?
- Why is this the first time we hear Bastjan's mother called by her name, Ester? What does this tell us about her character?
- Bastjan is described as 'closing the name like a pearl inside a shell.' What type of literary technique is this?
- Why is the verb 'lurched' frequently mentioned in this chapter? What is its effect on the reader?
- What clues can you find that show that Ana is empathetic towards Bastjan and his mother?
- What do you think might happen to Bastjan next?

### WRITING OPPORTUNITIES

Imagine you're a wild animal, like Mammoth, living in captivity. Write a diary entry about a life in lockdown from Mammoth's or a captive animal's perspective. Use your personal experiences and feelings during lockdown to help you.

### CROSS-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

**HISTORY** • In this chapter, it talks about the circus elephant, Mammoth, and the shackles that bound him to his cage, learn more about the use of exotic animals in circuses as mentioned in this chapter.

**DRAMA** • Debate orally the issue of wild animals being used in circuses, and the behavioural and/or health problems they develop as a direct result of the captive life that they are forced to lead.



## CHAPTER FIVE

Pages 45-53

### COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

- What causes Bastjan to relax after being awoken by Crake?
- What does it mean to be a 'natural' at something?
- Who are the roustabouts?
- What advice does Crake give to Bastjan before he gets up on the high wire?
- Why is Bastjan surprised to hear that Nanette trained his mother?
- Find and copy words or phrases that show the change in character in Bastjan when he is up high on the wire.
- What impression do you get of Nanette from this chapter?

### WRITING OPPORTUNITIES

Write down five questions that you would like to ask about Bastjan, the secret box of his mother's belongings and the story as a whole so far.

### CROSS-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

**SPEAKING AND LISTENING** • Discuss with a partner if you think you would make a good aeralist. What are your strengths? What weaknesses might you have?







## CHAPTER SIX

Pages 54-60

### COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

- How is using the word 'unbreakable' effective as a single-word sentence in the opening paragraph?
- According to Bastjan, why is taking the second step always the hardest part?
- Describe how Bastjan's feelings towards the high wire change by the end of the chapter. Use evidence from the text to support you.
- Who tries to placate and reason with the ringmaster?
- Why does Bastjan develop a case of the whoops?
- What does refusing to send for a doctor show about the character of Cyrus Quinn? Why are some of his words like *thing* and *performance* written in italics?
- How does the writer bring high-wire walking to life?

### WRITING OPPORTUNITIES

Write a set of instructions for walking across a tightrope. Think carefully about the precision and clarity of the language used and the order of instructions.

### CROSS-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

**SCIENCE** • Look at a tightrope walker and investigate the scientific concept of balanced forces. How do they stay level when walking across the tightrope? Understand more about how they often use very long metal poles to help them walk along the rope.

**PE** • Use masking tape, a low bench or beam or existing floor markings to create several "tightrope" pathways to try out the instructions and locomotive movements and patterns.





## CHAPTER SEVEN

Pages 61-67

### COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

- How do we know that Bastjan is losing his identity within the circus, especially in the group called The Runner Beans?
- Why does Bastjan worry about the disappearance of Quinn, constantly asking where he has gone?
- What is a domain?
- Read up to the end of page 64. Predict where Quinn may have gone.
- What word class is 'exceedingly' in the sentence 'and he looked exceedingly strange...' on page 62?
- Where is Crake's homeland?
- How would you describe the mood towards the end of this chapter between Bastjan and Crake?

### WRITING OPPORTUNITIES

Write a report about the effects of climate change on our world, from its cause to its impact, including extreme weather like droughts, severe storms and increased flooding, a reduction in glaciers and ice cover, desertification and a loss of wildlife and habitats leading to species extinction.

### CROSS-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

**SCIENCE** • In this chapter, Crake talks about the sea levels rising and the icebergs melting linked to climate change. Learn more about the science behind climate change and how the Earth's global temperature is warming, meaning that weather patterns and ecosystems are changing more quickly than animal species and human communities can adapt.

**COMPUTING** • Children may want to write their report about climate change using word processing or presentation software.





## CHAPTER EIGHT

Pages 68-76

### COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

- How is Bastjan's old wagon different from the one he shares with Crake?
- From its appearance, how does Bastjan know that this is surely the key to open up his mother's box?
- How is Bastjan's mother described? What can you infer about her character?
- How did Bastjan feel when he saw the bracelet? How do you know this?
- On page 75, find and copy a word that shows a feeling so intense it is able to be touched or felt (palpable).
- Predict what will happen next. Find evidence from the text to show how you think that the events of this chapter and the prologue are connected.
- Do you think Quinn will send Bastjan away?

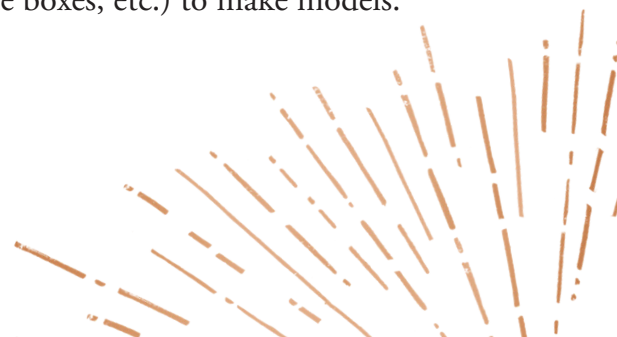
### WRITING OPPORTUNITIES

Create an Emotions Graph to plot Bastjan's changing thoughts and feelings throughout this chapter. You may wish to refer to key events such as: finding the key; the moment it opened the box; seeing the bracelet; leaving home and the painful memory he experienced.

### CROSS-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

**HISTORY** • Research more about circus wagons and learn how by 1835, circus wagons began to appear in circus parades, and their role in parades.

**ART AND DESIGN** • Design your own circus wagon, thinking about the exterior and interior. Collect boxes of different sizes (cereal boxes, tissue boxes, etc.) to make models.







## CHAPTER NINE

Pages 77-82

### COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

- What does Atwood mean by 'We have traditions, sir – customs'? Why is this important? How does Quinn respond to this?
- What new information does Quinn give the performers about the circus?
- What does Zenobia making the decision of accepting on everyone's behalf show about her?
- Who is the mysterious benefactor? What does it mean to be a benefactor?
- What do we find out about Bastjan's mother during this chapter?
- How do you think Bastjan is feeling about his future in this chapter?

### WRITING OPPORTUNITIES

Write a short paragraph about a tradition or a custom that you or your family participate in.

### CROSS-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

**GEOGRAPHY** • Find out about the cultural differences, customs and traditions of people around the world. Why are these traditions and customs important to them?





## CHAPTER TEN

Pages 83-89

### COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

- Why is this chapter different from the ones that were before it?
- How had the dog been given its name?
- What does 'others of her ilk' mean on page 85?
- Who are we introduced to in this chapter?
- What is Alice's backstory? How does her life differ from Bastjan's? How is it similar?
- Who are the Tunellers and Mrs P?
- Predict how the characters of Alice and Bastjan might meet in the book.

### WRITING OPPORTUNITIES

Write the events of this chapter from the perspective of Wares. How is it similar? How is it different from Alice's?

Imagine you are Alice's grandfather who has posted a reward for the return of his granddaughter. Write the text for a MOST WANTED poster for Alice explaining why it is vital she is caught and captured.

### CROSS-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

**ART** • There are many descriptions of colours in this chapter from coal-dark to chalk-white. Create a palette of different shades, tints and hues of colours and call them different names according to their likeness of objects.





## CHAPTER ELEVEN

Pages 90-98

### COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

- Why had there been a fight between Clement and Lady Zenobia?
- How does the author show the passing of time within this chapter?
- Bastjan wants Crake's help to read the map of Melita. Can you think of a time when you have been unable to read something you wanted to? How does it feel?
- Why does Crake also find it difficult to read most of the map?
- Who is Nikola?
- Explain why you think Bastjan's mother had bought tickets to return home to Melita.
- What does Bastjan realize about his mother during this chapter? What else now makes sense?

### WRITING OPPORTUNITIES

Write a short setting description of the island of Melita from the descriptions you have read so far. What kind of place might it be? What are its inhabitants like? Why do you think Bastjan's mother wanted to go back there?

### CROSS-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

**ART** • From the description provided in this chapter, draw a sketch of the lizard-lady.







## CHAPTER TWELVE

Pages 99-107

### COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

- Which metaphor is used to describe the morning light?
- List three examples of how Bastjan knows straight away that they are in a new place.
- Why doesn't Bastjan like cities?
- What does it mean when Crake 'suppressed a shudder'? Can you act this out with a partner?
- Why is it a good thing that nobody is looking at Alice?
- What is a 'laconic growl' on page 106? Use a thesaurus to find synonyms for laconic to widen your vocabulary. Are they as effective as 'laconic'?
- Imagine you are watching all the performers in the parade. Which would be your favourite and why?

### WRITING OPPORTUNITIES

In this chapter, we are introduced to the dual-narratives of Bastjan and Alice together. Write a prediction paragraph about how the two characters will meet and what you think will happen when they do.

### CROSS-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

**HISTORY** • In this chapter, Crake mentions a place that looks like a prison or a workhouse. Research the history of workhouses, and why they would have had the shuddering effect they did on Crake due to their inhumane treatment of people.





## CHAPTER THIRTEEN

Pages 108-116

### COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

- What does it mean to appear in someone's 'peripheral vision'?
- What is the name for a play performed during the day, especially in the afternoon?
- How does the author create tension in this chapter when Bastjan realizes he's left the wagon door open?
- How does the author break this tension with humour?
- How do Bastjan and Crake behave towards Alice? Do you think they could become friends with her?
- What impression do you get of Alice in this chapter?
- Predict how Alice might help Bastjan in the future, as she proves to do towards the end of the chapter.

### WRITING OPPORTUNITIES

Summarize the relationship between Bastjan and Quinn in this chapter in three words. Explain your reasons for choosing these three words.

### CROSS-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

**DRAMA** • Work with a partner to act out the exchanges between Bastjan, Crake and Alice during this chapter. Think about body language, expression, tone and humour to convey emotion.





## CHAPTER FOURTEEN

Pages 117-128

### COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

- What does Alice initially find out for Bastjan from reading his mother's notebook?
- Why would Alice's birthmark be a good thing in the circus?
- What causes Alice to look beseechingly at Bastjan?
- Why do you think Alice doesn't tell Bastjan and Crake about Mrs Palmer at first?
- What simile is used to describe Bastjan as he begins to walk on the high wire?
- How are the words of encouragement from Nanette and Quinn different in this chapter?
- Do you think the performers should trust Quinn after the way he acts towards them?

### WRITING OPPORTUNITIES

Create a character profile for Cyrus Quinn based on what you have learned about him so far.

### CROSS-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

**SCIENCE/PSHE** • Find out more about birthmarks and what causes them. Discuss how we are judged in society and why our appearance should not define us.

**MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES** • In this chapter, we are introduced to a French word. Learn some simple French phrases and vocabulary.







## CHAPTER FIFTEEN

Pages 129-139

### COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

- Read to the end of page 129. Who might this mysterious person who Alice had seen be?
- How does Bauer show he has come across some of the performers before?
- Why does Quinn address Bauer with the word 'doctor' this time in the campground?
- What does it show about Alice's character when she follows Dr Bauer?
- What does Dr Bauer promise Cyrus Quinn to entice him to look for the box?
- How does Alice know she can trust Bastjan and Crake?
- Why do you think Quinn looked strange according to Alice when talking to Dr Bauer about the box?

### WRITING OPPORTUNITIES

Rewrite this chapter from the perspective of Dr Bauer when searching for Ester's box.

### CROSS-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

**GEOGRAPHY** • The continent of Antarctica is mentioned in this chapter. Learn more about it being Earth's southernmost continent, its location and how it is also the world's highest, driest, windiest, coldest and iciest continent. Create a presentation to show the facts you have found out.





## CHAPTER SIXTEEN

Pages 140-149

### COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

- What do the words in italics so far throughout the book show?
- Which word in the French language does Alice help Bastjan to translate? What does it mean?
- What do the diary entries show about how Bastjan's mother felt towards Quinn?
- Why does Bastjan's mother want to return home to Melita?
- What is a Slipskin?
- Was Alice right to put her mother's doll away in a drawer?
- Do you think you can give your memories to other people?

### WRITING OPPORTUNITIES

Write a short paragraph about a memory you have. It might be a positive or negative memory. Think about the emotions you felt and why you felt them. Be mindful of sensitivity when discussing memories.

### CROSS-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

**PSHE** • In this chapter, Alice says 'Thinking about people you've lost can do funny things to your brain.' Do you agree or disagree? Talk more about grief, recognize the signs of grief and as a class, discuss strategies for managing grief.





## CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

Pages 150-159

### COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

- What is gruel? Have you read any other books that feature this food?
- Why are the performers now eating gruel rather than kippers or toasted crumpets?
- Find and copy a word on page 151 that means 'goods that are illegal'.
- What makes Bastjan's blood freeze?
- How does the author show that the rousties are scared of Quinn in this chapter?
- Explain the significance of the title of the book that the rousties couldn't buy and had to order into the bookshop.
- How do you think Alice is feeling at this point in the story?

### WRITING OPPORTUNITIES

Write a plan for Bastjan of what to do next after he has escaped the clutches of Quinn and his rousties who are in search of his mother's box.

### CROSS-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

**DRAMA** • In pairs, dramatize and come up with voices for the scene between Bastjan and Alice. You could also do this for Quinn and his rousties. Record bits of speech and improvise using your character voices, making Cyrus Quinn's sound as sinister as he is.







## CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

Pages 160-169

### COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

- Where is Bastjan's favourite place behind the scenes?
- What does the word 'inquisitive' mean to describe Wares? Can you think of any other words to describe the dog?
- Why does Sandrine sneer at Bastjan?
- Read to page 165. Predict why you think the colour of Bastjan's face paint has changed from red to silver and white.
- What does the costume remind Bastjan of?
- Read to the end of page 167. What does it mean when Nanette says Quinn will do 'whatever it takes' to get the box back?
- What new information do we learn about Alice at the end of this chapter?

### WRITING OPPORTUNITIES

Write a one-paragraph summary of the events in this chapter.

### CROSS-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

**ENGLISH** • Choose two characters from the ones we have been introduced to so far. Create 'Character Templates' by drawing an outline of two people. What words and phrases from the text can you add inside the template to describe what the character is like internally and outside the template to describe what the character is like externally? How are they different from each other?





## CHAPTER NINETEEN

Pages 170-178

### COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

- How does Wares try to protect Alice against Quinn?
- Why does Nanette feel pressured to go along with Quinn's instructions? How has her relationship with Bastjan changed over the course of the story so far?
- Read to page 175. Do you feel empathy for Nanette's character for following Quinn's instructions or do you think that she has an ulterior motive?
- What does it mean when someone says 'break a leg' before going on stage?
- What will Nanette do if Quinn gives her the signal about Alice?
- What does it mean when it says Alice's thoughts 'cascaded', one after the other?
- Why does the author choose to end this chapter with the sentence ending 'Alice prepared herself for what had to come next'? Predict what will happen next.

### WRITING OPPORTUNITIES

Quinn says 'headlines are headlines'. Write short newspaper headlines describing the moment if Bastjan were to fall from the high wire. What would they say? Try to keep them short and concise, challenging children to a limit of 6-8 words.

### CROSS-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

**MUSIC** • Create a soundtrack for the scene where Quinn confronts Alice. Research music from films with similar scenes to achieve the same desired effect.





## CHAPTER TWENTY

Pages 179-187

### COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

- What does it mean to mirror one another?
- What is exertion?
- What causes Bastjan to start whooping?
- Which noise is Nanette's signal for Bastjan to let go?
- How does Bastjan react to what Nanette does?
- Who comes to Bastjan's rescue? What has happened to Nanette in the meantime?
- What happens to the wagon at the end of the chapter?

### WRITING OPPORTUNITIES

Imagine you are in the audience at the performance where it all goes wrong. Write an eyewitness account of what you saw amidst all the pandemonium of the events.

### CROSS-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

**PE** • Compose a moving performance to music or without music, and try to mirror each other's movements. Who can move in synchronization with each other the most?







## CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

Pages 188-196

### COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

- How does the author depict feelings of disorientation for Bastjan at the start of this chapter?
- How does Bastjan know he is not in a wagon anymore?
- Who accompanies Bastjan on this journey?
- What can Bastjan remember?
- Who has been the closest person to a father for Bastjan?
- Explain the reasons why Bastjan is not physically hurt more on his arrival at the farmer's.
- What causes Ana to feel ready at the end of the chapter?

### WRITING OPPORTUNITIES

Create a timeline of events in the story so far which you can build on as you continue to read.

### CROSS-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

**DRAMA** • Role play the two scenes with Bastjan and the farmer and Alice, Ana and Carmen. What is the impact of each character's actions? What do you think each character is feeling and why?





*SINÉAD O'HART*

## CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

Pages 197-205

### COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

- What is Nanette's real name?
- List three examples of how Nanette has been hurt in the performance.
- What impression do we get of the character of Lily?
- How does Nanette feel towards Quinn after realizing he has disappeared?
- What is the name of the farm they think Bastjan might have been sold to?
- Why is Alice not given her own horse to ride?
- Predict what the animal that Quinn will bring back will be like.

### WRITING OPPORTUNITIES

Write an internal monologue as Nanette when she is asleep on her bunk to get inside her thoughts. Would she be angry at Quinn for getting hurt in the process?

### CROSS-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

**HISTORY** • Find out about how and why children were sold for labour to work for people throughout history.



*SINÉAD O'HART*

## CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

Pages 206-214

### COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

- 'The clunk of the lock on Bastjan's prison door being pulled open woke him.'  
What kind of literary device is the word 'clunk' in this sentence? (onomatopoeia)
- What is the name of the farmer's wife?
- Who do the lads that the farmer takes in look like?
- How does Bastjan feel about milking the cows?
- Describe what the farmer's dog's opinion is of Bastjan in one word.
- What is the term of endearment that Crake calls Alice?
- Why is Alice desperate to get out of the new place she is in?

### WRITING OPPORTUNITIES

Make some predictions about the rest of the story, which you can come back to at the end.

### CROSS-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

**MISC** • Learn how to play the game of knucklestones, or knucklebones as it's commonly known.





## CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

Pages 215-222

### COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

- What was included in Bastjan's meal?
- What does the farmer's wife think that Bastjan's name is? Why does she want to call him Joseph?
- Read to the end of page 216. Predict what Bastjan might do with the fork he has hidden.
- What is insolence?
- How does the farmer punish Bastjan?
- Which village do Alice, Crake and the others pass through on their way to Bracklebrick Farm?
- Why does the farmer tell the little girl in his cart to go and tell the Mythens that circus folk are on his tail?

### WRITING OPPORTUNITIES

Imagine you are the little girl on the way to Bracklebrick Farm to tell the Mythens. Write a conversation between what happens between you and the Mythens when you tell them that there are circus folk on their way to see them. How do the farmer and his wife react?

### CROSS-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

**HISTORY / PSHE** • Crake says that 'Fixin' the mistakes of the past shouldn't drown out your present'. What does this mean? Can we use this message to think about how the past influences the present and the future?





## CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

Pages 223-230

### COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

- How does Alice know that this is the place?
- Why does a concerned crease appear in Crake's forehead?
- What is Alice's plan to go and find Bastjan?
- What is the little girl promised for telling the Mythens about the circus folk?
- Read to the end of page 228. Predict what you think posset is.
- How does the author show that Mr Mythen turns nasty towards Crake?
- Where do Alice and Wares hide at the end of this chapter?

### WRITING OPPORTUNITIES

Write a diary entry from the farmer's, Mr Mythen's, perspective detailing the events of this chapter.

### CROSS-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

**DRAMA** • In small groups, re-enact the scenes between Alice and Bastjan and Mr Mythen, Mrs Mythen and Crake. Freeze frame at different points and reflect on what each character is feeling.





## CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX

Pages 231-238

### COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

- Why does Mr Mythen call Bastjan a runt? What is a runt?
- Can you show a 'mocking leer' in your voice like Mr Mythen?
- What object does Bastjan suggest that Alice uses to unpick the lock?
- What is a 'tine' on a fork?
- Find words and phrases to describe how the author shows Alice's shock in this chapter to the reader rather than telling them directly.
- Which punctuation marks are used in this chapter frequently to add suspense? (ellipses)
- Why is the roof easy for Bastjan to walk across?

### WRITING OPPORTUNITIES

Look up any unfamiliar vocabulary used in this chapter like those used to describe the parts of the farm buildings and use them in sentences to show your new understanding.

### CROSS-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

**MISC** • Understand more about the art of lock picking and when it is used. Recognize that in most places, picking locks that you own is legal, but it is illegal to pick locks that you do not own or do not have permission to pick.







## CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN

Pages 239-246

### COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

- Explain what movement a canter is.
- Who has got to Alice first: Bastjan and Crake or Mr Mythen?
- Why doesn't Alice tell Mr Mythen her name?
- What is a 'lout'?
- How does Mrs Mythen surprise everyone in this chapter with her actions? How does she show compassion towards the children in this chapter?
- What does it mean for something 'to be in its heyday'?
- How does Alice know so much about the trains?

### WRITING OPPORTUNITIES

Design a comic strip with three or more boxes showing the key events or moments in this chapter.

### CROSS-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

**PSHE** • Note down at least three positive qualities that make Alice a good friend to Bastjan. You could also do this for Crake.





## CHAPTER TWENTY-EIGHT

Pages 247-253

### COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

- Where is Bastjan's mother?
- Why was something about Alice's face not right?
- What is the name of the farewell song that the campmates sing?
- What is a 'front façade'?
- Describe what Bastjan sees inside the station.
- What is good advice for all of them?
- Predict who the two children might be at the end of this chapter.

### WRITING OPPORTUNITIES

Using the description of the newspaper report in this chapter, create a front-page article of the news about Bauer.

### CROSS-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

**COMPUTING** • Using word processing software, design your newspaper article using the computer.





## CHAPTER TWENTY-NINE

Pages 254-261

### COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

- How does the tone of Crake's voice show he is trying to reassure Bastjan?
- What are the names of the Tunneller children? Why?
- Why did Alice run away from Mrs P?
- What is the Barrier?
- It says the boy put his hands up in a 'gesture of peace'. What does this look like?
- What technique is used in the following phrases and sentences: 'prickle-pointed' and 'festooned with flags'? (Alliteration)
- Predict what was handed to Mrs Palmer at the end of the chapter.

### WRITING OPPORTUNITIES

Turn the scenes of this chapter into a script.

### CROSS-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

**DRAMA** • Act out the play script you have written, thinking about how you can turn stage directions into action. Take on each role to understand what each character is feeling.







## CHAPTER THIRTY

Pages 262-269

### COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

- Why is the simile of a crack appearing on a frozen lake effective in describing Mrs Palmer's expression?
- What does it mean to chuckle 'mirthlessly'?
- Where is Hades? Why does this show that Mrs P doesn't care about Alice's friends, just Alice?
- List at least two examples of how Mrs P's gang attacked Crake.
- How does the author describe the action in this chapter? What verbs and adverbs does she use?
- Why does Monty help Alice, Bastjan and the others?
- What had Quinn done to Carmen?

### WRITING OPPORTUNITIES

Write a two-paragraph summary of the events in this chapter and why they are important.

### CROSS-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

**ART** • Draw an illustration of Mrs P, now you know more about her character.





## CHAPTER THIRTY-ONE

Pages 270-277

### COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

- What does Alice give to Monty for helping them?
- What is a quay? What clues are there to help you work this out?
- How does Monty help the children in this chapter?
- It says that the voice of Quinn is very familiar to Bastjan. Act out what you think the voice of Quinn sounds like.
- What is Quinn planning on doing with the cage on board?
- What else have we learned about Quinn from this chapter?
- How are they trapped on board?

### WRITING OPPORTUNITIES

Rewrite the chapter from the perspective of Monty. What would he be thinking and feeling?

### CROSS-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

**ART** • Sketch what you think Quinn's airship looks like, based on the descriptions given in this chapter.



## CHAPTER THIRTY-TWO

Pages 278-285

### COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

- Why do Bastjan and Alice find it hard to tell the time aboard the airship?
- Explain why Alice is called Lady Patten by some characters.
- Why did Alice feel that she was never good enough for her grandfather?
- What is a galley on a ship?
- How are Bastjan and Alice found?
- Why do the rousties think the damage caused to the room was from Bastjan?
- If you were Bastjan and Alice, what would you say to Cyrus Quinn?

### WRITING OPPORTUNITIES

Write a continuation of the story. What do you think will happen next to Bastjan and Alice in the hands of Quinn?

### CROSS-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

**PSHE** • It seems that Alice has a lack of self-esteem and confidence because of the expectations of her grandfather. Discuss how she can regain some confidence through the positive actions, words and support of characters like Bastjan and Crake.





## CHAPTER THIRTY-THREE

Pages 286-293

### COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

- How does the reader know that Alice is feeling nervous?
- Do you think Quinn and the Slipskin will make a deal?
- What impression do you get of Bauer from the words of Quinn?
- What happens to Crake during this chapter?
- Why does Quinn need Bastjan to accompany him to the Silent City?
- Whose voice does Bastjan first hear upon waking up in the control room?
- How does Bastjan know they have arrived at the Silent City?

### WRITING OPPORTUNITIES

After your discussion about destroying things in the search for knowledge, write an argument about your opinion on the matter.

### CROSS-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

**PSHE** • It says in this chapter that Dr Bauer 'doesn't care what he destroys in his search for knowledge'. Do you think that things in our world should be destroyed in order to gain greater knowledge about them? Or should they be left alone?





## CHAPTER THIRTY-FOUR

Pages 294-301

### COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

- What kind of impending danger does Atwood sense?
- Read to the end of page 295. What should Bastjan do?
- How does Bastjan feel about entering the Silent City?
- What is the name of the last inhabitant of the Silent City?
- What happened to Dawara's mother?
- Who can Dawara smell?
- What is the Relic?

### WRITING OPPORTUNITIES

After completing the Conscience Alley activity, write a paragraph exploring your thoughts and decisions.

### CROSS-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

**DRAMA** • Look at pages 294 and 295. What should Bastjan do? As a class, create a Conscience Alley. One side of the class should be voices persuading Bastjan to go with Quinn. The other side should be Bastjan's conscience saying no. Take it in turns to play Bastjan walking through the alley of voices. How do you feel?





## CHAPTER THIRTY-FIVE

Pages 302-311

### COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

- What is the name of the rigger?
- Which of the characters continued into the Silent City?
- What has caused the Slipskins to become almost extinct?
- What do you think a 'bivouac' is?
- How does Bastjan feel when he has the bracelet in his hand?
- What is the bracelet made from?
- Who is the cub that Dawara is describing?

### WRITING OPPORTUNITIES

Summarize the character of Dawara in three words. Explain the reasons for your choice of words in a sentence.

### CROSS-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

**SCIENCE** • This chapter talks about the Slipskins becoming almost extinct. Learn more about species extinction, the alarming rate that it is happening and the causes for why this is occurring in our world, even today.







## CHAPTER THIRTY-SIX

Pages 312-321

### COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

- Where was Marlowe going to put Bastjan?
- How does Bastjan get hold of the key for the pods?
- What are 'brutes'?
- Why did Bastjan feel as if he knew the Slipskin even though this was the first time he had seen her?
- How does the bracelet connect Bastjan to the Slipskin?
- In what way does the Slipskin show she is starting to understand Bastjan?
- Predict what you think will happen next to Bastjan and the Slipskin in the hands of Hubert and Cyrus Quinn.

### WRITING OPPORTUNITIES

Write a reflection from Bastjan's perspective about the events in this chapter, especially coming face to face with the Slipskin. Focus particularly on his complicated feelings surrounding the bracelet, the Slipskin and his mum.

### CROSS-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

**ART** • Draw an illustration of the Slipskin from the description provided in this chapter and all that you know about her.



## CHAPTER THIRTY-SEVEN

Pages 322-329

### COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

- What does it mean to 'be laden with' something?
- How does Bastjan feel to see the reappearance of Crake?
- Who helps Bastjan and Crake to stop Quinn in his tracks?
- How does the Slipskin show she trusts Bastjan and Alice?
- How does the author use humour in this chapter?
- How does Crake communicate with Atwood?
- What makes Atwood begin to land the airship?

### WRITING OPPORTUNITIES

Write a short definition for each of the emotions the Slipskin is experiencing: fear, want, trust, terror and rage.

### CROSS-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

**SCIENCE** • There is a mention of speaking tubes on board the ship for its passengers to communicate. Create your own speaking tube and investigate how sound travels.





## CHAPTER THIRTY-EIGHT

Pages 330-338

### COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

- What verbs does the author use in the opening paragraph of this chapter to show the action happening?
- What does the Slipskin child turn into in the cage?
- What does it mean 'to find purchase on the mountain'?
- Why is Bastjan determined to go after Quinn?
- Are you surprised about what Quinn does to Lahiri?
- What is Quinn going to use to go after the Slipskin?
- Do you think Quinn has any sense of honour?

### WRITING OPPORTUNITIES

Write the conversation that you think Bastjan and Crake have next about the revelation about the Dance of the Snowflakes being Ester's idea. How does Crake explain himself to Bastjan?

### CROSS-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

**DRAMA** • Act out the conversation between Crake and Bastjan.







## CHAPTER THIRTY-NINE

Pages 339-349

### COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

- Why did Bastjan's mother choose to marry Quinn rather than Crake?
- Predict who or what you think the Slipskin is looking for.
- What does the word 'incredulous' mean when describing someone?
- How does Bastjan find his balance?
- Who destroys the pod and Quinn?
- What objects does Alice find from Bastjan's mother's box?
- Who are the women at the end of the chapter?

### WRITING OPPORTUNITIES

As we near the end of the story, write your own ending to the story predicting what you think will happen.

### CROSS-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

**MISC** • Create your own memory box of a person who you admire like Bastjan has of his mother. What would you choose to include inside?





## CHAPTER FORTY

Pages 350-359

### COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

- What does a 'dour voice' sound like?
- Why is Alice surprised that someone has asked to see her by name?
- Who shows up at the hospital to see Alice?
- How has Alice's grandfather changed? How does he show remorse for his previous actions towards her?
- What does Bastjan think his name is? Why?
- Do you think Bastjan will ever remember what he has been through?

### WRITING OPPORTUNITIES

Explain in a paragraph how Alice's grandfather has changed in his personality and his character.

### CROSS-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

**MUSIC** • Use music to soundtrack the dramatic events of this chapter like the return of Alice's grandfather.



## EPILOGUE

Pages 360-363

### COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

- What is an epilogue? What does it add to the story?
- What does the word 'litheness' mean?
- Who had stayed to care for Ester's mother?
- What medical condition is Mrs Manduca suffering from?
- Why does the Slipskin cry?
- What kind of bird does the Slipskin turn into?
- What effect does the last line of this chapter have?

### WRITING OPPORTUNITIES

Write a book review based on your thoughts about the story.

Write a letter to Sinéad O'Hart telling her all your thoughts and feelings about the book.

Write a continuation story about what happens to some of the characters such as Dawara, Bastjan, Alice, Crake and Quinn.

### CROSS-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

**ENGLISH** • Read the next book that follows this, *The Eye of the North* by Sinéad O'Hart, to see what happens to Bastjan/Thing.

**SPEAKING AND LISTENING** • Compare your predictions from the start of the story to now – were you right about anything?

