

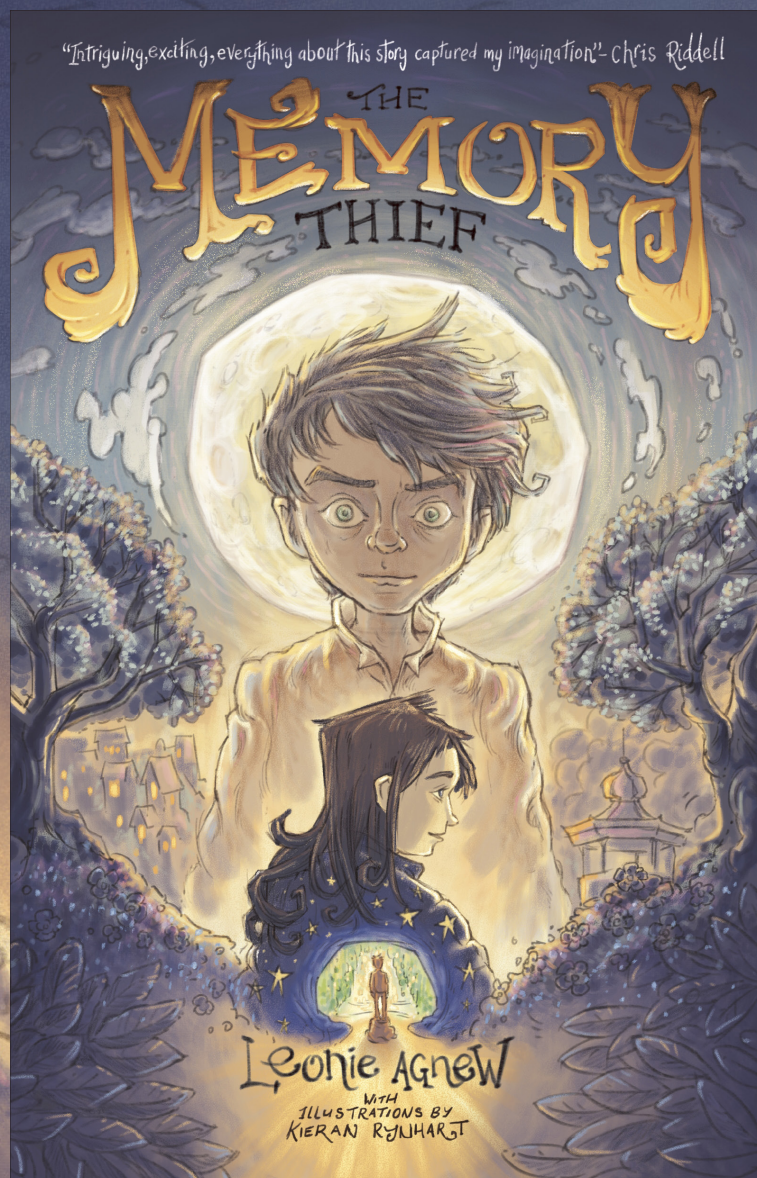
# Teacher Notes

## Contents:

- Before reading
- During reading  
(themes/characters/setting/  
language/illustrations)
- After reading  
(research and activities)

## Specifications:

Imprint: Puffin  
ISBN: 9780143775720  
rrp: \$19.99  
Format: paperback  
Readership: 9+





## About the book

By day Seth is frozen as a statue of a shepherd boy, but as soon as the sun sets he roams the park, ravenously hungry. He is a troll, and the food he seeks is human memories.

Then he meets Stella. Seth doesn't want her memories. He simply wants to talk to her. But there's someone else in the garden who sees Stella as a threat...and a meal.

What is Stella trying to forget? What are the memories that Seth is piecing together? And will he ever escape the lonely garden and start truly living?

## About the author

Leonie Agnew is an award-winning children's author, a former copywriter, and currently moonlights as a primary school teacher. It is possible she has a tendency to make things up. This is called lying, unless you write it down – then it is pleasantly referred to as being an author.

## About the illustrator

Kieran Rynhart is a freelance illustrator who creates beautiful, distinctive and evocative images using a mixture of traditional and digital techniques, and works on a wide range of commissions from children's picture books to music videos.

## Before reading

- 1) List three things you can see on the cover (illustrations or words that you think might be relevant to the story you are about to read. Why do you think these aspects relate to the story?
- 2) The back of the book has helpful information, too. In this book, we are told about the author, Leonie Agnew. Write down one interesting fact given in her biography. Why does this interest you?
- 3) Another clue to the story can be found on the first few pages. 'Troll: Noun' gives us a definition of these creatures. Why do you think this is important enough to place on the page before the book even starts?

# During reading

## Close Reading Questions

- 1) What does Stella remind Seth of?
- 2) Who is Celeste?
- 3) Who is Connor?
- 4) What does Stella discover about Seth in this chapter?
- 5) What does Stella want Seth to do?
- 6) What does Seth think of Celeste?
- 7) What makes Stella sad about her mum?
- 8) What does Seth think is happening to his memory?
- 9) What was Stella's grandfather's job?
- 10) Why does Seth think that humans 'can't be that great'?
- 11) What is the awful thing Seth remembers about Stella's granddad?
- 12) What is happening to Stella?
- 13) What does Stella tell Seth about her father?
- 14) What does Celeste want Seth to do?
- 15) Who has gone missing?
- 16) What huge secret does Celeste share with Seth?
- 17) What big action occurs in this chapter?
- 18) What is the special, selfless act Seth performs for Stella?
- 19) Who helps Seth in this chapter?
- 20) How do they get Seth to the house?
- 21) What has happened to Stella's grandfather?
- 22) What gift does Stella give Seth?
- 23) What did Seth find beside his statue's plinth?

# Themes

**This book wants us to consider the place of memory, relationship, freedom and loneliness in our lives.**

There are many lines in the book that show us this; things that characters say and descriptions of what they think and do.

- 1) Match the quotes provided from the book below with the most fitting thematic headings provided (sometimes a quote might cover two or even three!).

One has been done for you under each theme to help you get started.

<b>Friendship comes in many different for</b>	<b>Loneliness</b>	<b>Freedom is an important part of being human</b>
'Seth, are we friends?' 'I don't know, maybe.' I turn the idea around in my head. 'How can you tell?' 'You just know.' (113)	I'm crying and that's new, but I don't care. She'll never forgive me. I'll always be alone and nothing else matters. (135)	'Sunlight on snow. Everything was white and . . . I remember how it felt.' 'What felt?' 'Being free.' (97)

- I think I had a friend once, even for just a night or two, and her name was Stella. That's worth remembering. So I spend my nights high in the trees, muttering her name Stella, Stella and holding onto her memory with my teeth. (52)
- Stella doesn't have friends, big surprise. Her blunt words come across too rude. (143)
- Why do I have to stay in this stupid cage? (90)
- What was I thinking? Trolls eat human memories, end of story. Making friends? That's not an option. Deep down, I knew I was going to take her memory, I couldn't help it. And yet, I didn't want to . . . and I've no idea why it hurt. (20)
- 'Trying to climb over those fences? Breaking the locks . . . you know it's impossible. And before you ask, you've told me. You've tried millions of times.' She shrugs. 'Seth, you need to accept your home, we're stuck here. No point fighting the inevitable.' How can Celeste expect me to accept those fences? But she's older than me. She's like these exotic birds, used to living in cages. I don't want to get used to our garden — not ever. (82)
- I've swallowed her memory. What's wrong with me? Trolls eat people, well not the bones and skin, just their memories . . . but we mustn't hang out and talk, just because we're feeling . . . what? Lonely? I can't talk to anyone, not even for five minutes, without feeding. What did I think I was doing? (17)
- I've stolen enough memories from ordinary people to know that's how they make friends. Is that what I'm doing? Making friends? (40)
- 'We don't experience feelings. Not like humans, anyway.' Is she right? (79)
- What's it like out there, among houses where city lights line the streets like fallen stars? Or walking among students who stream along the pavements, turning the footpaths into a multi-coloured current as they head to places I've only seen in memories? I'll never know. It's just me and the trees, night after night, staring at the town. (53)

- And then she says, 'You know Seth, I think we're friends.' And I think she's right. (119)
- The river is always on the move, unlike me: I'm stuck here. (124)
- What's happening? I never had any problems with feelings. Not until she came along. (134)
- 'I'm a prisoner,' he whispers. 'They've locked me up.' (128)
- She frowns, catching herself. 'Just some girls.' I sit, waiting for her to explain. 'Well, I've had a few different schools.' She taps her fingers on her chin, beating out a tuneless rhythm. 'And the girls are all different, but they end up being the same. You know?' (100)
- Some of the other stories I told you, all the nasty things some kids said . . . I used to think maybe they were true. But when I saw myself in your memories, I saw the parts of me you liked — and I liked me, too.' (245)
- Deny everything! But I've always hated lies and I've told too many. They're hollow things — no bone, no meat. Just empty mouthfuls.(59)
- 'When did someone ever ask if I was okay? ... something warm splashes through my chest.'"(35)
- I'm tired of being alone.(40)
- I need to stop wondering what it feels like to be free. (32)
- 'They're not stupid. Unlike the rest of me.' (23)

## Characters

**Seth and Stella are the main characters in this book. Their friendship is the most important relationship throughout the text.**

- a) Does Seth deserve a friend like Stella? Why/not?
- b) Does Stella deserve a friend like Seth? Why/not?
- c) What changes do you see in Seth by the end of the book?
- d) What changes do you see in Stella by the end of the book?

1) How do these two main characters develop throughout the novel? Divide two pages into three columns titled 'Beginning', 'Middle' and 'End' - one for Seth and the other for Stella. Fill in the columns with your understanding of these characters throughout the text.

2) Find quotes from the book to support your opinion. Add the quotes to these character development pages.

## Setting

In the Acknowledgements at the back of the book, author Leonie Agnew writes:

This story would never have happened without hours spent wandering around the Dunedin Botanic Garden ... impossible things seemed to be lurking around each corner of the park and the first draft was written during my last week in Dunedin.'

Find a map of the Dunedin Botanic Garden. Can you mark these landmarks?:

- The bird aviary
- The South African garden
- The Herb garden
- All bridges across the Leith river
- The gate near the supermarket
- The rhododendron dell
- Magnolia tree dell
- Redwood dell



# Writing Style and Language Activities

## Tense and narrative perspective:

This book is written in first person present tense (from Seth's perspective).

- 1) What does this mean? Explain first person narrative perspective.
- 2) Explain present tense.
- 3) Why would an author use these techniques?
- 4) What do these storytelling techniques add to this narrative?

## Descriptive Language

This book uses **similes** and **metaphors** to make the story interesting to read. These techniques using comparison make it easier for readers to understand imagery.

Here are some definitions for you:

**Metaphor:** a direct comparison; saying one thing **IS** another (for example, 'the light **was** a beacon of hope in the dark night.').

**Simile:** a comparison that uses like or as (for example, 'the light was **like** a beacon of hope in the dark night'.)

**Here are three examples of comparative descriptive language from early in book:**

'... black iron curling above me **like** fists punching the air.' (7)

'There's nothing to see except plastic playground swings **throwing broken-fingered shadows** across the grass ...' (8)

'**Hunger digs tunnels through my stomach**, chewing at my insides.' (8)

- a) Explain these two examples. How is the first a simile? How is the second a metaphor?
- b) Find three of your own similes from the book. How do the comparisons work in these examples?
- c) Find three of your own metaphors from the book. How do the comparisons work in these examples?

## Illustrations

- 1) What is the illustration on the first page of the story (Chapter 1)? What clue does this give us about the story? How would you describe Rynhart's style?
- 2) On page 14 we see Rynhart's interpretation of Stella. Does this match the description Agnew gives in the text? List the ways you see this.
- 3) On page 15 we see Rynhart's interpretation of Seth? Does this match what we learn in the text as readers? List the ways you see this.
- 4) Rynhart has drawn Seth's bridge on page 121. Describe it in words, using the artwork as your main source.
- 5) Choose your favourite illustration from the book.
  - a) What is happening in the picture?
  - b) Why do you like this picture?
  - c) Why is this illustration important to the story?

# After Reading

## Further Research and Creative Activities

- 1) Draw your own picture of Stella's grandfather, as described on page 127. Use the description given by Leonie Agnew to direct your drawing.
- 2) Choose another book written by Leonie Agnew. Read and compare. What are some similarities? What are some differences?
- 3) Make a diorama of part of the Dunedin Botanic Garden, as described in the book.
- 4) Write a short story describing Seth's capture in Regent Park (the time before the book starts). Use third person past tense narration to change the style.
- 5) Create a sculpture, using papier mache or clay, of Celeste. How can you convey that she is dangerous?
- 6) Research three other books Kieran Rynhart has illustrated. Choose one to read. Present a book review to your class.
- 7) Choose a moment in the book to write from another character's perspective. You could choose Celeste, Mrs Walker, Stella's grandfather or Stella. You could even choose a kea in the aviary! Try to write at least 200 words.
- 8) What is happening to the kea in Aotearoa New Zealand? Is it safe, or endangered? Create a poster on the kea and present it to the class. If you live close to any bird sanctuaries, visit one!
- 9) Write a short play of the scene when Seth and Stella first meet. Present to your class, or film and present to your class.
- 10) Compose a song about the value of friendship. If you have the technology, record on a phone and present to your class or family.