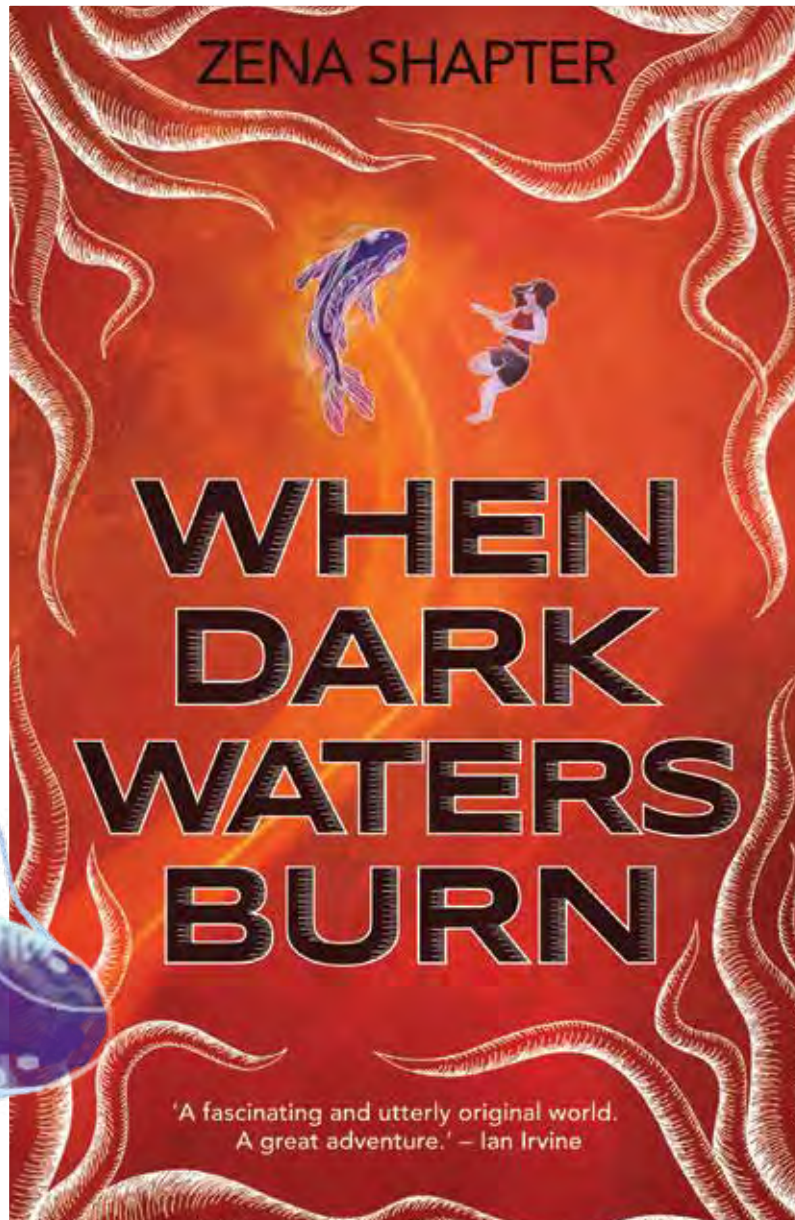


Teachers' Notes



RECOMMENDED FOR: AGES 12YRS+

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CURRICULUM LEARNING AREAS:

English, Humanities and Social Sciences

GENERAL CAPABILITIES:

Through a study of *When Dark Waters Burn*, students can examine literary techniques, narrative form, worldbuilding, speculative fiction writing, contemporary issues and themes, and develop their general capabilities in:

Literacy, Critical and Creative Thinking, Personal and Social Capability,
Ethical Understanding, Intercultural Understanding

GENRE:

Speculative Fiction, Science Fantasy, Science Fiction

THEMES:

- Misinformation
- Political Mistrust & Alienation
- Community Apathy
- Cultural Rivalries
- Technology
- Sustainability
- Value of Life
- Courage
- Love (Family, Friendship, Relationships)
- Identity and Belonging

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INTRODUCTION

Set on a planet of carnivorous tree swamps and giant water-ants, *When Dark Waters Burn* portrays a world where land and resources are alarmingly scarce, and societal distrust is rife. Survival depends on the various cultural groups of Palude putting aside their conflicting ideologies and cooperating to transfer their limited resources between communities established on a saltwater lake, in freshwater swamps, and the only dry farmland atop towering 'hillfarms'. However, most remain resentful of what other groups appear to have, resulting in constant intercultural tensions and rivalries.

Speculating on how individual inaction can negatively impact communities, the story draws subtle parallels with contemporary society to expose a deep collective apathy about the future. While the novel's protagonist, Sala, is anxious about the short-sighted environmental and wellbeing policies of Palude, her mistrust of its political systems alienates her from getting involved. A worldwide disaster looms, she is a trainee engineer with access to advanced technology, yet she chooses to remain secluded in safety... Until a series of events force her to reevaluate.

A thought-provoking page-turning adventure, the story champions the power of doing what you can to help others, empathy, and cultural tolerance. As Sala faces the consequences of her own complacency – as well as a worldwide misinformation inciting violent individual and collective desperation for technology – *When Dark Waters Burn* also explores themes of belonging, identity, and courage. Its dramatic climax not only challenges Sala with deep personal betrayals and issues of responsibility, but raises questions about the value of human life and the future of political power.



RELATED TEXTS

- *Fahrenheit 451* by Ray Bradbury (Harper Voyager/HarperCollins, 2008, ISBN: 9780006546061) – over-reliance on technology, the destructive nature of technology, struggles with individual identity, nature as a counterpoint to technology.
- ‘Stopping By Woods on a Snowy Evening’ by Robert Frost – the conflict between personal fulfilment and duty, nature as an escape.
- *Coast Road* by Robert Gray (Black Inc, 2014, ISBN: 9781863957021) – nature and the environment, environmental degradation caused by human activities, personal growth and self-discovery, the inevitability of change in both nature and human life, the impact of the past on the present, the transient nature of human life.
- ‘Father and Child’ by Gwen Harwood – self-corruption, the power of family, the reversal of roles, the impact of guilt.
- *Age of Doubt: Building Trust in a World of Misinformation* edited by Tracey Kirkland and Gavin Fang (Monash University Publishing, 2025, ISBN: 9781923192133) – trust and distrust in government, impacts of misinformation on individuals and collectives, finding truth in ourselves, the future of collective trust.
- *The Dressmaker* by Jocelyn Moorhouse (Universal Pictures, 2015) – the destructive power of secrets and omissions, romanticisation of the past, love as a transformative force, learned resilience.
- *Nineteen Eighty-Four* by George Orwell (Penguin Classics, 2004, ISBN: 9780141187761) – misinformation, control of history, self-preservation over morality, the value of allegorical storytelling.
- *The Merchant of Venice* by William Shakespeare (Cambridge University Press, 2014, ISBN: 9781107615397) – the value of human life, the destructive force of excessive greed, self-interest over love, the tragic flaws of avaricious characters, revenge as a natural human response to mistreatment.
- *The Tempest* by William Shakespeare (Cambridge University Press, 2014, ISBN: 9781107615533) – the complexities of familial relationships, the destructive pursuit of power, deception and betrayal, perceptions of monstrosity, the self-destructiveness of a cruel and domineering nature.
- *Frankenstein* by Mary Shelley (Penguin, 2003, ISBN: 9780141439471) – the dangers of technology and obsession, technology obstructing progress, familial responsibility, secrets, perceptions of monstrosity, destructive ambitions.
- *The Castle* by Rob Sitch (Roadshow, 1997) – the power of greed, the value of human life and experiences, the importance of connection (to family, friends, and land), the value of social principles over economic priorities.

BLURB

Stay out of sight. Stay hidden under the lake. Even as giant water-ants scout the surface, and deadly trees slop their hungry roots along the shoreline. For unrest surges in the swamps, getting closer and closer... Sala will only be safe for as long as their ship's location remains a secret.

But when a horrifying threat ignites close to home, and the lakeside hillfarms are forced to reveal a desperate truth, it unleashes a wreckage of terror and destruction on the world of Palude. What Sala fears most becomes irrelevant. All she can do is run, and make one irrevocable choice after another. If she's to have any kind of future, she must fight to accept the collapse of her past.

Hiding from it was never an option.

"When Dark Waters Burn held me captive from page one! This engaging, action-packed fantasy world will appeal equally to lovers of fantasy and science fiction. Five out of five stars." USA Today Bestselling Author Dionne Lister

"A timely epic futuristic quest, fast paced and absorbing, with a slow burn romance that will leave readers wanting more. Readers will be gripped by this thrilling and immersive tale from one of Australia's most exciting and inventive writers." CBCA Notable author Pip Harry

"A fascinating and utterly original world; a great adventure." Ian Irvine, bestselling author of the Three Worlds fantasy sequence.

"When Dark Waters Burn cements Shapter's reputation as a master of immersive worlds... Against a backdrop of crumbling politics, environmental decay, and high-stakes tech with a sci-fi romance simmering under the surface... is a deeply human narrative. Sala's struggle to belong – half Ittan, half swamper – mirrors every person's yearning to find their place. Shapter's future world echoes today's fractures: political distrust, climate catastrophe, inequality, cultural blind spots. Sala's fight isn't just for survival – it's for meaning, for connection, for agency. Somehow, amidst mutant ants and telepathic tech, Shapter still gives us relatable grief, loyalty, betrayal, and courage. When you surface from this book, you'll feel like you've survived something. Like Sala, you'll feel a little stronger for it. Shapter doesn't just tell stories – she pulls you under and dares you to come back changed." Tawny Frogmouth Magazine

"[When Dark Waters Burn] shoots head-on into a web of tension, intrigue, and human survival to create an emotional read which doesn't let go... It's a rich world with terrors to delight the imagination, while letting just enough hope shine through to touch the heart and make it ache. While the romance offers glimpses of warmth, it stays enough away to let the danger keep hold. All the while, whispers surrounding the meaning of humanity work their way in to add depth and thought... edges of darkness, and questions surrounding the meaning behind it all." Bookworm for Kids



AUTHOR'S INSPIRATION

1. What inspired you to create the world of Palude?

For over a decade I tutored English students, helping them to fall back in love with stories after becoming disenchanted with reading. They said they would read more if books helped them to escape, through a captivating story that also authentically represented their contemporary perspectives.

So I set out to create a story world that not only intoxicated them with lush imagination and fast-paced action, but which also resonated with their concerns. Along with fears about sustainability and the constant threat of war, they told me they felt continually anxious about what kind of world they would inherit, and particularly the future of land. They worried about the rising cost of living on it, the preciousness of it, yet the lack of responsibility people take for its preservation. These anxieties were exacerbated by the feeling that ‘no one listens’ to young people, so why bother to speak out or get involved? Someone else will surely fix things...

In the world of Palude, land is critically scarce. Resources are low. Important environmental issues are being ignored. There is political instability and constant cultural rivalry. The future is scary and unknown. My young adult hero is unheard, frustrated, and even constrained by the adults who are supposedly acting in everyone's best interests. And it's clearly resonated with YA and adult readers alike, as the first novel set in Palude, *When Dark Roots Hunt*, sold out prior to release!

2. What was the hardest part for you to write?

Sala's emotional journey – it's a rollercoaster of shock, disillusionment, compassion, love, betrayal, and hope. Yet the truth of her story lies in what it says about us as humans, our relationships with each other, and our relationship with the world in which we live.

3. What was your favourite book as a child?

When I was a young reader, I loved the *Little House on the Prairie* books by Laura Ingalls Wilder, so much so I'd go to sleep dreaming about building my own log cabin, where I might find water and food in the woods or on the prairie, and how I'd cook and eat it all! The pioneering lifestyle of the 1800s was of course in no way as simplistic or idealised as it is in those books, but that didn't matter to little young me – it wasn't the simplicity of life that appealed. What I found fascinating was exploring a different world new to me, the books' survival aspects, and how it allowed me to observe the basic needs of humans and what little we need to live. I still find this fascinating, whether I'm reading dystopian novels, watching *The Walking Dead*, or disaster movies on the big screen. I enjoy taking things back to basics and examining our essential nature. I still have my Little House books!

4. What authors inspire you today?

Margaret Atwood, Suzanne Collins, Cormac McCarthy, Veronica Roth, Patrick Rothfuss, William Shakespeare.

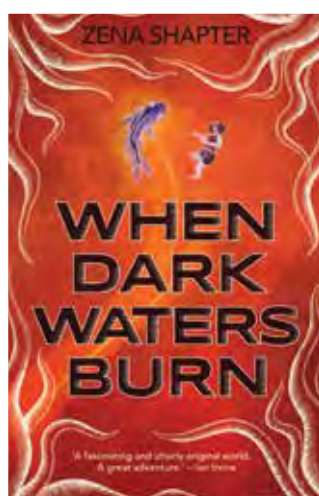
DISCUSSION & ACTIVITIES

BEFORE READING:

The following activities are designed to deepen students' contextual understanding of the novel, its parallels to contemporary culture, and to 'set the scene' before reading.

1. Visual Text Analysis

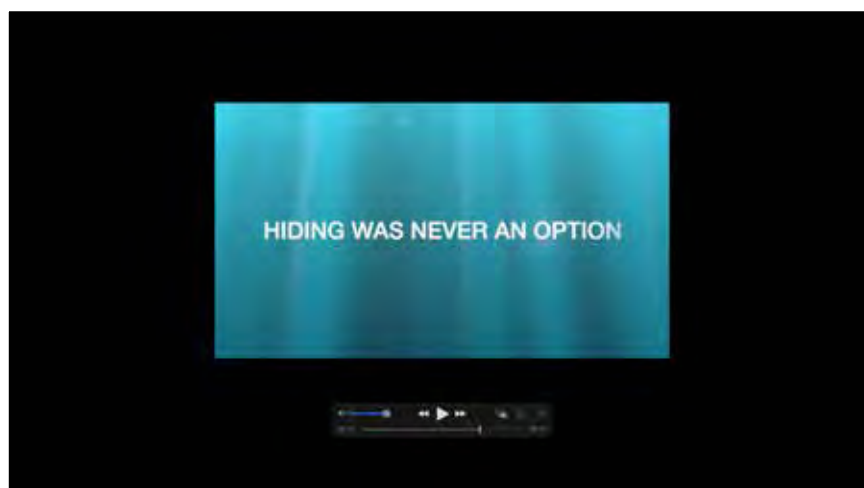
- How do the visual and literary techniques used in the novel's cover create atmosphere, what is that atmosphere, and what does it suggest of the story ahead?



2. Film Text Analysis

- How do the visual and literary techniques used in the novel's cover reveal video create atmosphere, what is that atmosphere, and what does it suggest of the story ahead?

<http://zenashapter.com/portfolio/when-dark-waters-burn/>



3. Understanding Speculative Fiction

Authors often create speculative fiction worlds to reflect on contemporary concerns and experiences. Such stories lean on subtle societal parallels and analogies to explore important world issues; yet provide enough escapism for readers to take a breath, then see the world differently.

Speculative Fiction is a broad term that refers to any story that departs from the real world in some way. It includes science fiction, fantasy, horror, alternate history, dystopian fiction, superhero and supernatural fiction, and any combination of these.

- Research the most common tropes and elements of:
 - o science fiction
 - o fantasy
 - o science fantasy
- Research the following Shakespearean plays. List out the elements that would classify them as speculative fiction:
 - o The Tempest
 - o Hamlet
 - o A Midsummer Night's Dream
 - o The Winter's Tale
 - o The Two Gentlemen of Verona
- Make a list of ten speculative fiction novels or movies in which individuals become disillusioned with a governing power, then defy that power in order to improve the everyday experiences of others.
 - o Why do so many writers create speculative worlds like this? What does this say of our collective experience of being human?
 - o Which of your ten worlds would you most like to experience and why?
 - o Which of your ten worlds would you least like to experience and why?
- If you were to speculate about the future of our world, what kind of world do you think you'll inherit?

4. Understanding Context & Worldbuilding

Authors are often inspired by the world around them, both subconsciously and consciously. *When Dark Waters Burn* may be an epic science fantasy rollercoaster, but the world of Palude also offers readers the opportunity to reflect on the societal concerns and experiences that influenced the author's imaginative worldbuilding. These include issues such as sustainability, land scarcity, rising property prices, political mistrust and alienation, community apathy, and misinformation.

Land Scarcity, Property Prices & Sustainability

Most of Palude is uninhabitable – covered in carnivorous tree swamps, with giant water-ants hunting the only saltwater lake, and the only dry land atop 'sky-high' hillfarms. Resources are scarce, which makes the keei fish saliva that fuels Palude even more precious. Yet few are working to protect the keei fish, and the lack of land causes constant rivalrous intercultural tensions.

- Discuss how the geography of Palude reflects contextual concerns about land scarcity and sustainability.

Land Scarcity references the fact that since 1975 the world has lost a third of its arable land due to population pressures, social inequality, and environmental issues such as erosion and pollution.

Sustainability is the way humans interact with their environment to preserve resources for future generations. It involves meeting the needs of the present without endangering the needs of the future.

Since 2000, Australia has experienced unprecedented growth in the ratio between wages and property prices. According to Grattan Institute analysis, while wages may have doubled, house prices have risen four-fold.

- Discuss the implications of this for house-buyers in the author's context, and how this has impacted the text's worldbuilding.

According to the Energy Institute's 2024 Statistical Review of World Energy, fossil fuels (coal, oil, and natural gas) make up around 81% of the world energy demand, whereas renewables (such as wind and solar energy) make up only 14.6%.

- Discuss the implications of this for Earth's future, what it tells us about the author's context, and how this might have impacted the text's worldbuilding.

Political Mistrust & Alienation

The novel's main character, Sala, mistrusts the political systems of Palude, which alienates her from getting involved. A worldwide disaster looms, she is a trainee engineer with access to advanced technology, yet she chooses to remain secluded in safety.

- Discuss the ways in which Sala's choice reflects the definition of political alienation in the author's context. What level of responsibility should individuals, communities, and governments take in ensuring the political system can be both trusted and effective?

Political Alienation occurs when individuals have little to no trust in the political system, such that they do not believe they can affect government action, thus believe that any attempt to influence politics is futile, leading to a lack of interest in political issues, information, elections, or voting.

In Ancient Greece, the mountainous terrain and island topography created natural barriers to the formation of a single kingdom, and instead fostered the development of independent city states, or poles, each with its own laws, philosophies and culture. Ultimately, this contributed to the rise and creation of democracy. The topography of Palude is similar in this, with its sky-high hillfarms and carnivorous tree swamps.

- What are the advantages and disadvantages of sending community representatives to a central meeting place far away, and how might this contribute to political mistrust and alienation in local communities?

Community Apathy

When we first meet Sala, she has no interest in returning home, engaging with the wider world of Palude, or even seeing friends or family. She only wants to save the keei fish eggs and stay hidden under the lake, along with the advanced technology keeping her camouflaged.

- Discuss the ways in which Sala's disinterest reflects the definition of community apathy in the author's context, and what might be the long-term consequences of this – both for Sala and for Palude.

Community Apathy is a lack of interest in or concern about community issues and involvement, potentially leading to withdrawing from community participation, even hindering the well-being of others, collective action and progress.



Misinformation – Past & Present

One of the central threads of *When Dark Waters Burn* is Sala's discovery that little to nothing about Palude is as it seems, both in her present and in the past. In his novel 1984, George Orwell explores how manipulation of historical fact can cause collective distrust in even the most widespread truth. Similarly, Margaret MacMillan once said that, "We can learn from history, but we can also deceive ourselves when we selectively take evidence from the past to justify what we have already made up our minds to do."

- Research examples from the author's context of (i) world leaders manipulating historical records and (ii) individuals manipulating historical narratives to benefit their own agendas.

According to the University of Canberra's Digital News Report 2024, trust in news fell to 40% in 2023, while distrust rose to 33%, with concerns about misinformation increasing from 64% in 2022 to 75% in 2023 (*Digital News Report: Australia 2024* by Park, Fisher, McGuinness, Lee, McCallum, Cai, Chatskin, Mardjianto & Yao (University of Canberra, 2024).

- Discuss the impact of rising mistrust in news reports and societal leaders on political alienation in the author's context.

Published at the same time as *When Dark Waters Burn*, a book exploring the decline of trust in a world of misinformation called the author's context an *Age of Doubt* (*Age of Doubt: Building Trust in a World of Misinformation* edited by Tracey Kirkland and Gavin Fang, Monash University Publishing, 2025, ISBN: 9781923192133).

- Discuss the ways in which continual misinformation about the past and the present impacts who in society can be trusted, from both individual and collective perspectives.



WHILE READING:

The following activities are designed to be used after reading the specified chapter sections. If completed for homework, rather than in class, you might like to attribute your choice of mark values for both assessment and student time management purposes. Quotes are provided either for analysis or as discussion prompts.

Chapters 1-5

1. “‘We need to stay away,’ I mutter as a mantra.” (Chapter 2) – Why does Sala want to keep herself and Kib separated from the rest of Palude? What does ‘as a mantra’ reveal about the strength of her beliefs, and what literary technique is this?
2. “It stings like the whip of a wyann root, numbs like ant venom.” (Chapter 4) – What literary technique is used here to immerse readers in the speculative world of Palude?
3. “The musty choke of wet reeds wraps around me like a hug after crying alone.” (Chapter 5) – List the literary techniques utilised here. What does such a contradictory comparison tell us about Sala’s feelings upon returning home?

Creative Task:

Write a letter from Sala to her father explaining her prolonged absence from Itta, describing what she fears most right now, who she distrusts, what personal issues she’s trying to resolve, and her concerns about Palude’s various societal groups. (250 words)

Chapters 6-10

1. “Otherwise it’ll be Ittans asking for parts next, then swampers, then Tillars, then mounders.” (Chapter 7) – What does Sala’s argument tell us about the challenges of taking action to improve our societies and/or the environment?
2. “Darkness consumes us.” (Chapter 8) – What literary technique is this, and how does it evoke Sala’s physical, emotional and psychological reactions to entering the tunnel?
3. “All broken people can do is weld their scars together until they hold, then make something new of themselves.” (Chapter 10) – List three adjectives that Sala might use to describe Tuni at this point in the novel, and also list three adjectives that Tuni would use to describe herself. What does a comparison of these lists, and Tuni’s comment about scars, tell us about the nature of identity and self-reflection?

Creative Task:

You are an Ittan who understands Sala’s distrust, though fears making an enemy of Urisolu and his people. Write a sympathetic appeasement to Urisolu explaining the difficulties that your village faces, how relying on Kib’s technology is not sustainable in the long-term, and the benefits of waiting for Sala and Kib to share their skills and knowledge. End with a plea for patience. (250 words)

Chapters 11-15

1. “Help to be reaching the Glade, yes.’ (Chapter 11) – Rituals and beliefs about death can often tell us more about the living than the dead. What does the Borlock practice of sending people to the Glade tell us about their cultural values?
2. “Keeping decades of secrets buried from Ittans and swampers alike.” (Chapter 12) – What literary technique is used here, how does it evoke Sala’s emotions, and what are those emotions?
3. “‘Probably attacking your firewall,’ Kib says truthfully. ‘Could be what’s been overloading your systems.’” (Chapter 14) – In what ways do competing technological systems drive the plot of *When Dark Waters Burn*? Use quotes from the text to support your answer.

Creative Task:

Write a travel guide for someone who has never been to Palude, outlining how its various societal groups were formed, ensuring you only include incontestable facts: Borlocks, Tillars, swampers, Ittans, and mounders. Then write an addendum of possible truths about the formation of each group, based on what Sala learns from the Borlocks, with warnings about how those truths may have been embellished or even invented for ulterior agendas. (250 words)

Chapters 16-20

1. “The way I saw things, it was clear and simple: them or us.” (Chapter 16) – How and why is Sala’s perspective of the cultural rivalries between Ittan, swamper, Tillar, mounder and Borlock communities changing? Use quotes from the text to support your answer.
2. “A grief that isn’t my fault, yet wants me to pull it inside anyway, so it can gnaw at me at its leisure.” (Chapter 18) – What is this literary technique, and what does it reveal about Sala’s subconscious beliefs about community apathy? What other quotes from the text support your answer?
3. “Not that appearances mean anything, I know that now. Still, being around people who look as I do, I find myself drawn to them.” (Chapter 19) – Sala used to believe she belonged among swampers. What made her think that, in what ways has her perspective changed, and where does she think she belongs now? Use quotes from the text to support your answer.

Creative Task:

Throughout Chapter 17, Sala feels both unease and fascination while travelling along the wyann branches. Write a vivid and sensory description of the last time you were in nature, paying particular attention to creating an atmosphere that reflects how you felt. Include a shift in your feelings. (250 words)

Chapters 21-25

1. “My body twitches in its sleep, the words jabbing their truth at me.” (Chapter 22) – How is Sala’s self-identity challenged at this point in the novel, and how do the literary techniques used here reflect that?
2. “‘It’s just what?’ That he does? I press my lips together to stop from giving breath to doubts I thought I’d silenced.” (Chapter 23) – What literary techniques are used here, and what do they tell us about the challenges of romantic attachments?
3. “I think I whimper but can’t be sure. ‘How did they know?’” (Chapter 25) – Is Kib’s technology more secure, less secure, or the same as technology today? What is the author’s purpose in presenting technology this way?

Creative Task:

Write a short report on which individuals, leaders and communities of Palude are the most and least responsible for the events leading up to the attack on Wrion and the keei. (250 words)

Chapters 26-30

1. “‘It’s down to me that Itta’s still standing, and that’s a solid fact.’” (Chapter 26) – To what extent is Beata factual in her conversation with Sala here, and why is she choosing to speak in this way? Use quotes from the text to support your answer.
2. “The house emanates a similar prerogative, being single-storey when Tillars are supposed to be so desperate for land.” (Chapter 27) – What is the author’s purpose in creating a world where land and resources are scarce?
3. “If not me, then who? If not now, then when?” (Chapter 29) – What does Sala mean by this, and why does she repeat the phrase several times in this chapter? Use quotes from the text to support your answer.

Creative Task:

The Dalai Lama once said that “It’s not enough to be compassionate, we must act.” Margaret Mead once said “Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it’s the only thing that ever has.” Write some additional internal thoughts Sala might have as she crosses the hillock in search of Hayon, which reflect these quotes. (100 words)

Chapters 31-35

1. “She is not my mother. She is not.” (Chapter 31) – Can you choose who is and isn’t family? What does this quote convey about Sala’s perspective of family, and what literary technique is this?

2. “Isn’t that what you want? The irony!’ She laughs, manic.” What do you think is more important to Sala at this point in the novel: the long-term sustainability of milking keei fish, or to stop everyone fighting over Kib’s technology? Why do you think this is? Use quotes from the text to support your answer.

3. “I’m an emptied vessel haunted by a silent scream. I should have stayed and faced Islie too.” (Chapter 36) – What literary techniques are used here, and how do they reflect how Sala is different now compared to Chapter 1?

Creative Task:

George Bernard Shaw once said, “We are made wise not by the recollection of our past, but by the responsibility for our future.” Write a letter to yourself about how you will personally endeavour to create the future you want for yourself. Outline whether this might involve changes to your sense of identity, your relationships with others, where you feel you belong, your local community, your country, or something else. (250 words)

AFTER READING:

The following activities are designed to be used after finishing the novel. If completed for homework, rather than in class, you might like to attribute your choice of mark values for both assessment and student time management purposes.

1. Visual Text Analysis

- Now that you’ve read the novel, re-examine its cover and your answer about how its visual and literary techniques create atmosphere.
- Design a poster that conveys the novel’s themes to readers.

2. Understanding Speculative Fiction

- Which elements of the novel belong to the genres of science fiction, fantasy, or science fantasy?
- Write a glossary for the novel’s most unusual words and terms.
- Which books and/or movies would you compare to *When Dark Waters Burn*, and why?



3. Understanding Context & Worldbuilding

- Revisit your pre-reading answers on context and worldbuilding, make adjustments to reflect what you now know of Palude, and add quotes from the text to illustrate how the author's worldbuilding reflects contextual issues of sustainability, land scarcity, rising property prices, political mistrust and alienation, community apathy, and misinformation.
- Now that you've read the novel, how would you order the following contextual themes 1-10, with '1' being the most important, and what are your reasons?
 - o Misinformation
 - o Political Mistrust & Alienation
 - o Community Apathy
 - o Cultural Rivalries
 - o Technology
 - o Sustainability
 - o Value of Life
 - o Courage
 - o Love (Family, Friendship, Relationships)
 - o Identity and Belonging



Friedrich Nietzsche once said that, "Truth is impossible – there can only be perspective and interpretation, driven by a person's interests." Titus Livy once said that, "Truth is often eclipsed but never extinguished."

- What analogies can you draw between these statements and the world of Palude? Use quotes from the text to support your answer.

4. Understanding Setting

- Choose a passage from the text that vividly describes the world of Palude, and discuss how that passage develops atmosphere. What literary techniques are involved?
- What are the 'Four Corners for Confusing the Wind', and what do they tell us about Borlock culture? Use quotes from the text to support your answer.
- What is the definition of a 'chewer', and how do Palude's various cultural groups differ in their value of life? Use quotes from the text to support your answer.
- Are the keei fish sentient? Use quotes from the text to support your answer.
- Are the wyann trees sentient? Use quotes from the text to support your answer.

- To what extent is Palude an inclusive society? Use quotes from the text to support your answer.
- To what extent do physical appearances impact cultural rivalries in the world of Palude? Use quotes from the text to support your answer.

5. Understanding Structure

- Suspense is key to any narrative's structure. Discuss how it is crafted in this text. Use quotes from the text to support your answer.
- Compare the last sentence of each chapter with the first sentence of the next chapter. What does this tell you about how the novel is structured?
- 'If not me, then who? If not now, then when?' – In what ways is the novel's dedication developed as a motif throughout the text? Use quotes from the text to support your answer.
- What is the author's purpose in quoting technological notes directly from "light-surface layers" throughout the novel?

6. Understanding Character

- Find a key event for each main character – Sala, Kib, Aten, Tuni, Hayon, and Beata – then write a brief character study for them, using quotes from the text to illustrate their personalities and character arcs.
- Which character is the most courageous, and why? Use quotes from the text to support your answer.
- What does Sala learn about the consequences of community apathy through her experiences in the novel? Use quotes from the text to support your answer.
- Which character best illustrates the dangers of political mistrust and alienation, and why? Use quotes from the text to support your answer.



ASSESSMENT TASKS:

The following tasks are designed to be post-reading formal assessments. Please attribute your choice of mark values for both assessment and student time management purposes.

Analytical Task

“Perhaps, I did have something to do it after all.” (Sala, Chapter 18) – In what ways does this statement reflect the central concerns of the text?

OR

‘Texts rely primarily on suspense and setting to create reader engagement.’ – To what extent do you agree with this statement?

Write an essay discussing your answer. Follow correct essay structure with an introduction, two analytical body paragraphs, and a conclusion. Include quotes and examples from the text as evidence to support your ideas. (600 words)

Success Criteria:

1. Correct essay structure is followed with an introduction, two analytical body paragraphs, and a conclusion.
2. Quotes and examples from the text are included.
3. The essay sustains a thesis that directly engages with the question.
4. Writing has been edited for spelling and grammar.
5. The essay is approximately 600 words in length.

Discursive Task

‘Stories are how we critique our communities, and ourselves.’ Write a discursive article exploring this statement. As research, read the series of short articles written by the author on ‘Storytelling Over Time’ on her blog: <http://zenashapter.com/blog/?s=StorytellingOverTime>. Include at least one quote by the author, and use discursive writing techniques to express your viewpoint. (600 words)

Success criteria:

1. The discursive involves discussion of the topic.
2. The discursive features one quote from the author on ‘Storytelling Over the Centuries’.
3. Discursive writing techniques are used.
4. Writing has been edited for spelling and grammar.
5. The discursive is approximately 600 words in length.

Imaginative Task

Write the scene when Aten flies back up to the top of Tuglow and finds Tuni fighting Beata. Choose to write in either first person or close third person, from either Aten or Tuni's perspective, but include both their viewpoints in an argument between them, as well as a decision about what they will do next. Remember to use creative writing techniques to set the scene in Palude and to reflect the tension between the characters. (600 words)

Success criteria:

1. Both Aten and Tuni's perspectives are reflected in the narrative.
2. The narrative is written in first person or close third person consistently, with no 'head-hopping'.
3. The narrative includes an argument, a decision, and recognisable details from the original text.
4. Creative writing techniques are used.
5. Writing has been edited for spelling and grammar.
6. The narrative is approximately 600 words in length.

Multimodal Task

In pairs or small groups, create an eye-catching 60-second video as a reel / short illustrating one of the text's central themes, designed to intrigue interested readers. Be sure to include relevant imagery, words and phrases from the novel. Themes could include:

- Misinformation
- Political Mistrust & Alienation
- Cultural Rivalries
- Technology
- Sustainability
- Value of Life
- Courage
- Love (Family, Friendship, Relationships)
- Identity and Belonging

Success criteria:

1. The video has a clear theme and markets it to the correct audience.
2. The video is professionally presented, visually attractive and engaging.
3. Relevant imagery, words and phrases from the novel are included.
4. Creative film techniques are used.
5. Any text included has been edited for spelling and grammar.
6. The video is approximately 60 seconds in length.



EALD Task

“While its body is covered in reflective scales, its head has the hooked yellow beak of a predatory bird, and its fleshy underbelly has four white tentacled limbs, with which it clings to the ladder. Each of those tentacles then divide into three smaller tentacle-fingers, which have sallow circular suckers. A bushy yellow-feathered tail extends behind it, and it stinks of the alcoves below, of dried excrement that outside would be covered in buzzing swamp flies, of fusty rags long forgotten in dank corners, of gweela eggs so old they’ve rotted.”

In Chapter 9, Sala and Kib encounter a grondel. How would you feel if you encountered a grondel? Would you be terrified, curious, or in awe? Write a scene where you encounter a grondel, either in the world of Palude or in a contemporary Earth setting. It could see you, or not see you. Describe the encounter, portray your reaction, and use creative writing techniques to create a distinctive atmosphere that enhances and reflects your feelings about the grondel. (500 words)

Success criteria:

1. The scene portrays a narrator’s reaction to encountering a grondel.
2. The scene has a distinctive atmosphere that enhances and reflects the narrator’s feelings.
3. Creative writing techniques are used.
4. Writing has been edited for spelling and grammar.
5. The scene is approximately 600 words in length.

Links to Further Information:

For free creative writing tips:

<http://zenashapter.com/blog/?s=writing+rockface>

For discussions on #StorytellingOverTime, including The Hero’s Journey, The Insight of Wildernesses, Worlds of Upheaval, Love & Betrayal, and How Monsters are Metaphors:

<http://zenashapter.com/blog/?s=StorytellingOverTime>

For other interesting articles on writing and living a creative life:

<http://zenashapter.com/blog/>

For Zena’s YouTube channel:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCHOg2qfRECB6qpZwsjHKPw>

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Zena Shapter writes from a castle in a flying city hidden by a thundercloud, reaching across age and genre into the heart of storytelling. A multi-award-winning author of speculative and contemporary fiction, she loves conjuring journeys into the beyond and unusual. To read more of her work, please browse the bibliography on her website at zenashapter.com

When not writing, Zena loves movies, frogs, chocolate, potatoes and living with her family among Sydney's beautiful Northern Beaches. She's travelled all around the world, visiting close to 50 countries, which inspire her to create worlds of her own.

With her BA (Hons) in English Literature, and a plethora of post-graduate qualifications, Zena enjoys working as a mentor, editor and inclusive creativity advocate, inspiring writers to develop their craft. She teaches storytelling and writing at festivals, libraries and schools, judges various literary awards and encourages everyone to value the importance of creativity.

She believes that stories are our best invention.



To book Zena for a school visit or author talk:

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