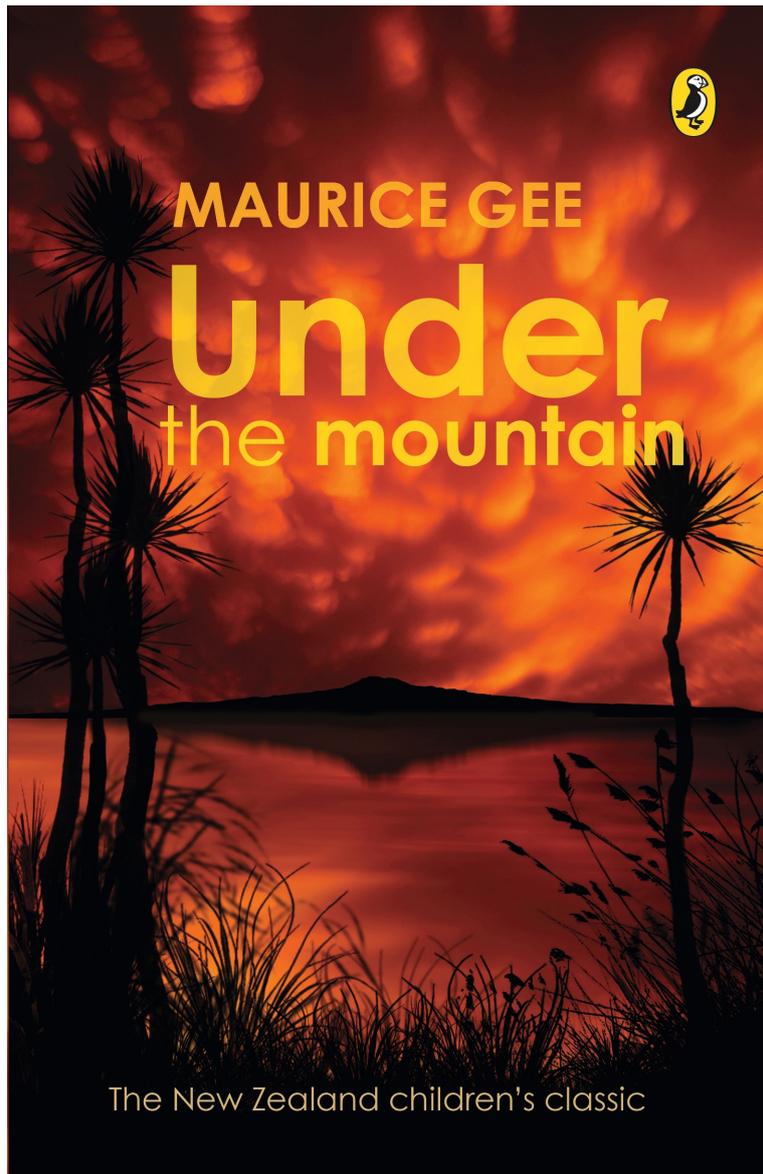


Under the Mountain

Teacher Notes



Includes
activity
sheets

Maurice Gee



Before Reading:

1. Before reading the book, look at the cover image and title. Discuss what you think this book might be about and who you think its readership might be?
2. Discuss as a class what information you can glean from the book cover that helps you identify that it is set in New Zealand. For example, the title and the photograph.
3. The cover of the book refers to this novel as 'The New Zealand children's classic'. Discuss what this means? Do you think this is true? Why or why not? List five other books you think are New Zealand classics and justify your choices.
4. Read the author's dedication (p. 8). If you wrote a book, to whom would you dedicate it and what would the dedication say?

Themes:

1. Discuss the following themes and find examples from the book which illustrate each:
 - » family relationships
 - » collaboration and love
 - » mysteries and other worlds
 - » survival and disasters
 - » humanity
 - » death, grief and loss
2. What do you think is the main theme of the novel? Write an essay on your choice.

Setting:

The book is set predominantly on the North Shore of Auckland, New Zealand.

Language features, structure and narrative:

1. The genre of this book is science fiction/fantasy. List the aspects that are indicative of this genre with examples from the book.
2. The book contains a prologue (pp. 9-13). Discuss the purpose of a prologue and how it aids the reader. If the author had not chosen to include a prologue, in what other ways could the events portrayed in the prologue have been included in the narrative of the novel?
3. Foreshadowing is used in the prologue when Rachel thinks Rangitoto 'looks sinister' (p. 16). Find other examples of when foreshadowing is used in the novel.
4. The story is told in the third person. Why do you think the author chose to do this? Is it effective? Why or why not? Choose an exciting passage from the novel and rewrite it in first person narrative.
5. Figurative language is used to convey ideas that might otherwise be difficult to express. Examples of these include similes and metaphors, such as, 'It looked, she thought, like a flying saucer ready to take off.' (p. 22) and 'His mind is a pool of water.' (p. 50). Find more examples from the book.
6. The author uses animal imagery in some similes, for example, 'The light lay still and warm over them, murmuring like a hive of bees.' (pp. 11-12), 'They went along the rim, clambering like goats.' (p. 33) and 'It bounced a metre in the air and the boat and trailer bucked like a rodeo horse.' (p. 142). Think of five animals that are native to New Zealand and create a simile for each.



7. The author uses nature imagery in some similes, for example, 'They were as still as puddles, a grey stony colour' (p. 28) and 'black and still as water in a well' (p. 63). Write a poem about a force of nature using three similes.
8. The following is an example of what figure of speech: 'A helicopter chattered down the valley from the town.' (p. 12)? Find another example from the book. Write a poem or descriptive paragraph which includes the words from your example.
9. The following are examples of what figure of speech: 'ducked and dived (p. 16) and 'slithering sound' (p. 40)? Think of examples of this figure of speech for ten other letters of the alphabet.
10. The author often uses short and sharp sentences in direct speech. Find an example of this from the book and explain why you think he has chosen to do this. What effect does it have on the pace and meaning of the text?
11. The author uses idioms and colloquialisms in the book. What are the phrases below typically symbolic of? What is the origin of these phrases? Research their origin. Choose ten phrases and draw cartoon interpretations of them.
 - » he's baled something up (p. 13)
 - » hard-hearted (p. 13)
 - » a bear-hug (p. 19)
 - » looneys in this town (p. 20)
 - » to paint the town red (p. 26)
 - » a dunny (p. 64)
 - » off to the sack (p. 84)
 - » steady as a rock (p. 117)
12. Find definitions of the following words from the novel. Write a sentence for each or use them to create a glossary for the novel. You may like to add any other words from the novel that are new to you.
 - » sinister (p. 16)
 - » morbid (p. 22)
 - » magnetism (p. 46)
 - » culvert (p. 64)
 - » undulated (p. 66)
 - » menace (p. 78)
 - » petrified (p. 91)
 - » aperture (p. 115)

Characters:

1. Do you like Rachel and Theo as characters? Do you think they are realistic characters? Why or why not? Compare and contrast their personalities, opinions and actions, and analyse how they are influenced by one another. Use quotes from the novel to support your points.
2. Do you think Rachel and Theo have a realistic brother-sister relationship? Do you believe that their relationship, as well as their relationship with their friends and family, develops and changes though the book? If so, list what these changes are and the main events which contribute to the development?



3. Mr Jones describes Theo as being 'practical' and Rachel as 'intuitive' (pp. 51-52). Find examples from the novel of when the twins display these qualities.
4. Choose three adjectives to describe the following characters: Rachel, Theo, Ricky, Uncle Clarry, Aunt Noeline, Mr Jones and Mr Wilberforce. In pairs, read your adjectives to your partner and see if they can guess the character you are describing.
5. Choose an important event from the novel and describe Rachel and Theo's reactions to it? What are the different pressures on Rachel and Theo throughout the novel? What factors lead to the decisions they make and how do they cope with the various situations they find themselves in?
6. What does the novel say about friendships and/or family and their importance during difficult times? List examples of episodes when friends and/or family are either a help or a hindrance to Rachel and Theo.
7. Draw a picture of one of the characters based on their physical descriptions, for example, Mr Wilberforce (p. 27), Mr Jones (p. 30) and the slugs (p. 66).
8. Choose a character from the book, other than Rachel and Theo, to write a character study on. What part do they play in the novel? Think about the development of the character throughout the book, and how your chosen character's attributes and actions affect those around them.
9. Which character do you particularly like or dislike? Why?
10. Which character do you most identify with? Why?

Close-reading/Comprehension Questions:

Chapter one

1. What is Ricky referring to when he says 'Let me warm my hands' and what is the twins reaction to this (p. 15)?
2. Why does Theo stare nervously at Uncle Clarry and Aunt Noeline's house (p. 17)?
3. What does Ricky mean when he says that his dad 'thinks this place is Buckingham Palace' (p. 21)?
4. How do the twins describe the smell in the local area and what possible reasons were given to explain why their relatives could not also smell it (pp. 20-21)?
5. Why is Rachel nervous as she canoes past the Wilberforce's place (p. 23)?

Chapter two

6. When they are on Mt Eden what happens to Rachel and Theo directly after they have the 'pins-and-needles' feelings in their minds (pp. 32 & 33)?
7. Aunt Noeline talks about the 'games' the twins played when they were smaller. What did these games involve (p. 35)?
8. Why does Rachel ask to be 'let down' in Takapuna (p. 36)?
9. What do Rachel and Theo both experience with the old man despite being in different places (pp. 36-39)?

Chapter three

10. What type of car follows the buggy and who owns it (p. 42)?
11. Why does Ricky not bring fishing rods on their boat trip to Rangitoto (p. 43)?
12. What do the sharks do to the boat and why do you think they behaved in this way (p. 44)?



13. What does Rachel think the lines on Mr Jones' face are a mark of (p. 49)?
14. What is the process of 'pebbling', who can use it and why do the twins find it easy (pp. 50-51)?
15. What do you think Mr Jones means, and is referring, to when he tells Rachel and Theo that they 'are the hope of your race' (p. 57)?

Chapter four

16. What idiom is the title of this chapter a wordplay of (p. 4)?
17. Why do the twins think they are both having nightmares (p. 59)?
18. What provisions do the twins choose to take with them in the canoe and why (p. 61)?
19. Why do the twins enter the Wilberforce's house (p. 63)?
20. What do Rachel and Theo think the 'piles of dust against the walls' might be (p. 66)?
21. How do the twins escape from Mr Wilberforce (p. 69)?

Chapter five

22. Why does Rachel not want Theo to touch the floating 'huge grey-brown balloon, a globe, a planet' (p. 73)?
23. How big are the slugs that appear and chase Rachel and Theo (p. 78)?
24. How do Rachel and Theo get the slugs to back off and what effect do the slugs have on the twins (pp. 79-80)?
25. How does Uncle Clarry react to the twins' arrival and their excuses (p. 84)?

Chapter Six

26. What does Mr Jones reveal about the role the twins will play against the Wilberforces (p. 87)?
27. How does Mr Jones' news about the role they will play make Rachel feel (p. 87)?
28. What is the meaning of the name of the creatures (p. 89)?
29. How did Mr Jones' race fight the Wilberforces (p. 91)?
30. How did the Wilberforces arrive in Auckland and where were their hiding places (p. 92)?
31. What analogy does Mr Jones use to compare his magic with the Wilberforces' 'rough magic' (p. 93)?
32. What has been 'poured into' the two stones (p. 94)?

Chapter seven

33. What characteristics must the pairs Mr Jones has found have to use the stones (p. 96)?
34. What does Theo pretend to be in order to 'see' his stone (p. 98)?
35. Why is Rachel able to 'see' her stone better than Theo (p. 101)?
36. Where were the other twins from and in what era (p. 103)?
37. Where must the red stone be used and why is this so (p. 106)?
38. How does having the stone in the bag around his neck make Theo feel (p. 108)?

Chapter eight

39. Why does Rachel think they should try and save the Wilberforces (p. 110)?
40. Why do you think Rachel forgets the number when ringing the police (p. 113)?
41. Why does the Wilberforce move slowly and how do the twins use this to their advantage (p. 114)?



42. How does Theo attack the Wilberforce once it has Rachel and what effect does this attack have (p. 120)?

Chapter nine

43. What has the Wilberforce done to Rachel and what does Mr Jones do to counter it (pp. 125-127)?
44. How and why do Ricky and his friends help Mr Jones (pp. 125-127)?
45. Why do Rachel and Theo let go of the stones (p.136)?
46. What is Mr Jones' reaction to learning the twins dropped the stones and why does he react in this way (pp.137-138)?
47. Where must the twins place the stones and why (pp. 138-139)?

Chapter ten

48. Why will Ricky not turn off the lights on the boat as Mr Jones requests (p. 144)?
49. Why does Theo enjoy the walk on Rangitoto less than Rachel (p. 146)?
50. What makes Theo go against Mr Jones's order and 'move helplessly' to his and Rachel's aid (p. 150)?
51. Why do you think Rachel's voice 'contained a note of grief' (p. 150)?

Chapter eleven

52. Why is Rachel jealous of Theo (p. 154)?
53. What part are Ricky and his boat playing for the Wilberforces (p. 156)?
54. How does Theo convince Mr Jones that Rachel has to come with them to Mt Eden (pp. 156-157)?

Chapter twelve

55. When waiting for Mr Jones with the worm how does Theo try to keep his courage (p.163)?
56. What is the one picture that Rachel's mind holds in the tunnels and why (p. 166)?
57. What drives Theo on as they run through the tunnels (p. 167)?
58. What is Mr Jones's 'natural shape' and in what way does he help the twins after changing into it (pp. 169-170)?
59. Why do you think Mr Jones tells the twins that they 'do right to grieve' (p. 177)?
60. What happens to Mr Jones (p. 177)?



Activities and Creative Responses:

1. The twins wander away from their father and get lost in the bush (p. 10). Create a lost and found poster to aid in the search for the missing twins.
2. Before the twins enter Mr Jones's house the twins remind each other about what their mother said about strangers (p. 46). What do you think their mother's advice may have been. Design a safety campaign for a younger age group centered around 'stranger danger'.
3. There is a description of the city as Ricky drives the twins through Auckland (p. 16 & p. 31). Find other descriptions of places that are mentioned in the book. Locate these places on the map of Auckland provided. Choose one of the places mentioned. Create and design an entry for a travel book for your chosen place as it is today. Include information such as, population size, geography, history, things of interest, weather, etc. Compare these details with how the place has been described in the book.
4. Descriptions of exteriors and interiors are featured throughout the novel, such as Uncle Clarry and Aunt Noeline's house in Takapuna (p. 17), the Wilberforce's house (p. 41) and the tunnels and chambers under the Wilberforce's house (pp. 72-82). Find other examples of descriptions of exterior and interior spaces in the book. Draw one of these based on the descriptions. Next, in pairs, each write a description of an exterior or interior space of your choice. Read your description aloud to your partner and get them to draw the space based on your description.
5. Rachel looks out at the scene from the house and feels like she 'could write a poem about it' (p. 18). Choose a scene that you like looking at as inspiration for a poem. Choose a form of poetry, such as a rhyming ballad, a concrete or shape poem, a limerick, a haiku or a list poem.
6. Rachel admits that she is homesick (p. 19). Write a descriptive paragraph or short story about a time you have been homesick. Think about the emotions and physical symptoms you felt.
7. Rachel describes the peaks of Rangitoto of looking 'so neat and even they might have been modelled by a sculptor' (p. 29) and the surface of the planet within the chamber (pp. 73-74). Choose your favourite episode to create an artistic interpretation of, for example, a painting, drawing, photograph, model, poem, etc. Or, design your own illustrations for the cover of the book.
8. Rachel and Theo experience both 'teleportation' and 'telepathy' (p. 48 & p. 50). Research these topics and write an illustrated report of your findings.
9. The novel is full of suspense-filled action sequences, particularly chase and escape scenes, for example, when the slugs chase Rachel and Theo in the Wilberforce house (pp. 61-62), the slide down the slug tunnels (pp. 72-73 & 159-161), the confrontation with the Wilberforce in Uncle Clarry and Aunt Noeline's house (pp. 112-124), launching the boat (pp. 143-144) and Theo's scramble to the crater on Mt Eden (pp. 172-174). Choose an action sequence from the book. Study the language the author uses in the sequence, then write a dramatic, suspense-filled action sequence of your own about something that has happened to you. Alongside your written description present your sequence in either a comic strip or a movie storyboard format.
10. Mr Jones's race uses magic spells to fight the Wilberforces (p. 91). In pairs, write a spell and perform it for your class.
11. Write, design and publish an illustrated children's picture book about the journey and adventures of The Swedish Twins (pp. 103-107). Read your book to a younger class level.
12. Rachel ponders whether or not the Wilberforces have the right to be saved from extinction (p. 110 & p. 140). Use Rachel's thought as either a topic for a class debate or as an essay starter.
13. The world that the Wilberforces and the worms wish to create is described in the novel (pp.

Activity
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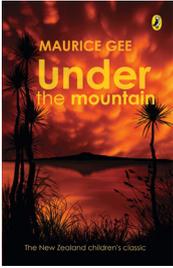


89-90). Draw this scene. Use this description to set the scene or the mood for your own piece of descriptive writing about another fantasy or science fiction world of your own creation.

14. Rachel and Theo shelter with a knot of people from the wind and ash from the Auckland volcanoes (p. 177). Create a campaign to inform the general public of how best to cope in a natural disaster in New Zealand. Research what agencies have been set up to assist and how can you help. The campaign could include elements such as pamphlets, scripts for school talks, radio jingles, posters, slogans, websites, phone apps, etc.
15. After a close reading of the book, choose your favourite chapter to write your own comprehension questions about. Create a quiz based on your questions. Ask a classmate your quiz questions.
16. Choose your favourite chapter from the book to summarise. Present your summary in a poster, powerpoint, pamphlet or video format to your class.
17. Read the author biography notes (p. 1). Find other books by Maurice Gee, such as those listed (p. 2). Choose one to read, compare and contrast with *Under the Mountain*. Are there many similarities or differences in themes, characters, settings and action?
18. Using the drama convention of 'hot-seating', in pairs, each choose one of the characters to embody, for example Mr Jones and Mr Wilberforce. Get the class to ask questions about what it is like to be these characters, your relationship and how you feel about each other.
19. Imagine you are one of the other characters from the book. Choose an event from the book and write a personal diary entry or monologue about it from your point of view, for example one of Ricky's friends who helps fight the Wilberforce (pp. 112-124). Think about how you would describe the physical scene, any other characters who were involved and your feelings about the incident.
20. This book has been made into both a television series and a major movie. Watch the series and/or the film and write a comparative review.
21. Find other books which have young adult characters dealing with saving humanity. Write a comparative review in which you compare and contrast *Under the Mountain* with at least one other novel dealing with this theme.
22. Rewrite one of the climactic scenes as a video script. (If your school has filming equipment, produce your scene.)
23. Create an illustrated timeline of the main events of the novel. Then choose one event at, or near the end of the book, that is important, and describe how it helped you understand a key idea of the novel.
24. Did you like the ending of the book? Why or why not? Either rewrite the ending of the book or write a plot outline for a sequel.
25. Design your own cover for the novel, including a blurb.
26. Write a review of the book, aiming it at the readership of your favourite magazine, newspaper, website or blog. Give it a rating, such as stars or a number out of ten. Consider the following questions:
 - » Which characters appealed to you the most? The least?
 - » How did the story make you feel as it unfolded?
 - » What ideas in the book awakened your interest?
 - » What did you dislike, or find boring?
 - » Do you think this is a significant book?
 - » Why is this book important for today's readers?

Activity
sheet
provided





Under the Mountain

Word Find

Can you find the following words from the novel in the wordsearch below?

SINISTER MAGNETISM UNDULATED PETRIFIED
MORBID CULVERT MENACE APERTURE

C S D E Q M N R Y R W E C V D
M W F S D E T A L U D N U Q W
E E V N M E N B V C X Z L A S
N D W E R W A P G H G D V S Y
A A G D A A M E F G H T E H T
C D S I N I S T E R A J R N M
E S V Z D W F R S I D K T P M
B A V X Y M T I F O W B E O S
N V D D U J H F G I F R Y U I
N M S D M H G I H W U T Y U T
M O A G F G D E N T I O U T E
U R H B N F S D R Y U U Y I N
T B R B M A F E E Q R T T R G
H I W S B F P R S F B F G E A
E D F R W A Z X C G C X Q W M

Once you've discovered them, find out what they mean and write a sentence for each or use them to create a glossary for the novel.

Sinister (p. 16) means:

Morbid (p. 22) means:

Magnetism (p. 46) means:

Culvert (p. 64) means:

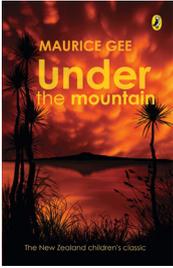
Undulated (p. 66) means:

Menace (p. 78) means:

Petrified (p. 91) means:

Aperture (p. 115) means:





Under the Mountain

Auckland Map

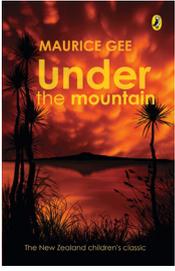


There is a description of the city as Ricky drives the twins through Auckland (p. 16 & p. 31). Locate these places on the map of Auckland provided.

- | | |
|-----------------|------------------|
| HARBOUR BRIDGE | MOUNT WELLINGTON |
| MANUKAU HARBOUR | NORTH HEAD |
| MOUNT EDEN | ONE TREE HILL |
| MOUNT VICTORIA | RANGITOTO |

Can you find any other descriptions of places mentioned in the book?





Under the Mountain

Comic Strip

Choose an action sequence from the book. Study the language the author uses in the sequence, then write a dramatic, suspense-filled action sequence of your own about something that has happened to you. Alongside your written description present your sequence in either a comic strip or a movie storyboard format.

Above is a basic strip to get you started, but you can lay it out how ever you like!



write your blurb here:

design your book cover here:

MAURICE GEE

Under the Mountain



A series of ten horizontal dotted lines spanning the width of the blurb section, intended for writing a book blurb.

Design your own cover for the novel, including a blurb about the book.