



LEGEND OF THE LIGHTHOUSE MOON

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SYNOPSIS

It's the 1970s and on Kangaroo Island, Mona McKenna and her brother Albert live with their grandparents at Cape Willoughby Lighthouse. For five long years they have mourned their mother and longed for their missing father to return. Since being diagnosed with type 1 diabetes a year earlier, Mona has been increasingly acting in ways that make her hate herself. While she loves the rugged beauty of their isolated sanctuary—and dearly loves her grandparents—she yearns for her parents and finds her diabetes frightening and confusing. Mona finds solace in the treasures she collects along the island's shores. But when she encounters a mysterious sea lion pup, Neo, the world as she knows it is forever changed. The two siblings embark on a journey that leads them to uncover secrets hidden within their family's past. As they bond with Neo, Mona and Albert's quest for truth takes them deeper into the heart of Kangaroo Island. With the fate of their beloved lighthouse hanging in the balance, they must summon courage and resilience to protect their home and the endangered sea lions who call it their own. Rich with folklore and brimming with adventure, Legend of the Lighthouse Moon is a dazzling tale of family, resilience, and the enduring magic of the sea. Join Mona on a journey of self-discovery where the whispers of the past guide her towards a future filled with hope, love, and legends brought to life.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr Helen Edwards grew up surrounded by books. She ‘published’ her first book at age 6, for which she won the Children’s Book Week prize at her school. Ever since, she has wanted to be an author. She worked for many years in mental health and has a PhD in Psychology. Helen writes stories that reduce stereotypes, increase understanding of diversity, and feature Australian history and nature. She includes characters in her stories who are neurodivergent and/or who live with physical and mental health conditions, out in the world, having adventures. She is on the SA committee for the Children’s Book Council of Australia, part of the Author Pen Pals initiative and a Role Model for Books in Homes. Helen has been shortlisted in and won a number of awards, including being a South Australian State Finalist for Australian of the Year for her work in diabetes. She was winner of the ZestFest writing competition, a special mention in the inaugural Writers’ SA Deep Creek Fellowship and short-listed in the inaugural SA Literary Fellowship.

Helen is passionate about inspiring action for our beautiful, fragile planet and nature features in all of her books. She find history fascinating and uncovers stories that may have been forgotten, or hidden, and brings them into the light. She also believes that fantastical things can happen and sees magic in the everyday. She lives in Adelaide with her lovely family, two cats and a very active rescue kelpie! When not reading, writing or watching good stories, you’ll find her walking in nature, going on road trips, discovering new story ideas, laughing a lot, and listening to music.

Her debut middle-grade novel *The Rebels of Mount Buffalo* was longlisted in the DANZ awards and shortlisted in the Speech Pathology Australia Book of the Year Awards. *Legend of the Lighthouse Moon* is her second middle-grade novel.

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KEY CURRICULUM AREAS THAT CAN BE EXPLORED USING LEGEND OF THE LIGHTHOUSE MOON

ENGLISH

Literacy

- Responding to literature
- Examining literature
- Interpreting, analysing, evaluating
- How language use is determined by different contexts
- Building knowledge and understanding, and communicating emotions, opinions and ideas with others

Critical and Creative Thinking

- Listening to, reading, viewing, creating and presenting texts
- Developing critical and creative thinking through interacting with others, creating and experimenting with literary texts, and discussing the aesthetic or social value of texts
- Critically analysing the opinions, perspectives and unstated assumptions embedded in texts
- Expressing personal responses and preferences, stating and justifying points of view, and responding to the views of others in discussing texts
- Considering the authors' innovations, planning, exploring and creating ideas for imaginative texts, in particular the combination of facts and fiction
- Using and adapting language to represent novel ideas
- Re-writing old legends and fairy tales and incorporating ideas from other countries into Australian stories

Personal and Social Capability

- Development of understanding that language is central to personal and social identity
- Exploring diverse perspectives and how these shape different interpretations and responses to both text and ideas
- Interacting with others in formal and informal settings to become effective communicators
- Articulating opinions and collaborating with others to analyse text and create your own
- Through close reading and discussion of the text, students experience and evaluate different personal and social behaviours and perspectives. They develop connections and empathy with the main characters in different contexts and through diverse experiences.

Intercultural Understanding

- Developing intercultural understanding through texts drawn from different historical, social and cultural contexts—in this case the combination of English migrant history and Australian history from the 1800s – the 1970s

- Learning that the English language has been influenced by different cultural groups, languages, speakers and writers— the use of the Manx Gaelic is a good stepping off point for this
- Exploring cultural perspectives and world views from the past and present
- Interpreting and analysing the authors' ideas and points of view represented in the text
- Appreciating issues of intercultural meaning and sensitivity

Ethical Understanding

- Developing ethical understanding as they explore ethical issues within real-world and fictional settings—in particular Mona's behaviour and her feelings of guilt around this, as well as the issue of sealing in the past and current ideas on conservation
- Identifying moral messages, ethical concepts, bias and stereotypes, and their representation in texts
- Comparing, evaluating and discussing how these messages are created through language
- Analysing ethical perspectives on contemporary issues and the strengths and weaknesses of the ways in which arguments are represented

HASS: HISTORY

- Developing a sense of wonder, curiosity and respect about places, people, cultures and systems throughout the world, past and present, and an interest in and enjoyment of the study of these phenomena
- Key historical, geographical, civic, business and economic knowledge of people, places, values and systems, past and present, in local to global contexts
- Understanding and appreciation of historical developments, geographic phenomena, civic values and economic factors that shape society, influence sustainability and create a sense of belonging
- An understanding of the key concepts applied to disciplinary and/or cross-disciplinary inquiries
- Capacity to use disciplinary skills, including disciplinary-appropriate questioning, researching using reliable sources, analysing, evaluating and communicating
- Dispositions required for effective participation in everyday life, now and in the future, including the ability to problem-solve critically and creatively, make informed decisions, be a responsible and active citizen, make informed economic and financial choices, and reflect on ethics

CROSS-CURRICULUM PRIORITIES

The English curriculum and Humanities and Social Sciences share a focus on analysing, interpreting and evaluating information and texts. Both learning areas consider the ways in which perspectives and points of view shape texts and represent ideas. Both learning areas help students to develop written, visual, digital and multimodal texts by selecting text structures and language features for a range of purposes and audiences.

In Legend of the Lighthouse Moon these areas include:

- Sustainability and Conservation – particularly ocean conservation
- Australian history
- Mental health and wellbeing
- Chronic illness and diversity
- Society and culture

THEMES

- Laws, rules and how to deal with people who break these—delving into the complexity of these issues
- How we champion and stand up for those who cannot do this for themselves
- Family relationships
- Grief and loss as pertains to death of a loved one and the diagnosis of a chronic illness
- Courage and self-belief
- Mental Health
- Neurodiversity
- Growth, change and identity
- Lighthouse history
- History of Kangaroo Island in 1970s
- History of the management of type 1 diabetes
- Understanding the emotional impact of type 1 diabetes
- Ocean conservation, particularly as it relates to sea lions and the history of sealing in South Australia
- Environment and Conservation
- Using the past as a vehicle to explore themes in the present and future
- Legends of the selkies and how these can be used in new ways
- How to weave old legends into your stories

USE IN THE CLASSROOM

- As an example of middle-grade Australian magical historical fiction.
- As a basis for writing exercises on characterisation and diversity.
- As a basis for writing exercises related to the use of fantasy in stories, speculative fiction and how to blend fact and fiction.
- To explore the use and power of metaphor in describing emotions.
- To explore Nature in fiction and stories that feature the environment.
- As a portal to learning about the history of Kangaroo Island, Australian lighthouses and ocean conservation.
- To introduce the experience of diagnosis and living with type 1 diabetes and looking back on how the condition was managed to the current times.
- Opening conversation about how it might be to live with other chronic illnesses.
- As an example of the importance of preservation of important ecosystems and habitats.

- To discuss mental health issues affecting young people and developing resilience.
- To discuss the impact of grief and loss and the importance of seeking support.
- To generate discussion about the connections between mental health and Nature.
- To consider the ethics of right and wrong and when someone might break the rules.
- How to ask for help and understanding who a support for you can be when you have problems.
- Family relationships and extended family.
- Using magic in stories and how to make these believable.

DISCUSSION POINTS AND ACTIVITIES

1. Before reading the novel, have a look at the cover and identify the following:
 - The title of the book
 - The author
 - The publisher
 - The blurb.
2. Based on the cover and the blurb, what do you think this story is about? Compare your ideas with other people in the class. What do you think the main themes are? Do you know what is going to happen? When you have read the book, go back and see if you were right and if there was anything you didn't predict, or anything that surprised you.
3. Read the first three chapters of the book and write down some of the things you think might happen. Later, check back to see if you predicted anything and discuss what the key aspects of the story were that led you to these predictions. If you were surprised, how do you think the author managed to do that?
4. Creating a complication for a character in reaching their goal, or solving their problem, is an important aspect of creating tension in a story. How do you think the author does this in Mona's situation? What are some of the complications that she has to face? Would you add any other complications?
5. Where do you think the highest point of tension is in the story? This is often called the climax and commonly falls somewhere in the middle of the book. What are the things that make this the climax in Legend of the Lighthouse Moon? Can you identify other parts of the story where there is tension?
6. There are two main characters in Legend of the Lighthouse Moon— Mona and Albert. Note down all of the words you can think of to describe one or both of these characters. You can draw them if you would like. Consider how they look, their voice, their personalities, how they think, act and feel. Then discuss this as a class and see if there were some common words or ideas. Compare differences or similarities in their personalities and ideas about the world.

7. There are also a number of important secondary characters in the book. Complete the same exercise as above, for one of the secondary characters.
8. Complete the same exercise for one of the sea lion characters – Neo, Nerissa or Lear. Can you create a believable animal voice?
9. Mona and Albert's mum Maisie never appears in the book, and yet, she is woven through the story. Write down the scenes and ways in which Maisie is brought into the story. How does the author present her character, and can you describe her as a person? Do you think she would have been proud of Mona and Albert and why?
10. The author has used verse as well as prose in the story. These are scattered throughout and used to add impact to the emotional aspects of the narrative. Pick one of two of these verses and analyse them for how they make you feel, how they drive the story onwards and how they add to the narrative. Write your own verse based on one of the chapters.
11. World-building is very important in any book. This story is set in a real place, with some real events, and fictional characters, as well as a very magical story of the selkies. Why do you think the author decided to add the selkie story and how does it add to Mona's journey to becoming comfortable with herself?
12. Do you like stories that combine real and imagined elements? If so, why? And if not, why not? Did you think the selkies worked in this story and if so, what made this work well? If not, why not?
13. At the end of every story there is a resolution. In Mona's case, there were some important scenes in the closing chapters – including understanding her type 1 diabetes, her own behaviour and coming to terms with the loss of her mum. Write down and then discuss, what themes and issues she was able to resolve and what were the things that supported her to do so?
14. Lighthouses are very special and have been an important part of Australia's history. Research an Australian lighthouse and write a poem that describes it and what it might be like to live there as a light keeper. Draw a picture of the lighthouse to go with your poem.
15. Mona does some things she is not proud of, as she is struggling with her diabetes diagnosis and the loss of her parents. Discuss as a class, why someone might start to act out in ways that are not like them, even breaking the law like Mona does, and how they might ask for help in different ways. Describe how she might have been feeling in a verse or a paragraph of a story.
16. Design a different cover for the book that incorporates something from the story that you really enjoyed. If you would like to, also create a new title and see if you can write a tagline for the book that will encourage people to want to read it.
17. Choose your favourite character from the book and draw a picture of how you think they look. Write a letter from this character to another character in the book. Make sure you use some of the language or expressions that they use, so that you are staying true to their character.
18. What do you think it might have been like to live in the Cape Willoughby Lighthouse in 1870 and in 1970? What might the differences

and similarities have been? Have you ever visited a lighthouse? Share what this was like with the group.

19. The environment is important in this story—the sounds, smells, colours, plants and animals that live on Kangaroo Island—even in the underwater scenes. The senses are important in writing a book, it helps to place the reader in the story. Pick out three parts of the book where the author uses senses to put you in the moment. Describe what the author wrote and how and why it connected you to the story.
20. Why do you think senses are important in writing and how do they connect you to memories of your own life? Do you have a favourite smell, song, or object that connects you to a memory? Write a poem that uses these senses.
21. In this story the author used 3rd person past tense narrative. Why do you think the author did that? How do you think the story might have changed if she had used first person perspective?
22. Break into small groups and choose a theme from the book. Choose some examples from the text that show how this theme is explored.
23. Retell the scene where Mona and Albert discover their dad Lear is a selkie, from either Albert or Lear’s perspective. How does this change the story and the narrative flow? Does it add or take anything away from the story?
24. Mona talks about ‘razorfish’ in her stomach from the guilt of stealing and lying to her grandparents. She also talks about being ‘razorfish and fire’. Why do you think the author uses this metaphor? Brainstorm metaphors for one or more of these emotions. As a class, discuss why we use metaphorical language to talk about our feelings.
25. Mona finds great solace in nature, especially the ocean. It has been shown that time in nature is good for our mental health. Discuss some of the places you enjoy spending time in nature and why they make you feel good.
26. Like Mona, people often find it difficult to discuss grief and guilt is a common emotion when someone dies. Describe a time where you have felt grief about someone or something you have lost. Write a short story about how you felt and use metaphors to illustrate these feelings. If you are comfortable, share these stories with a small group of other people in the class.
27. Mona likes to describe people as birds, based on their personalities. Such as this one:
“Grandad slumped his shoulders, rubbing his hand through his hair. White streaks against the once solid black reminded Mona of a magpie’s plumage. Her cheeks flushed hot. If Grandad were a bird, he’d be a White-bellied Sea Eagle, proud and elegant, high-soaring and sensitive. She didn’t want to hurt his feelings.”
Take a bird and research its nature and personality. Create a character based on that bird.
28. Mona’s grandparents came from two islands in the Irish Sea—Walney Island and The Isle of Man. These are the islands that the authors’ grandmothers were born on. The author has used some Manx Gaelic

words in the story. Look up these islands and learn a little bit about their history. Present this on a poster or discuss in small groups.

29. The author uses the metaphor of ‘wearing another skin’ as a way to describe Mona’s discomfort with herself and the idea of selkies shedding their skin, as a way to extend this theme. Do you think this works? And why or why not?
30. Pick an old legend or fairy tale and use it in a story of your own, like the author has done with the selkie legends.
31. *“Grandad was right. The sea did live within Mona’s heart. It beat in time with the tides—with the pull and push of the Moon as it drew the ocean in and out, like breathing. It thrummed with the constant sound of waves against rocks and sand, against the melody woven by birds and wind.”* – discuss the use of the metaphors here and how this passage brings you into Mona’s experiences of being connected to the ocean.
32. *“She shifted from foot to foot, staring out across the tossing sea through the single window. It was deeply framed and etched into the granite wall of the lighthouse, like a tunnel to the outside world. The sky was misty grey and filled with water, rising from the tips of the whitecaps, almost as if the rain was upside-down.”* – Think about the picture this descriptive language creates for you. Draw this image and share with someone else.
33. *“Since being diagnosed with diabetes a year earlier, the Kraken, as Mona called it—in honour of that mythical octopus-like sea monster of epic proportions—had been a dark cloud hanging over every one of her days. Its tentacles seemed to have invaded all the parts of her life, until she could no longer do anything without the Kraken making an appearance ...”* – the author has used the mythical sea monster—The Kraken—to describe type 1 diabetes from Mona’s perspective. Why do you think she did this? Can you think of other mythical creatures that could also work?
34. In small groups, select a chapter of the book and turn this into a play. Act this out in front of the class. Analyse what you did and how you created action from a written story.

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