

The Weaver

Melanie Kanicky

Teachers' Notes

PUBLICATION DETAILS

Title: The Weaver

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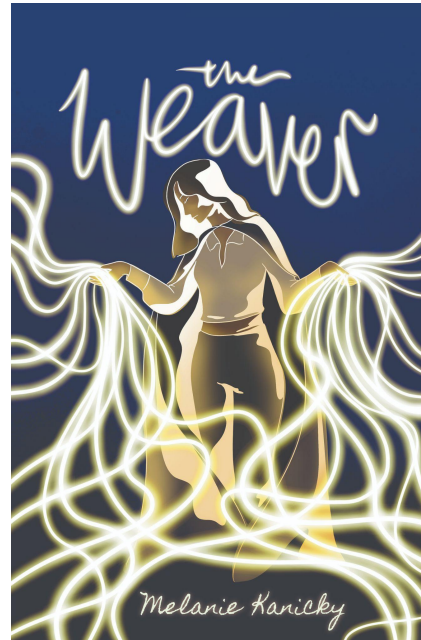
Recommended for:

Lower Secondary

13+

KEY THEMES

Identity, friendship, power, genetic and environmental influences (nature vs. nurture), family, good vs. evil



SYNOPSIS

In a remote village, bordered by woods and an endless winter, Saatcha lives in the attic of her ailing father's blacksmithery. As her father's health fades and he is no longer able to work, Saatcha takes it upon herself to keep the forge running. But when a pair of thieves appear in the dead of night, Saatcha's duty to her father is torn from her. Forced to leave her home behind, the bounds of magic that once held Saatcha begin to slip away.

Papa is gone.

Magic is real.

And her kidnappers are much more than simple thieves.

As Saatcha's world is irrevocably altered, she must rely on her new friends to find the truth of her past – and what it might mean for the future of the kingdom.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Melanie Kanicky is a Melbourne-based author. Born in the Yarra Valley, Melanie has a Bachelor of Creative Arts (Film & Television) from Deakin University, and is currently completing her Master's Degree in Writing & Literature with a focus on creative writing. Outside of her studies, Melanie currently manages a bookstore, where she delights in sharing her love of reading and literature with others.

Her short fiction has appeared in the Wyndham Writing Awards Anthology and the Forty South Short Story Anthology, as well as being shortlisted for the 2022 Tasmanian Writers' Prize. *The Weaver* is her first novel.



SOMETHING FROM THE AUTHOR

The stories we discover when we're young are often the ones that stay with us well into adulthood. For me, many of these stories were set in worlds separate from our own – Narnia, Middle Earth, a certain magical school of witchcraft and wizardry...

At a glance, speculative fiction may be seen as less important, or perhaps less didactic than its realistic counterparts. However, these stories are critical for the development of the imagination, for hope and wonder, and offer us a glimpse into the battle between what is good, and what is not. Magic may not be real to us, but the characters who wield it, battle it, and struggle with it, could be. As Frodo overcomes each hurdle and challenge on his way to Mount Doom, the author is promising us that we, too, can overcome our struggles.

The Weaver is a story about stories – the power they have over us, and how our person is formed through our experiences, our own personal narratives. As Saatcha discovers magic, so too does she discover the joy in reading, friendship, and striving for what is right. It is my dearest hope that readers will fall in love with the world of the story – a world quite different from our own – and learn that there is no challenge they cannot face – given the right reading material.

PRE-READING TASKS

The Weaver is set in a world inspired by the wintry landscape of Eastern Europe, where the author's ancestors once lived as knights. Much of the mythology in *The Weaver* is rooted in these areas, from Morozko himself to the Leshy of the woods. The following tasks/questions are designed to help set the scene for the novel.

1. Make a list of all countries that are considered part of Eastern Europe. Do you know much about these countries? Can you list any of the languages spoken, or their capital cities?
2. There are many famous myths that influence the media we enjoy, from video games to books, movies and television shows. Can you list any famous myths, folktales, or mythological creatures? What country do they originate from?
3. *The Weaver* is set in a medieval time, before the internet, electricity or industrial innovation. Can you make a list of all the items you think you would need in order to live comfortably in this period?
4. Following question 3, what would you consider to be some of the jobs available to people during this time? Saatcha's father worked as a blacksmith, but are there other roles that might have existed within society? How have these jobs changed over time, and do any of them still exist today?

READING GROUP QUESTIONS

Chapters 1-9

1. When Ren and Kaverin sneak into the blacksmith forge, Saatcha immediately assumes that they are thieves. Why would she assume this?
2. Saatcha attempts to flee when she wakes up at the castle. Why do you think this is, when she is seemingly safe and warm there?
3. Why does Saatcha remember the story about her childhood friend, Mikhail, when she is lost in the woods?

4. How does Saatcha react when she discovers that she has been under a spell? Can you describe how she may have felt when she realised that she had lost years of time?
5. When Saatcha becomes distressed, she secretly wishes to be given a chore to distract her from her problems. Is this a good way to deal with her situation? What other methods for dealing with stress and anxiety can you think of?
6. Why is Ren mistrustful of Saatcha? Is his suspicion warranted?
7. In the library, Markus tells Saatcha of the history of the kingdom. Why was King Petyr so cruel to his first son?
8. Why does Markus feel that it is important to teach Saatcha how to read? To what extent do you think illiteracy impacts the lives of people in the real world?
9. Can you think of any parallels between Boris's story of the crimson flower and Saatcha's situation? Does the story feel hopeful or foreboding?

Chapters 10 - 19

1. Does Saatcha's actions in saving Ren's life alter their relationship? If so, how and why?
2. Kaverin's chamber is in the tallest tower of the castle. Do you think Saatcha's assessment of his flair for drama is fair, or might there be another reason for him to hide himself away from his friends?
3. Why does Ren wish to teach Saatcha how to defend herself?
4. Why is it important for Saatcha, Ren and Kaverin to spend the day at the lake?
5. In Chapter 16, it rains at Ironwood for the first time. What does this change in weather signify?
6. How does Saatcha know that the book she finds beneath the library is evil?
7. After Saatcha's encounter with the book, why does she wish to be alone? How important is it for Saatcha to rely on her friends during this time?

Chapters 20 - 29

1. Saatcha is unable to respond to Kaverin's admission of love. If she had time, how do you think she would respond?
2. Why is Ren bitter watching Kaverin and Saatcha?
3. How does Markus's death impact Saatcha, Ren and Kaverin? Why might it impact them differently?
4. What does it mean to be 'The Weaver', and why does Morozko covet this power?
5. Should Saatcha forgive Markus for what he did? Why/why not?
6. What do you consider to be Saatcha's key motivation for trying to retrieve her book?

Chapters 30 - 39

1. During their travels, Saatcha grows too cold. What are some of the dangers of venturing out into the snow? Can you list any of the symptoms of hypothermia?
2. What is the Leshy? Are there other examples of forest spirits in books or movies that you can name?
3. How does retrieving her magic impact Saatcha? What might have happened if she had not?
4. Why do the Tavikir capture Saatcha and Ren?
5. Having lived most of her life in a village, what might Saatcha have expected as they entered the city? Do you think that it met her expectations, or differed?
6. Why does Saatcha lie to Morozko and tell him that she is warm in Chapter 35?
7. What does Saatcha make of Morozko's gifts?

Chapters 40 - 45

1. Why does the Library appear to Saatcha when she is trapped in the cell?
2. What does Saatcha change about Morozko's past?
3. How does Morozko's death make you feel? Does Kaverin need to be held responsible for his actions, or were they justified?
4. How does Saatcha feel about the events at the castle? Do you agree with her stance?
5. Why does Saatcha choose to leave? What is she going to do?

POST-READING DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Now that you have read *The Weaver*, what do you think about the power of stories? Are they important, and if so, why?
2. In Chapter 17, Kaverin tells Saatcha, 'We decide who we are, Saatcha. Every day, with the choices we make. I do not think you, of all people, need to remember your past to know who you are, in your heart'. What does Kaverin mean by this?
3. Markus used his powers to hide magic users from Morozko by locking away their abilities. Do you think his actions were morally acceptable? Was he doing the right thing, or acting on his own fears?
4. Why does Saatcha's magic behave differently at the end of the book compared to when she first retrieved it? What changed?

5. Saatcha uses her magic as *The Weaver* to rewrite Morozko's past. How does this change impact Morozko, and why? Do you think people are impacted by their experiences, and if so, to what extent?
6. What does *The Weaver* tell us about identity?

CREATIVE EXERCISES

1. Craft a letter set after the events of the novel, written by one of the characters to another expressing their views on what has happened. Are they relieved? Do they miss someone? Are there problems that live on beyond the end of the book?
2. In Chapter 15, Kaverin draws a map of the kingdom for Saatcha. Using a real-world place for reference, draw a map in a fantasy style. Include any important geographic features, such as main cities, mountains, rivers and lakes. Remember to include a key with cardinal directions.
3. Rewrite Chapter 1 from the perspective of either Kaverin or Ren. What changes about the blacksmith forge, and how do they view Saatcha upon meeting her for the first time.