

*'Sky Song made my heart sing – I loved it'*

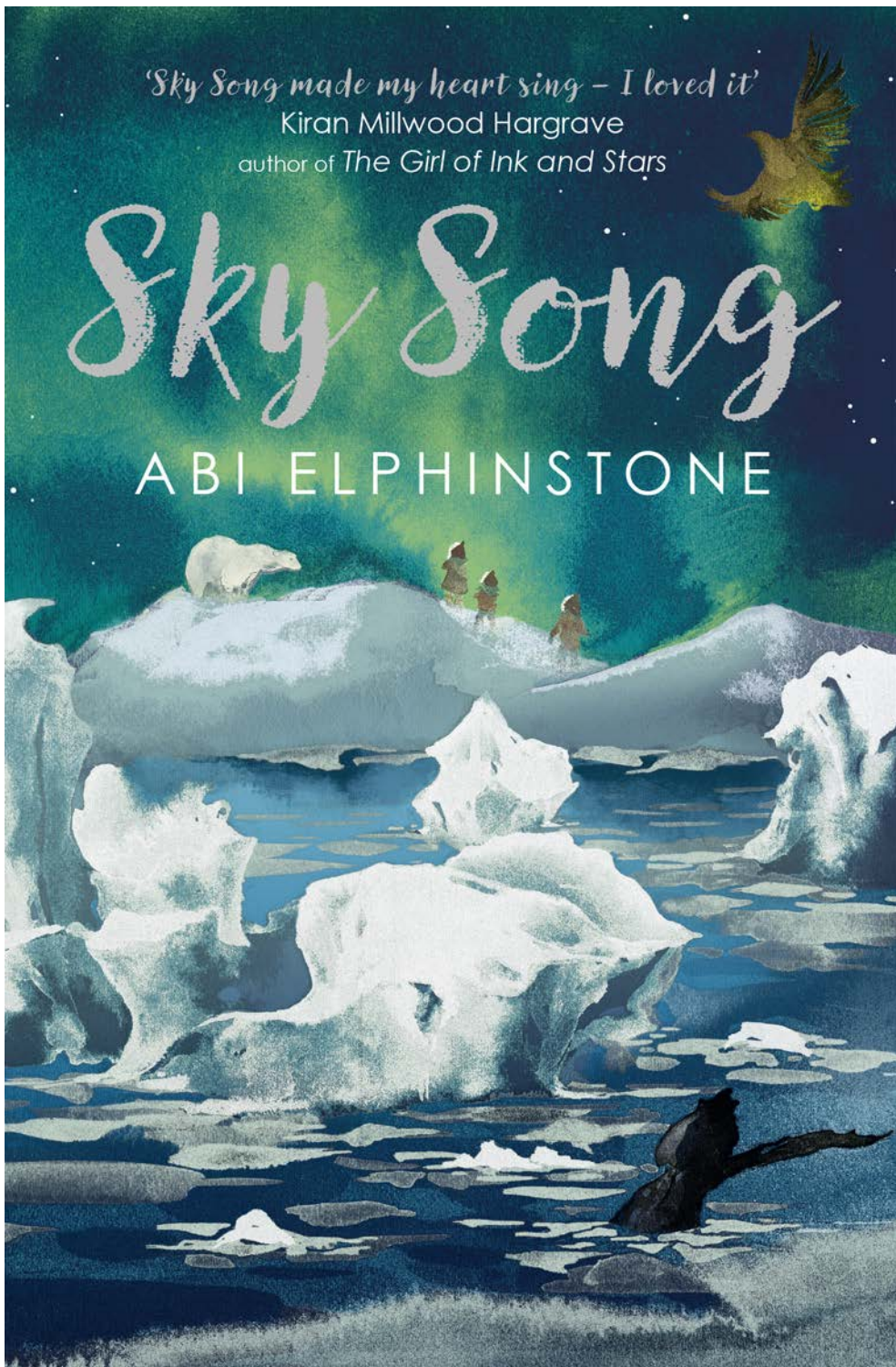
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author of *The Girl of Ink and Stars*



# Sky Song

ABI ELPHINSTONE



# **SKY SONG**

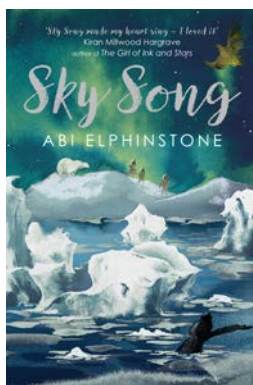
## **SCHEME OF WORK (AIMED AT KIDS AGED 8-12 YEARS)**

written by the author, Abi Elphinstone, a former English teacher

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## PRE-READING ACTIVITIES 1&2



My publishers and I went through several different book cover designs before we settled on this one by Daniela Terrazzini, which I love.

### Activity 1: Discussing The Book Cover

Write down a sentence on what you think the book might be about just from looking at the title.

.....

Now look at the artwork on the cover. Where do you think the story is set? Why?

.....

.....

What sort of characters do you think the story might contain? Why?

.....

.....

.....

### Activity 2: Designing A New Book Cover

Now read the blurb on the back cover. Create your own book cover on a separate piece of paper using the blurb to help you.

*Pre-reading activities*  
**PRE-READING ACTIVITY 3**



I start every story I write by going on an adventure. *The Dream Snatcher* trilogy saw me carving catapults in the forest, abseiling into jungle caves and scaling mountains in Scotland. But for this book, I went further afield to find my story. I went to the Arctic. And up in northern Norway (the Lofoten islands and Tromsø), I watched orcas and humpback whales dive for herring, I went dog-sledding through snowy valleys and I glimpsed the northern lights rippling across the sky. You can read more about my Arctic adventures, and see lots of photos, on the BLOG section of my website ([www.abielphinstone.com](http://www.abielphinstone.com)).

**Activity: Research Project on Inuits**

Although I didn't venture to the Arctic regions of Greenland, Canadian and Alaska, I did learn a lot about the customs of the people who live that far north: the Inuits. Your task is to create a poster full of interesting facts and images about the Inuit culture. Here are a few prompts to kick-start your research...

- What is the traditional method of transport for Inuits?
- How do Inuits make igloos? What items are traditionally kept inside an igloo?
- What kind of clothes do Inuits wear?
- What animals do Inuits hunt? And at what times of year?
- What are Inuit kayaks made out of?
- Can you find a traditional Inuit recipe?
- Can you unearth any beliefs about Inuit gods? What do they think the northern lights are?
- What is a shaman? And what powers do Inuit shamans apparently have?
- What is the significance of Inuit names?
- What traditional games do Inuit children play?



## PRE-READING ACTIVITY 4



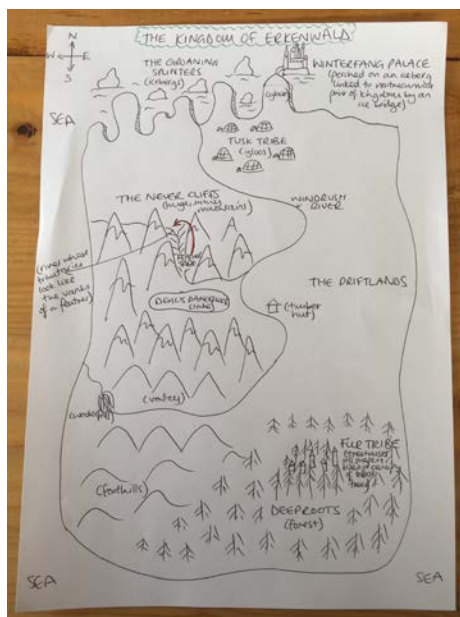
Finding inspiration for Eska, the heroine of *Sky Song*, was easy because when I was trawling through photos of remote tribes on the internet, I came across the Kazakh Eagle Hunters, a formidable group of people out in the wilds of Mongolia who tame golden eagles and use them to hunt foxes, wolves and marmots. It is an ancient tradition handed down through generations but what struck me most was that almost every single person in the tribe was male. Then I read about twelve-year-old Aisholpan, one of the only eagle huntresses, and I knew then that I had my heroine. Many emails and months later, I found myself trekking through Mongolia's snow-capped mountains to find her and the memories of spending time with this young eagle huntress found their way into my book – along with a made up character called Flint, an inventor boy who keeps an Arctic fox pup in the hood of his jacket. You can read more about my Mongolian adventures, and see photos, on the BLOG section of my website ([www.abielphinstone.com](http://www.abielphinstone.com)). Or, watch the brilliant documentary, *The Eagle Huntress*.

### Activity: Research Project on Kazakh Eagle Hunters

Create a poster full of interesting facts and images about the Kazakh Eagle Hunters. Here are a few prompts to kick-start your research...

- Where in Mongolia do most of the Kazakh Eagle Hunters live?
- What is a Mongolian ger? What is it built out of and what items might you find inside it?
- How do the Eagle Hunters find the golden eagle chicks they then go on to use in hunts?
- What animals do the Kazakh Eagle Hunters want their golden eagles to pounce on? And what do the hunters do with these animals?
- What is the traditional Kazakh Eagle Hunter's (or Huntress) style of dress?
- What do the Kazakh Eagle Hunters eat and drink?
- Find out more about Aisholpan: who is she? How old is she? Where does she live?

## PRE-READING ACTIVITY 5



After I've been on an adventure, the first thing I do when I sit down to write my story is draw a map because it is only when my characters start moving from place to place that a plot unfolds. Perhaps maps are such a huge part of my creative process because I'm dyslexic and I need visual prompts to anchor my ideas into a coherent tale or maybe it's simply because my stories are quests and I feel I'm more likely to capture the essence of adventure – that thrill of journeying through unexplored lands – if I've glimpsed the forests, seas and mountains before my chapters take shape. Whatever the reason, I always draw my way into stories. Sometimes I sketch my fictional world directly onto an Ordnance Survey map to make sure the geography works and other times I draw onto a blank sheet of paper using memories of interesting places I've discovered.

### Activity: Creating Your Own Literary Map

On a separate sheet of paper – possibly A3 in size to give yourself plenty of room – draw your own fictional map. If you are creating an Arctic world, think about including icebergs, glaciers, frozen lakes and snowy mountains. If you're planning something warmer, perhaps sketch out beaches, caves, jungles, temples, oceans and islands. Or maybe you want to create an enchanted city with magical railways, libraries, museums, restaurants, sewer tunnels. Remember your world can be any shape! Things to think about:

- Where might my main character live? Mark that spot on the map
- Where might my villain live? Mark that spot on the map

*Pre-reading activity*

## PRE-READING ACTIVITY 6

Authors spend a lot of time dreaming up names for places in their stories. Here is a bit of information on how I came up with a few of the place names in *Sky Song*.

### 1. Winterfang

This is the name of my Ice Queen's palace, a fortress of domes, spires and towers carved out of an iceberg. I wanted a word that would conjure up the menace of the Ice Queen and 'winter' carried all the connotations of ice and snow while 'fang' leant the word a sinister undertone.

### 2. Never Cliffs

I've always loved J.M. Barrie's *Peter Pan* and especially Neverland, the fictional world the characters travel to. There's something endlessly magical about the word 'never' – and using that word in conjunction with a mountain range implies dazzlingly high peaks and ridges that go on and on and on.

### 3. Devil's Dancefloor

This is the name of an enchanted lake in Erkenwald but I didn't make the name up myself. While researching the book, I was reading about adventurer Olly Hicks' kayak expedition from Greenland to Scotland and one of the toughest stretches of his journey was over the 300 miles of open water between Iceland and the Faroe Islands, known as the Devil's Dancefloor. I loved the alliteration of these words, and their sinister connotations, and I decided they would be perfect for a lake enslaved to an Ice Queen's command.

### Activity: Naming Places On Literary Maps

Name any places of interest on your map. Remember to think about the connotations of your place names and to use techniques like alliteration to bring them to life. Below are a few words to trigger places names for your world.

#### Mountains

Crag	Cliff	Peaks	Ridges	Jagged
Mount	Valley	Daggers	Cloud	Mist

#### Forests

Thorn	Gnarled	Twisted	Knotted	Dense
Bramble	Rotten	Oak	Ivy	Trunk

#### Seas

Waterfall	Cove	Ocean	Depths	Waves
Swell	Churning	Froth	Anchor	Swirling

#### Caves

Tunnels	Shadow	Echo	Deep	Bones
Mouth	Scream	Underground	Labyrinth	Crystals

#### Buildings

Hovel	Castle	Lighthouse	Forgotten	Haunted
Crumbling	Ruined	Fallen	Secret	Lost

## PRE-READING ACTIVITY 7



Your main character has to *want* something for there to be a plot. Chloe from David Walliams' *Mr Stink* wanted a friend. Charlie from Roald Dahl's *Charlie And The Chocolate Factory* wanted a golden ticket. JK Rowling's Harry Potter wanted to destroy Voldemort.

### Activity: Using Maps To Plot Stories

Decide what your character wants:

- Do they want to rescue a person?
- Do they want to find an object?
- Do they want to save an animal?
- Do they want to find a cure for someone who is ill?
- Do they want something else entirely?

Draw a line through your fictional world (starting from where your main character lives) mirroring the journey your character might take to find the person/item/animal they want. Take them to the most exciting places on your map. Create detours. Let your character get lost. Imagine traps... Now think about the following:

- What might happen at each place your character visits?
- What characters/magical creatures might your main character meet?
- At which place will your main character encounter the villain?

So, that is how I plan my stories! By now, you might well have the groundwork for an exciting story of your own. Write it down...

*Pre-reading activity*



## PROLOGUE ACTIVITIES



Read the Prologue.

When I first sat down to write *Sky Song* I opened it with Chapter 1, a scene involving a girl called Eska who is locked inside a music box in the Ice Queen’s palace. But when my editor read the book she suggested it might be more interesting to have a ‘voice-over style fairytale prologue’ that grounds the reader in my magical world before the action starts – like the ones you might have come across in films such as *Maleficent* and the new *Cinderella*. As a huge fan of fairytales (and having drawn on both *The Snow Queen* and *The Little Mermaid* by Hans Christian Andersen to write *Sky Song*), I said I’d love to write something like that (editors are a bit like teachers – annoying in that they often ask you to change your work but full of brilliant ideas to bring out the best in your writing...).

### Activity 1: Writing A Fairytale Opening

Watch the voice-over fairytale prologues used in the films *Maleficent* and *Cinderella* and/or read a fairytale of your choice by Brothers Grimm or Hans Christian Andersen. Then, in the spaces below, write down the words and phrases used that reminded you of fairytale language.

.....

.....

Have a go at writing your own fairytale prologue. Where is your story set? Who is the villain? What does he/she want? Who is the main character? Remember to include fairytale language.

### Activity 2: Creating A Timeline Of Events

On a separate piece of paper, draw up a timeline that documents the stages of the Ice Queen’s rise to power.

### Activity 3: Inventing Your Own Constellation

The Sky Gods form the Ursa Minor constellation which is in the shape of a little bear. On a separate sheet of paper, design your own constellation of stars and name it. And if you’re really interested in identifying the constellations yourself, download the App *Starwalk 2*.

*Prologue activities*

## CHAPTER 1 ACTIVITIES

Read Chapter 1.

### Activity 1: Illustrating The Ice Queen

Using the descriptions given in the Prologue and Chapter 1, draw the Ice Queen and her palace.

### Activity 2: Comprehension Questions On The Ice Queen

1. Look at the paragraph starting: 'She raked her nails...' Can you find two verbs in this paragraph that hint to the Ice Queen being a violent character?

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2. Find a sentence in this chapter that shows Eska's fear of the Ice Queen.

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3. The Ice Queen's voice is described as 'hard and pointed, as if full of unpleasant corners.' What do you think this means?

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4. Why do you think I put the Ice Queen's words '*because I own you*' in italics?

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5. Pick out three quotes that describe the Ice Queen's physical appearance.

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6. Look at the paragraph starting: 'The Ice Queen tilted her head...' Can you find five verbs in this paragraph that hint to the Ice Queen's powerful nature?

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7. Look at these sentences: 'I *will* take your voice,' she snarled. 'I get everything I want. In the end.' Have I used short or complex sentences here? Why?

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*Chapter 1 activities*

## CHAPTER 2 ACTIVITIES

Read Chapter 2.

### Activity 1: Creating A Fact File For Flint

Fill in the blanks in the table below using quotations from Chapter 2.

Age	
Hair colour	
Complexion	
Animal friend(s)	
Clothing	
Personality	
Hobbies	
Family members you know of	
Aims	

### Activity 2: Dreaming Up Inventions

Flint is an inventor. Google an unusual invention (when I did this I discovered someone had invented a robot that feeds you tomatoes when you run – WHY?!!) then dream up an invention of your own. What does it do? What is it called? In the space below, write a sentence describing your invention. You can also draw it if you want.

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## CHAPTER 2 ACTIVITIES CONT...



While exploring Tromsø, on the north coast of Norway, I went dog-sledding around Camp Tamok with a tour operator called Lyngsfjord Adventure. I stayed the night in a little wooden hut with a glass roof so that I could watch the northern lights dancing across the sky right up until I fell asleep and then in the morning I met the five Alaskan husky dogs whose sled I was to steer through the valley. I remember the creak and groan of the wooden sled over the snow, the patter of the dogs' feet and the smell of pines as I rushed through the forest (I also remember tipping the whole sled over when trying to show off round a corner...).

I love reading scenes where the author has been inventive with transport – like Philip Pullman with Leo Scoresby's hot air balloon in *Northern Lights* and JK Rowling with the Hogwarts Express in the *Harry Potter* books.

### Activity 3: Creating Writing

Imagine a particularly exciting mode of transport: zeppelin? Sidecar? Unicycle? Unicorn?! Then write a scene in the space below where your main character is being chased in this unusual method of transport. Who or what is after them? How does their method of transport sound/feel as they race along? Does it work perfectly or break? Where are they? Use dramatic verbs to bring the action of the scene to the forefront of the reader's mind.

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## CHAPTER 3 ACTIVITY

Read Chapter 3.

### Activity: Learning About Arctic Foxes

I often use photos to inspire my characters and this was the photo that made me want to include a character (Flint) who keeps an animal in their parka hood.



I chose an Arctic fox pup to go inside Flint's hood and I called him Pebble because of his coal-black eyes and because the name implies he's small – a pup. Google ten facts about Arctic foxes:

- 1.....
- 2.....
- 3.....
- 4.....
- 5.....
- 6.....
- 7.....
- 8.....
- 9.....
- 10.....

*Chapter 3 activity*



## CHAPTERS 4 & 5 ACTIVITIES



Read Chapters 4 and 5.

I wrote much of this story as Europe's Refugee Crisis reached its peak, and as the photos of capsized boats and separated families flooded in across new channels, I began to see my fictional world – a kingdom torn apart by an evil Ice Queen where tribes turn inwards and are prejudiced against outsiders – as a stage to challenge the idea of what it really means to belong. I wanted to include a character who starts off having very fixed ideas of what outsiders are like and then whose opinions change as the story progresses.

### Activity 1: Learning About Refugee Boy, Rami

Watch this youtube link (Rami – My Journey: [https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=is\\_JZJF0qAw](https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=is_JZJF0qAw)) to hear all about Rami, a Syrian refugee who travelled over 4000km to Europe with his violin wrapped in cling film. When everything around him was falling apart – being separated from his family and friends, being chucked off trains by police, enduring appalling conditions in refugee camps – music gave him hope. Complete the table below.

Things that I have/use every day (and that Rami had to go without)	Ways in which I can make refugees (or those from different backgrounds to my own) feel welcomed in my school

### Activity 2: Reading Stories That Champion Tolerance

If you have access to a local library or bookshop, consider reading Gill Lewis and Jo Weaver's book, *A Story Like The Wind*, which draws on Rami's story.

*Chapter 4 & 5 activities*

## CHAPTERS 4 & 5 ACTIVITIES CONT...

### Activity 3: Writing A Formal Letter

Write a letter to the Prime Minister and, using the format below, split it into 3 paragraphs. In paragraph 1, state the conditions many refugees have to endure when fleeing war-torn countries. In paragraph 2, suggest ways in which the British government could help refugees. Could they spend more money on making the boats safer? Free life jackets? More blankets and food at refugee camps? In paragraph 3, give instances of how you plan to help. Volunteering English lessons to refugee classmates? Donating clothes? Offering friendship?

Enter your address here

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Enter Prime Minister's address here

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.....

.....

Enter date here

Dear .....

[illegible]

Enter 'Yours sincerely' here: .....

Sign your name here: .....

## Chapter 4 & 5 activities

## CHAPTER 6 ACTIVITIES

Read Chapter 6.

### ACTIVITY 1: Writing A Diary Entry

Imagine you are Eska. Write a diary entry which covers the below pointers:

- Your hopes
- Your fears
- Your feelings about Flint
- Your thoughts about Erkenwald and the outlawed tribes
- Your reaction to the golden eagle

### ACTIVITY 2: Creative Writing

As a child, my father used to take me walking in the Scottish glens and my memories of those hikes are filled with glimpses of golden eagles launching from their eyries (nests) and soaring out over the moors. Watch the ‘Golden Eagle Fight: Planet Earth II Mountains Preview’: ([https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=ebPmDYH4\\_Mc](https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=ebPmDYH4_Mc)). Then make a list of adjectives that you think best describe these birds of prey:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Now write a short piece of descriptive writing imagining you are a golden eagle and you are out hunting in the mountains. Focus on the verbs, adjectives (you can use some from your list above), similes, metaphors and personification you might use to describe your speed and power as you soar across the sky before diving onto your prey.

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## CHAPTER 7 ACTIVITY



Read Chapter 7.

### **ACTIVITY: Creating 'Den' Settings**

Growing up in Scotland, there were plenty of places to make outdoor dens: up trees, under trees, amongst the bales in the farm opposite, in caves along the coast. In this chapter Flint is proud to show Eska the Fur Tribe's 'den' or hideout, 'The Labyrinth', a secret network of tree houses and wooden walkways up in the canopy of the trees. In the space below, design your own woodland hideout. What will the entrance look like? Do you need a code to get in? Where does everyone sleep? Eat? Have meetings?

If you have time at the weekend, build a den at home – either inside with things like upturned chairs and blankets – or outside in the park or in your garden with branches, overturned wheelbarrows and cardboard boxes. It's up to you what you do inside the den: read, write, daydream, talk to friends...

*Chapter 7 activity*

## CHAPTER 8 ACTIVITIES

## ACTIVITY 1: Writing Dialogue

Before you read Chapter 8, imagine the conversation that might occur between Tomkin, Flint and Eska. Write it below and remember to punctuate your speech correctly using these rules:

- **New speaker, new line**

"Please move," he pleaded.

**“Only** if you give me your ice-cream,” she grunted.

- Small letter after speech closes

“But you promised you’d buy me an elephant!” he screamed.

- All punctuation inside speech marks

“Give me the potato! Now!” the farmer yelled.

- Vary the word 'said'

"You?" she **exclaimed**. "You stole my goldfish?"

- Use action to create atmosphere

“Are – are you sure,” the child stammered, **pulling on his sleeve**, “that the dinosaurs have gone?”

[illegible]



## CHAPTER 8 ACTIVITIES CONT...



Now read Chapter 8.

### ACTIVITY 2: Learning About Diverse Characters

Blu is very obviously different from the other members of her tribe. In the table below, list three ways in which she is different and provide quotations to back up your points.

Ways in which Blu is different	Quotations to support my points

Although I never explicitly say this in the book, Blu has Down's Syndrome, a genetic disorder caused by the presence of all or part of a third copy of chromosome 21. It is typically associated with physical growth delays, characteristic facial features and mild to moderate intellectual disability. I've always known about Down's Syndrome but it wasn't until I married my husband and got to know his little sister, Steph, who has Down's Syndrome, that I realised how much more there was to Steph than the medical conclusions listed above. She is funny and brave and quite possibly the most loving person I have ever met. And, she's a great skier! She has taught me more about compassion and kindness than any of my friends without genetic disorders. And I think it's important books celebrate diverse characters like Steph and that people recognise that just because characters with disabilities sometimes look, act or speak differently, it doesn't mean they don't have their own very special, and wonderful, skills. Both Eska and Flint learn a lot from Blu during the course of the story.

For more books that include diverse characters, try: *Wonder* by R.J. Palacio, *The London Eye Mystery* by Siobhan Dowd, *Bubble Boy* by Stewart Foster & *Goldfish Boy* by Lisa Thompson.

*Chapter 8 activities*

## CHAPTER 8 ACTIVITIES CONT...

### ACTIVITY 3: Language Analysis

Often comprehension questions ask you *how* a writer makes a moment dramatic / scary / exciting / tense. As soon as you see that word 'how' in the question, you know you need to comment on the writer's craft. And to make sure you give a full answer it's often easiest to rely on the PEE chain technique (Point, Evidence, Explain).

**POINT:** state the technique the writer has used: a dramatic verb? An exciting adjective? A simile? A metaphor? Personification? A short sentence? An ellipsis?

**EVIDENCE:** include a quotation from the text to support your point.

**EXPLAIN:** explain the effect this quote creates for the reader.

Below is an example question and a model answer.

*Question:* How does the writer show Tomkin's anger towards his brother early on in this chapter?

*Answer:* The writer uses dramatic verbs: 'shouted', 'striding' and 'jabbed' to show Tomkin's fury towards Flint.

If you follow this formula - **The writer uses POINT: 'QUOTE' to show EXPLAIN** - you will always answer these types of questions correctly. Now see if you can answer the 'how' questions below using the above formula.

1. Look at these sentences:

Tomkin's eyes blazed. 'Winterfang? Why were you at the Ice Queen's palace?'

How does the writer show Tomkin's shock here?

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.....

2. Look at these sentences:

'You ran away!' For a moment, his eyes softened. 'Imagine if you hadn't come back...'

How does the writer use punctuation to show Tomkin's rage? How does the writer use punctuation to show Tomkin's sudden worry?

.....  
.....  
.....

3. Look at these sentences:

'Of all the reckless, stupid, irresponsible things you've done,' Tomkin spat, 'this is the worst.'

How does the writer show Tomkin's frustration with Flint here?

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.....

## CHAPTER 9 ACTIVITIES

Read Chapter 9.

### ACTIVITY 1: Identifying Dramatic Language

Eska is on the run, initially from the Fur Tribe and the wild beasts that might be lurking close and then, when she wakes up, from the Ice Queen herself. I wanted to make this chapter as tense as possible so I used a lot of energetic verbs, dramatic adjectives and vivid imagery (similes, metaphors and personification). In the table below, quote as many dramatic verbs, adjectives and imagery as you can find from this chapter.

Verbs	Adjectives
Imagery	

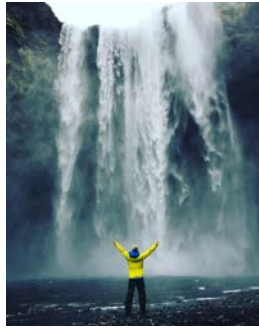
### ACTIVITY 2: Writing Action Scenes

Scroll down this link to find my tips on how to write action scenes: <http://moontrug.com/so-you-want-to-write-a-book/>. Now write an action scene on a separate piece of paper using the below image as inspiration. Remember to include dramatic verbs, adjectives and imagery to bring your scene to life.



*Chapter 9 activities*

## CHAPTER 10 ACTIVITY



Read Chapter 10.

Writers have to be endlessly inventive. When I'm typing away at my laptop I'm always thinking: *am I writing this scene in the most exciting, original way possible for my reader?* In an early draft of *Sky Song*, I had Eska find a wooden hut in this valley – a hideout similar to the one she and Flint took shelter in on their escape from Winterfang. But then I realised it would be boring for the reader if Eska was just making her way through all the wooden huts in Erkenwald so I tried to be more original. I've always been fascinated by waterfalls – so much so that I once found myself hailing the magnificent Skogafoss waterfall in Iceland (photo above) because I was so bowled over by its power and magnificence – and I decided to have Eska find shelter behind a frozen waterfall instead.

### **ACTIVITY: Imagining Alternative Settings**

Make a list of alternative hideouts I could have invented for Eska at this stage in the story. Where else do you think she could have hidden? You can be as inventive as you like.

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## CHAPTER 11 ACTIVITY

Read Chapter 11.

### ACTIVITY: Charting Flint's Character Development

Looking at Chapter 5 and Chapter 11, fill in the chart below showing Flint's changing attitudes towards Eska and his own tribe.

<i>Can you find a quote from Ch5 showing Flint's dislike for Eska?</i>	<i>Can you find a quote from Ch11 showing Flint cares about Eska?</i>	<i>Why do you think Flint is starting to care for Eska now?</i>
<i>Can you find a quote from Ch5 showing Flint's lack of compassion towards Eska?</i>	<i>Can you find a quote from Ch11 showing Flint's guilt about Eska being chucked out into the wild?</i>	<i>Why do you think Flint feels guilty for what has happened to Eska?</i>
<i>Can you find a quote from Ch5 showing Flint's faith in his tribe fighting back against the Ice Queen?</i>	<i>Can you find a quote from Ch11 showing that Flint believes his tribe's ideas of fighting the Ice Queen might not work?</i>	<i>Why do you think Flint feels differently about fighting the Ice Queen now?</i>
<i>Can you find a quote from Ch5 showing Flint's pride in his tribe?</i>	<i>Can you find a quote from Ch11 showing that Flint feels out of place within his tribe?</i>	<i>Why do you think Flint feels like an outsider now?</i>
<i>Can you find a quote from Ch5 showing Flint's irritation with Eska?</i>	<i>Can you find a quote from Ch11 showing Flint's regret at letting Eska go?</i>	<i>Why do you think Flint feels regret at letting Eska go?</i>



## CHAPTER 12 ACTIVITY

Read Chapter 12.

### ACTIVITY: Charting Eska's Character Development

Looking at Chapter 9 and Chapter 12, fill in the chart below showing Eska's changing attitudes towards the wild.

<i>Can you find a quote from Chapter 9 showing Eska's fear of the wild?</i>	<i>Can you find a quote from Chapter 12 growing love of the wild?</i>	<i>Why do you think Eska is starting to feel a closeness to the wild now?</i>
<i>Can you find a quote from Chapter 9 showing Eska's lack of skills to cope with the wild?</i>	<i>Can you find a quote from Chapter 12 showing Eska's growing skillfulness in the wild?</i>	<i>Why do you think Eska is starting to feel more confident now?</i>
<i>Can you find a quote from Chapter 9 showing Eska's loneliness?</i>	<i>Can you find a quote from Chapter 12 showing Eska feels less alone?</i>	<i>Why do you think Eska feels less lonely now?</i>
<i>Can you find a quote from Chapter 9 showing Eska's readiness to give up?</i>	<i>Can you find a quote from Chapter 12 showing Eska's determination to survive?</i>	<i>Why do you think Eska feels more confident now?</i>

## CHAPTER 13 ACTIVITY



Read Chapter 13.

I've always been interested in snowy landscapes (Philip Pullman's *Northern Lights*, Joan Aiken's *Wolves of Willoughby Chase*, Katherine Rundell's *The Wolf Wilder* and in 2016 I curated a collection of short stories by award winning authors called *Winter Magic* – my story within that collection is called *The Snow Dragon*). Without doubt the snowy books I've read and loved have influenced *Sky Song* but it's not only fiction for 8-12 year olds that I draw inspiration from; I frequently turn to picture books to spark ideas because the images and the simplicity of the text often present ideas to launch off from. And for *Sky Song*, I looked at the following snowy picture books: *Raven Girl & The Snow Witch* by Linda Sutherland, *Immi* by Karin Littlewood, *The Snow Queen* by Hans Christian Andersen, *Odd and the Frost Giants* by Neil Gaiman and Chris Riddell and *The Wolves of Currumpaw* by William Grill.

### ACTIVITY: Looking At The Influence Of Picture Books On Fiction For 8+ Years

Try to get hold of a few picture books that look engaging – from home, your school library, your local library or a bookshop – and as you flick through them write down any ideas for new stories that come to mind.

## CHAPTER 14 ACTIVITY

Read Chapter 14.

### ACTIVITY: Writing Film Director Notes

When I write, I often imagine my chapters unfolding as if they are in film format. Imagine you are a film director. Write a set of notes under the headings below to show how this chapter might be directed.

Music – is there any? Does it change? Speed up? Slow down? Get louder or quieter?	
What sort of lighting?	
What sort of camera angles? Wide shots? Close ups? Think of key moments: the waterfall thawing, the snargoyles appearing, Eska coming face to face with Flint...	
Which actors and actresses would you employ and why?	
Props?	
Anything else?	

*Chapter 14 activity*

## CHAPTER 15 ACTIVITIES

Read Chapter 15.

### ACTIVITY 1: Comparing Characters

Pick out three words/phrases which show Blu's openness towards Eska:

1.....

2.....

3.....

Pick out three words/phrases which show Flint's guarded attitude towards Eska:

1.....

2.....

3.....

### ACTIVITY 2: Exploring Themes

Themes are 'the fundamental and often universal ideas explored in a book.' In the *Harry Potter* books, there are themes of friendship, bravery and magic. Below is a table of some of the themes I touch on in *Sky Song*. Write down a quote from Chapter 15 for each theme.

<b>Friendship</b>	
<b>Courage</b>	
<b>Forgiveness</b>	
<b>Child-animal bonds</b>	
<b>Family</b>	
<b>Acceptance</b>	

## CHAPTERS 16 & 17 ACTIVITIES



Read Chapters 16 and 17.

Ever since reading about Iorek Byrnison, the armoured polar bear who befriends Lyra in Philip Pullman's *Northern Lights*, I've wanted to write about a polar bear. And in *Sky Song* I wrote about one called Whitefur.

### ACTIVITY 1: Making A Leaflet On Polar Bears And Climate Change

Make a leaflet about polar bears and the threats they face because of climate change. You can include photos or drawings and you might want to consider the following in terms of content:

- Facts about polar bears (their appearance, size, diet, life-span, cubs, speed of running)
- Facts about climate change (what causes global warming? What is the impact on the Arctic?)
- What this means for polar bears
- Ways in which we can help

### ACTIVITY 2: Getting Inspiration From Documentaries

The idea for Diamond Dust – the magical breath of Erkenbears seen in Chapter 17 – came from my watching a David Attenborough documentary about life up in the Arctic. In fact, I reckon I owe a lot of my ideas to David Attenborough documentaries... Watch an episode of a documentary (it could be based on nature, history, geography, science – whatever!) with a notepad on your lap and write down any unusual facts that could later inspire a story idea.



## CHAPTER 18 ACTIVITY

Read Chapter 18.

### ACTIVITY: Inventing A Villain

In this chapter, we discover what contraption Slither has been making and how the Ice Queen is using it. This is your chance to create a seriously horrible villain... I've listed a few prompts below.



First of all, decide on what *type* of a villain you want your character to be. A pirate? An evil uncle? A dentist? A witchdoctor? A robber? A teacher? A giant? A baby-sitter? A chef? Or simply just an evil person?!

Then make a spider diagram to include the following: name, appearance, clothing, mannerisms, voice, the way they move... Do they have a sidekick (perhaps an animal?) or maybe a human accomplice? Make sure your name suits your character. For example, if you wanted to create a rogue dentist he could be called Dr Snatchdrill (both violent words often connected with teeth)...

Use this sentence to lead into the description about your villain: *Without warning, a person stepped out of the shadows.*

Feel free to include an illustration if you'd like.

*Chapter 18 activity*

## CHAPTER 19 ACTIVITY

Read Chapter 19.

### ACTIVITY: Inventing A Magical Creature

*Sky Song* is full of magical creatures: Erkenbears, snargoyles, thunderghosts. Have a go at creating your own magical creature. First, decide on its power: does it breathe shadows? Can it control the weather? Can it turn items and people into glass? Then decide on a name that befits its power: if your creature breathes shadows maybe call it a Shadowgasp. Next, draw your creature. And finally, if you're feeling confident, create a spell that it might utter (you can make this rhyme if you want to).

Power:.....

Name of magical creature:.....

Illustration:

Spell:.....

.....

.....

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## CHAPTER 20 ACTIVITY

Read Chapter 20.

I'm often asked who my idols are. They don't tend to be celebrities. They tend to be ordinary people who happen to be extremely brave, like Malala Yousafzai, a Pakistani activist for female education and the youngest-ever Nobel Prize laureate. She is known for human rights advocacy, especially the education of women in her native Swat Valley in northwest Pakistan, where the local Taliban had at times banned girls from attending school. She was severely injured after a Taliban gunman attempted to murder her but recovered and the murder attempt sparked a national and international outpouring of support for Malala. Since recovering, Malala became a prominent education activist. Based out of Birmingham, she founded the Malala Fund, a non-profit charity, and in 2013 co-authored a book called *I am Malala*, an international bestseller.

### ACTIVITY: Case-study On An Inspirational Person

Flint, Eska and Blu have all shown bravery in the story so far. Write down one way in which each of these characters has shown courage:

Flint: .....

Eska: .....

Blu: .....

Using an encyclopedia, Google or your existing knowledge, prepare notes in the space below on a person you find inspirational because of their bravery. Using the notes, talk to the class about your chosen person. They don't have to be someone famous – this person could be someone you know or someone related to you.

My inspirationally brave person: .....

Notes on them: .....

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*Chapter 20 activity*

## CHAPTER 21 ACTIVITIES

Read Chapter 21.

### ACTIVITY 1: Understanding The Art Of Naming Characters

Naming characters is one of the best parts of writing a book. The sound of the name, and any images conjured up by it, have to suit the personality of each character. Have a look at the characters from *Sky Song* below and in the box opposite write what images are created in your mind by those names. Then for the pictures below, name the character and the book, then once again write down what images are created in your mind by those names.

CHARACTER	IMAGES THAT ARE CREATED IN YOUR MIND BY THAT NAME
Lofty	
Inch	
Blade	
Needlespin	
Slither	
Wolftooth	

### ACTIVITY 2: Naming An Ice Monster

A few years ago I read a wonderful book called *One Wish* by Michelle Harrison. It featured a terrifying river monster called Nessie Needletooth and in *Sky Song* I wanted to create my own 'needle-sharp' monster. Cue Needlespin, a ghoul made entirely from splinters of ice, who haunts the Never Cliffs. Come up with another name for an ice ghoul. Here are some words to help you: *frost, glimmer, blizzard, storm, ghost, snow, glitter, spear, dagger, glass*.

My ice ghoul's name: .....

## CHAPTER 22 ACTIVITY

Read Chapter 22.

I came across the idea of having an ice spider weaving a message in its web after seeing an incredible frosted spiderweb while on a walk in Rutland. Here is the photo I took:



### ACTIVITY: Writing A Haiku

A haiku is a traditional form of Japanese poetry. Haiku poems consist of 3 lines. The first and last lines of a Haiku have 5 syllables and the middle line has 7 syllables. The lines rarely rhyme. In the space below, write a haiku poem about the photo above.

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*Chapter 22 activity*

## CHAPTER 23 ACTIVITY

### ACTIVITY 1: Pre-Imagining Settings

Before reading this chapter, write down some guesses as to what you imagine the Lost Chambers, the Feather Tribe's hideout, to look like.

Where will they sleep? .....

Where will they eat? .....

How will they wash? .....

Where will they meet to talk?.....

Read Chapter 23.

### ACTIVITY 2: Character Spider Diagram

Draw a spider diagram in the space below with as many details about Rook's character as you can: her appearance, her attitude towards outsiders, her opinion of Blu, her thoughts on Eska.

## CHAPTER 24 ACTIVITY

Read Chapter 24.

### ACTIVITY: Understanding Persuasive Techniques

Rhetoric used to be taught in schools as a separate lesson, it was so important. It means the art of speaking (and writing) persuasively, and follows certain rules to achieve the desired effect. Journalists use these devices all the time to write persuasively and argumentatively in their newspaper columns; rhetorical devices make their writing much livelier and more interesting to read. There are very many forms of rhetorical devices, but below are a few to start off with and these can be defined as going through... **A FOREST**.

<b>A</b>	ANECDOTES	A personal experience or story as proof, illustration or added 'colour'
<b>F</b>	FACTS	Real, hard evidence you can prove
<b>O</b>	OPINIONS	Often quite strong!
<b>R</b>	REPETITIONS	Repeated words or phrases to emphasise a point
<b>E</b>	EXCLAMATION MARKS	To drive a point home
<b>S</b>	STATISTICS	Numbers, dates and percentages
<b>T</b>	TRIPLES	Patterns of three ideas or adjectives

Below is Eska's speech to the Feather Tribe as she tries to win their loyalty (I've cut out the interjections from the Feather Tribe and any phrases like: *she said, she paused, she exclaimed* etc). Make a key for the above persuasive techniques and highlight the ones that you find in Eska's speech below.

'The Sky Song isn't something that belongs to worn-out legends! It's the tune the North Star played on the Frost Horn to breathe life into Erkenwald all those years ago! And it's the only thing that can defeat the Ice Queen now! I may not remember anything from my past but I know this: we only have three days to stop the Ice Queen cursing Erkenwald and wiping out the Fur and Feather tribes forever but together with my friends and the help of Erkenwald's magic, I will find the Frost Horn and claim the Sky Song. And when I do, I will use my voice to stop the Ice Queen and put an end to the divide between tribes! I will silence the tribes, command animals and shake the skies! I may not have a whole tribe behind me, I may not have words that you think amount to much now – but I won't give in. I won't back down. I have a voice and I'm going to make it count! Because we have a kingdom to protect and families to bring home and even in the face of an Ice Queen whose anthem reaches every corner of Erkenwald, *our voices matter more*. I *will* find the Frost Horn and I *will* blow it from the stars and, as one tribe, we *will* beat the Ice Queen.'

*Chapter 24 activity*

## CHAPTER 25 ACTIVITY

Read Chapter 25.

### ACTIVITY: Comprehension Questions

Answer the questions below. Remember that if you come to a question asking *HOW* the writer achieves a certain effect you should try to use the PEE chain we spoke about back at Chapter 8.

1. Look at the sentences:

‘She’s gone!’ he gasped. ‘Rook’s gone.’

How does the writer make this moment dramatic?

.....

.....

2. Pick out a sentence that shows Eska’s fear.

.....

3. Find three adjectives to describe Jay’s dogs’ wild nature.

.....

4. Write down the sentence that shows Jay’s loyalty to Eska and her friends.

.....

5. Find a simile to describe the weather on the Driftlands.

.....

6. Find a metaphor to describe the weather on the Driftlands.

.....

7. Look at these sentences:

Then the wind picked up, heaving and groaning and stirring the mist so that it rose around them like a slow-creeping wave.

How does the writer make this moment frightening? Pick two examples.

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.....

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.....

*Chapter 25 activity*



## CHAPTER 26 ACTIVITY



Read Chapter 26.

### ACTIVITY: Writing Poetry

The moment where the Erkenbears bow to Eska was inspired by the illustration above, from Jackie Morris' book, *The Ice Bear*. Either go to the library and find a Jackie Morris book (I highly recommend these ones: *The Snow Leopard*, *Tell Me A Dragon* or *Wild Swans*) or google her work. Pick an illustration you like and write a short poem based on it. The poem doesn't need to rhyme – instead try to focus on creating a really vivid scene. To do this you could use:

- Dramatic verbs
- Engaging adjectives
- Original imagery

*Chapter 26 activity*

## CHAPTER 27 ACTIVITY

Read Chapter 27.

I've always loved reading about giants (Roald Dahl's *The BFG*, CS Lewis' *The Silver Chair*, Oscar Wilde's *The Selfish Giant*) and I had great fun creating the giants in my third book, *The Night Spinner*. I toyed with the idea of making The Grey Man, the giant in *Sky Song*, enormous and frightening from the start but sometimes it's more fun to subvert expectations – so I have him broken, small and moody to begin with.

### ACTIVITY: Creating Unexpected Characters

It's your turn to create a character who will surprise readers. Perhaps it's an animal (a giraffe who is terrified of heights? An ant who is ridiculously lazy?) or a magical creature (a fairy who has vertigo? A dragon who is allergic to fire?). Draw, name and label this character in the space below.

## CHAPTER 28 ACTIVITY

Read Chapter 28.

In this chapter Eska starts to feel that the task ahead of them is too big. In just two days she, Flint and Blu have to find the Frost Horn, blow it from the stars and unite the tribes against the Ice Queen. But thanks to her friends, she starts to hope that she might in fact succeed in her quest.

### **ACTIVITY: Writing Emotive Letters**

Imagine you are Eska. Write a letter to your mother telling her of the things you've seen and the people you've met since escaping Winterfang. Then ask all the questions you've been longing to ask and write down the things you wished you'd had time to say before Blackfina was killed. Remember to use emotive language (language that appeals to the reader's emotions) to make your writing as powerful as possible.

Dear Ma,

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.....

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*Chapter 28 activity*

## CHAPTER 29 ACTIVITY

Read Chapter 29.

This chapter ends with a lot of uncertainty: will Flint manage to defeat the last walrus? Will Eska manage to go on through the Groaning Splinters to find the Frost Horn?

### ACTIVITY: Continuing The Story

Decide whether you want to be Flint or Eska. Then, in the space below, write the next chapter imagining what happens. Does Flint kill the last walrus? Does he have any tricks up his sleeve? Can he protect Blu? Does Eska find the Frost Horn? If so, where? And what does it look like? Remember to use paragraphs, write in full sentences and use accurate spelling and punctuation. And for technical tips to help make your writing as brilliant as possible, remember **SLIP**:

- ❖ **S:** Start sentences in different ways
- ❖ **L:** Length of sentences should be varied (short for impact, longer for description)
- ❖ **I:** Imagery to create atmosphere (similes, metaphors, personification)
- ❖ **P:** Punctuation (semi colons, ellipses), POW words (exciting vocab)

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## CHAPTER 30 ACTIVITIES

Read Chapter 30.

### ACTIVITY 1: Exploring Child-Animal Bonds

Throughout the book Eska's bond with Balapan, the golden eagle, is clear. In this chapter though, we also see her bond with an orca. I love reading about child-animal bonds in books (Lyra and Pantalaimon's from Philip Pullman's *Northern Lights*, Torak and Wolf in Michelle Paver's *Wolf Brother*). Make a list of three child-animal bonds you have read about and loved. Then pick your favourite one and write a paragraph saying why this particular bond is so special.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

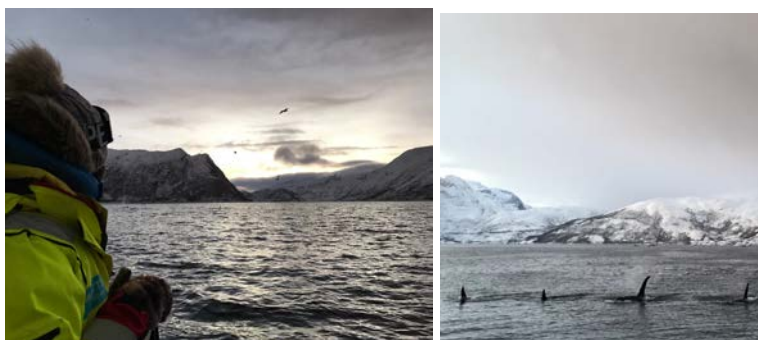
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When I was up in the Arctic, I saw orcas and humpback whales diving for herring off the coast of Tromsø and although it was too cold, and bumpy, to take notes on the RIB boat I was on I watched these animals fiercely: the almost luminous glow of orcas beneath the surface of the sea, the slow menace of their dorsal fins breaking the water and then sliding into the deeps, the graceful bow of a humpback carving the waves. And all the while, scenes for *Skey Song* began to play out in my head.



### ACTIVITY 2: Learning About Orcas

There is a really interesting, but harrowing, documentary on orcas kept in captivity at sea-life centres across the world. It's called *Blackfish* if you are interested in watching it.

## CHAPTER 31 ACTIVITY



Read Chapter 31.

### ACTIVITY: Researching Arctic Animals

Throughout the book you have encountered many Arctic animals. Make a list of ten that have been mentioned:

- 1.....
- 2.....
- 3.....
- 4.....
- 5.....
- 6.....
- 7.....
- 8.....
- 9.....
- 10.....

Now pick your five favourite animals from the list above and create an A3 poster with pictures and facts about these animals.

*Chapter 31 activity*

## CHAPTER 32 ACTIVITY

Read Chapter 32.

### **ACTIVITY: Creating A ‘Wanted!’ Poster**

Create a ‘Wanted!’ poster for Eska and Flint, made by the Ice Queen. Consider the following:

- What material might the Ice Queen write on?
- What might she use to write with?
- What might she say about Eska and Flint?
- What might she offer as a reward for anyone who turns Eska and Flint in?

Read Chapters 33, 34 and 35 – it’s too tense for activities now!

## EPILOGUE ACTIVITY

Read the Epilogue.

### ACTIVITY: Writing Your Own Arctic Adventure

Imagine Flint and Eska team up for another adventure in Erkenwald. Maybe one of the wolverines is still cursed and on the prowl? Maybe Slither makes a come back? Maybe another fallen star threatens the kingdom of Erkenwald.

Write this story and for tips, see [www.moontrug.com](http://www.moontrug.com) (go to the tab called ‘a book in 5 steps’ and you’ll find advice on story hunting, setting, character, structure and writing skills). Good luck!



And remember, if you want to be a writer:

- Carry a notepad with you everywhere
- Live a life filled with adventure
- Never be afraid to fail (I had 96 rejections from literary agents on the books I wrote before my first book, *The Dreamsnatcher*, was published!)

*Epilogue activity*