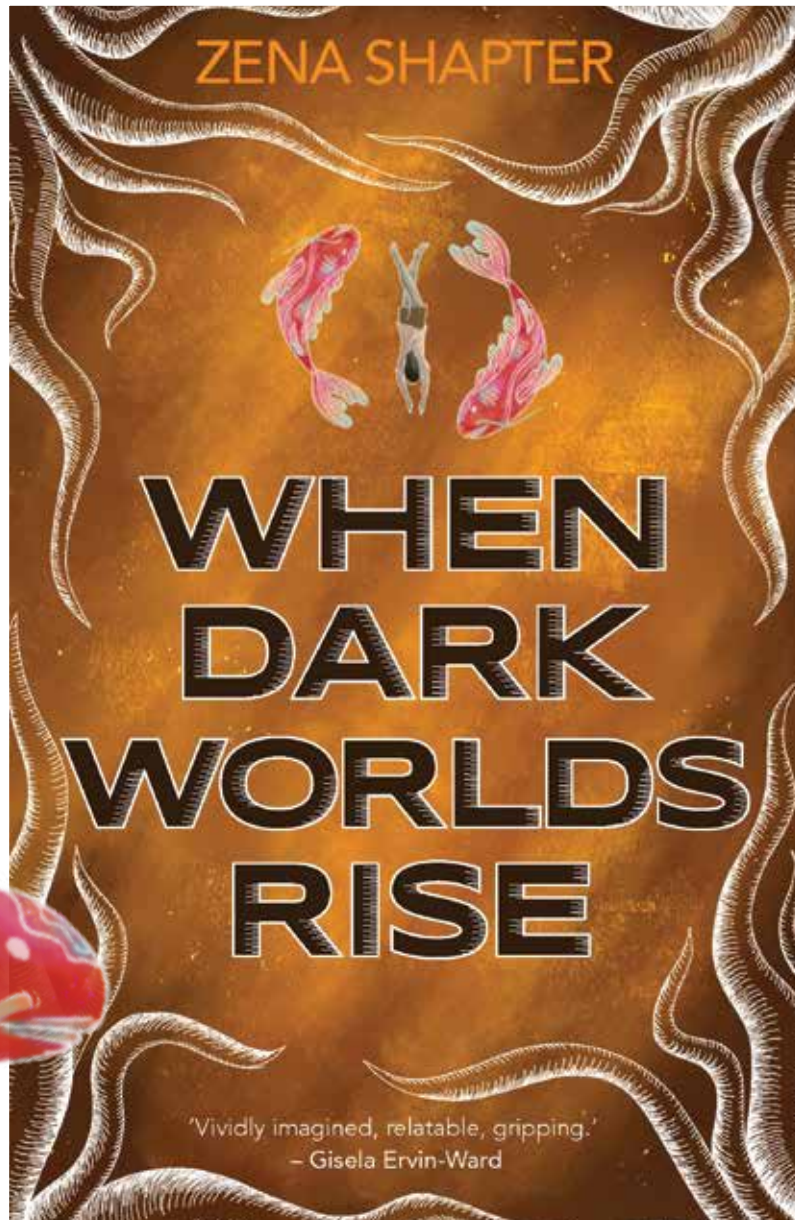


Teachers' Notes



MidnightSun



RECOMMENDED FOR: AGES 12YRS+

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CURRICULUM LEARNING AREAS:

English, Humanities and Social Sciences

GENERAL CAPABILITIES:

Through a study of *When Dark Worlds Rise*, 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:

- Scapegoating & Collective Blame
- Confirmation Bias
- Economic Dependency
- Cultural Rivalries
- Social Responsibility
- Courage
- Love (Family, Friendship, Relationships)
- Identity and Belonging
- Value of Life
- Sustainability
- Land Scarcity
- Technology



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INTRODUCTION

Set on a planet of carnivorous tree swamps and giant water-ants, *When Dark Worlds Rise* portrays a world where land and resources are alarmingly scarce. 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 have and have not, resulting in constant intercultural tensions and rivalries. So when a worldwide crisis puts a stop to any and all exchanges, those tensions break, divide, condemn and abandon communities to the threat of attack – both by desperate others, and by the many lethal creatures that inhabit Palude.

Speculating on the disservice we do ourselves by succumbing to scapegoating and collective blame, and how confirmation bias makes us vulnerable to manipulation by avaricious others, the story draws subtle parallels with contemporary society to expose a deep lack of societal cohesion and resilience. The novel's protagonist, Sala, is particularly tempted by the opportunity blame provides to ignore the truth she owes herself, and she is increasingly disadvantaged by the limitations sustained by her negative approach.

A thought-provoking page-turning adventure, the story champions the power of hope, critical thinking, and constructive problem-solving. As Sala faces the consequences of a devastating deception she inadvertently enabled, *When Dark Worlds Rise* also explores themes of belonging, identity, and courage. Its dramatic climax not only challenges Sala with issues of responsibility and personal sacrifice, but raises questions about the value of human life, the future of effective governance, and how we can all make a difference.



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 – childhood innocence, self-corruption, the power of family, the reversal of roles, the impact of guilt.
- *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) – the evil facilitated by technology, the value of rebellion, manipulation of identity, self-preservation over morality, the value of allegorical storytelling, society’s decline.
- *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, revenge as a self-destructive force, the power of bias to create barriers and divisions.
- *The Tempest* by William Shakespeare (Cambridge University Press, 2014, ISBN: 9781107615533) – the complexities of familial relationships, the destructive pursuit of power and revenge, deception and betrayal, perceptions of monstrosity, the self-destructiveness of a cruel and domineering nature, the illusion of justice.
- *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, the dangers of stereotypical assumptions.

BLURB

It's dangerous to leave. Outside the secret shack where Sala and her friends have been hiding, foraging among the burnt-out ruins of a raided land, heartless scavengers will kill for any technology they find. Vicious tree cats stalk the night for prey. And giant water-ants have overrun Palude's carnivorous tree swamps. But when the love of her life needs help, Sala has no choice but to trade everything they possess for his freedom.

She's not the only one making decisions of course. As ecosystems collapse, and everyday life fractures, desperate leaders will risk everything for control. Soon, no amount of sacrifice can stop the poison of lies and betrayals set to bring the explosive world of Palude to its limits. Sala's courage to kindle hope from the ashes will only do so much.

The greatest enemy always hides within.

"When Dark Worlds Rise, like the best speculative fiction, reminds us that individual actions matter, and that even amongst overwhelming turmoil, ecological exploitation and official corruption, a more sustainable world can still be built."

*Dr Craig Cormick OAM, Children's Book Council of Australia (ACT) Ambassador,
author of the Shadow Master series*

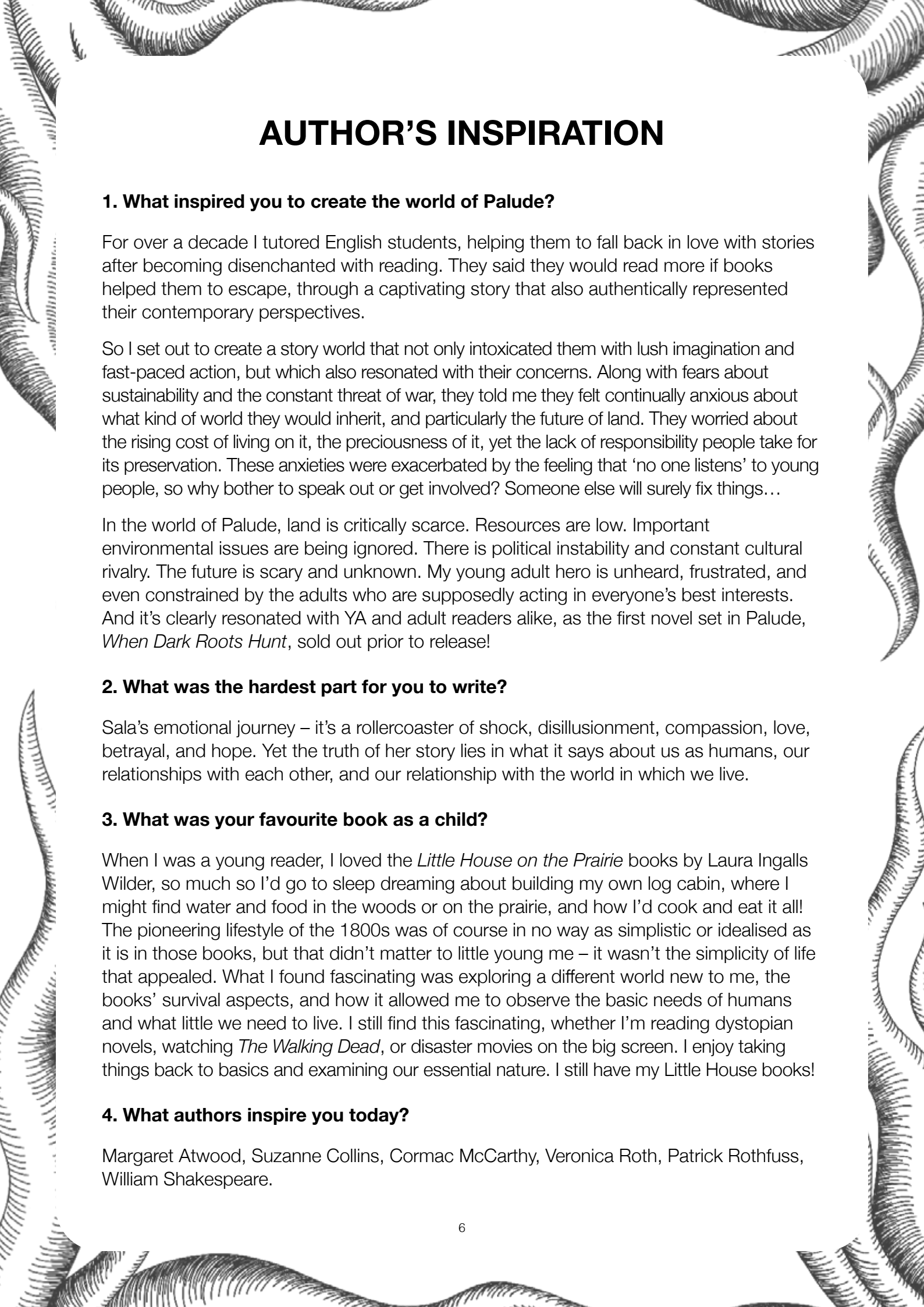
"Vividly imagined, relatable, gripping, When Dark Worlds Rise questions both the choices we face today and the future we still have the power to shape."

Gisela Ervin-Ward, literacy specialist & author of True South

"Edge-of-your-seat please-survive action in a deftly drawn world as savage as any enemy. I couldn't put this book down. Smooth, poetic, and immersive prose, with a deep romance and contemporary parallels impossible to ignore. If you love sci fi and action/adventure, this book is for you. I highly recommend. 5/5 stars!"

USA Today Bestselling Author Dionne Lister





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.

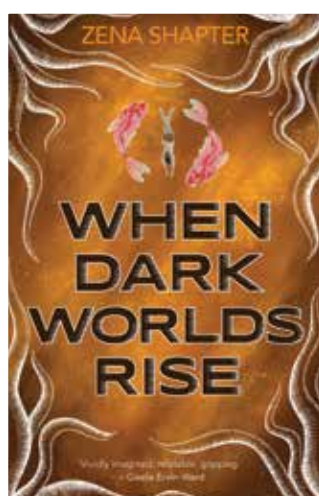
DISCUSSION & ACTIVITIES

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?

<https://zenashapter.com/portfolio/when-dark-worlds-rise/>



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 confront a governing power because of the damage it's causing society, only to realise they're part of the problem themselves.
 - 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 Worlds Rise* 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, scapegoating, collective blame, confirmation bias, and economic dependency.

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.

Scapegoating & Collective Blame

At the beginning of the novel, Sala and her friends believe that Palude's governing body, the Joint Council, is wholly responsible for the crisis threatening their world, even though other groups and individuals could potentially share the blame. Sala even has violent dreams wherein the Joint Council is physically attacked as punishment for their actions.

- Discuss the extent to which Sala's dreams reflect the definitions of scapegoating and collective blame in the author's context. How do we determine the levels of blame that individuals, communities, and governments deserve during times of crisis?

Scapegoating is the projection or displacement of feelings of aggression, hostility, or frustration onto a specific individual or group undeserving of the level of blame attributed to them. If a group is targeted, it often involves characterising that entire group according to the unethical or immoral conduct of a small number of individuals in that group, which can result in prejudice and discrimination.

Collective Blame is when blame is assigned not to the actions of any individual, but to a group, system or broad category of people, based on it/them being largely responsible for certain trends, shared characteristics or behaviours. Since individual members may not have actually or directly caused such things, collective blame can undermine genuine accountability, exacerbate intergroup tensions, and fuel social division and distrust.

Confirmation Bias

As Sala encounters more savagery and violence resulting from the worldwide crisis, her beliefs about the Joint Council's incompetence are only confirmed.

- Discuss the ways in which a contemporary individual's decision-making might be impeded by confirmation bias while performing one of the following real-world tasks: (i) conducting scientific research, (ii) performing police investigations, (iii) using social media, (iv) determining medical diagnoses, (v) voting in elections, or (vi) teaching at school. What does this tell us about confirmation bias in the author's context?

Confirmation Bias is the tendency to search for, interpret, favour and recall evidence that confirms or supports an existing belief, preconception or hypothesis, as well as discounting or overlooking evidence that contradicts them.



Economic Dependency

According to a 2020 report by Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (Trade and Investment at a glance 2020), 45% of Australia's GDP (being a country's economic health) relies on the country trading its various goods and services with other countries. This trade then directly supports one in five Australian jobs.

- Discuss what this tells us about Australia's economic dependence on other countries in our contemporary context.

Economic Dependence refers to how one entity needs to rely on another for economic survival or success, such as requiring financial support from, investment by or trade with another country, region or society. This relationship often makes the reliant entity vulnerable to unequal power dynamics and an inability to achieve sustainable growth or autonomy.

GDP is the standard measure of the value of all the goods and services produced within a country during a specific period, which essentially reflects the total monetary value of a nation's economic activity, allowing comparisons with other countries.

According to a 2023 report by UNCTAD (United Nations Trade and Development), 85% of the world's least developed countries are commodity dependent on other countries, wherein 82% of their exports consist of only commodities (such as the country's raw materials, minerals, and farmed products).

- Discuss what this tells us about the link between human wellbeing and commodity dependence in the author's context.

Commodity Dependence is a type of economic dependence, wherein a country or region's economic survival or success relies on the production and exportation of its primary commodities, such as raw materials, minerals, and farmed products. Where more than 60% of a country or region's merchandise export value is from commodities, it is defined as commodity dependent.



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. “Those were dreams, Aten, and dreams are symbolic. Not literal.” (Chapter 1) – To what extent does Sala use the Joint Council as a scapegoat, and how does this quote reflect that? What other groups might be to blame for the worldwide crisis Palude is experiencing? Use quotes from the text to support your answer.
2. “Family looks out for each other.” (Chapter 2) – Sala is not related to Aten, Tuni, Nayt or Ryll, so what does she mean by this statement? What does it tell us about the nature of friendship?
3. “Tears well, seeping into the days we’ve spent apart as if to dissolve them.” (Chapter 5) – How does this convey Sala’s feelings upon reuniting with Kib, and what are those feelings? What literary technique is this?

Creative Task:

Write a letter from Sala to the Joint Council, expressing how much they’re to blame for the current worldwide crisis, and why Borlocks, Ittans and swampers should be excused from any responsibility. (250 words)

Chapters 6-10

1. “Every one of them a boneless sludge.” (Chapter 6) – What literary technique is used here to immerse readers in the speculative world of Palude?
2. “It blooms like fresh daisy petals, so soft and smooth if I slept on them it would be the deepest sleep I’d ever know.” (Chapter 7) – What is this literary technique, and what does it reveal about Sala’s sense of identity and belonging on the Culiens hillfarm?
3. “Dread descends as dark as midnight chill – a darkness that is becoming more and more familiar.” (Chapter 9) – What literary technique is this, and how does it evoke Sala’s experience with confirmation bias at this point in the novel?

Creative Task:

Write a short report on how the geography and land scarcity of Palude has inspired cultural rivalries between Ittans, swampers, Tillars, Borlocks and mounders. (250 words)

Chapters 11-15

1. “The light seems to dim a moment, like clouds passing before the sun.” (Chapter 11) – What does this tell us about Sala’s experience with and the nature of self-blame? What literary technique is this?
2. “‘In a snap.’ He clicks his fingers. ... ‘with my ship I could get any creature wherever you want it to go.’” (Chapter 12) – In what ways does technology drive the plot of *When Dark Worlds Rise*? Use this and other quotes from the text to support your answer, analysing the techniques used.
3. “The memory of it lifts me, has me taking a deep breath of wyann-warmed air, and listening to the late afternoon birds that call to each other as they dart between sweet-blooming bromeliads and flying insects.” (Chapter 13) – In what ways does Sala’s reaction here evoke her sense of social responsibility? What literary techniques are used here?

Creative Task:

Throughout Chapter 13, Sala feels both unease and fascination while travelling through the swamps as the sun sets. Write a vivid and sensory description of the last time you travelled somewhere at sunset, paying particular attention to creating an atmosphere that reflects how you felt. Include a shift in your feelings. (250 words)

Chapters 16-20

1. “What’s possible for a few, ain’t possible for the many.” (Chapter 17) – Why does Ryll say this, and how is his perspective of the rivalries between Ittan, swamper, Tillar, moulder and Borlock communities different from Sala’s perspective?
2. “There’s no quick and easy route to anywhere.” (Chapter 17) – Sala says this of the ants in her dream, but what does it also say of her subconscious beliefs about the challenges of social responsibility? What is this literary technique?
3. “I embody her loss.” (Chapter 18) – What literary technique is this, and what does it reveal about Sala’s attitude to being the woman’s scapegoat?

Creative Task:

Mahatma Gandhi once said “You must be the change you wish to see in the world.” Emma Thompson once said “We do not have a society unless we have mutual responsibilities.” Write an additional discussion between the Borlocks – Jue, Mych, Elm and Frax – debating whether or not to go to Tucker Flats and join the others. Ensure you reflect these quotes in their discussion. (250 words)

Chapters 21-25

1. “None smile back.” (Chapter 21) – What literary technique is this and what does it tell us about Sala’s arrival home?

2. “Voelle grins and pulls out a kitchen knife. ‘So you finally admit it – you’re boneless.’” (Chapter 23) – What does Voelle calling Sala ‘boneless’ say about Sala’s subconscious views of herself at this point in the novel, and what literary technique is this?

3. “So, the opposite of sustainability.” (Chapter 24) – What do you think is the author’s purpose in creating a world where sustainability, economic and commodity dependency, are issues to resolve? Use and analyse quotes from the text to support your answer.

Creative Task:

Write a diary entry about meeting Kib’s uncle Drey, outlining his appearance, personality, technology, and commercial ambitions. Include an emotional reaction to his betrayal of Sala and Kib, and what commodity dependency would mean for Palude. (250 words)

Chapters 26-30

1. “I dart sideways with the shifting currents, trying to avoid their bite.” (Chapter 27) – List three adjectives that Sala might use to describe herself at this point in the novel, and also list three adjectives that Drey might use to describe her, if asked. What does a comparison of these lists tell us about the nature of identity and self-reflection?

2. “But the lake needs its water-ants.” (Chapter 28) – Until now, Sala has only acknowledged the negative aspects of water-ants, leading to confirmation bias against their species. What literary technique is used here and how does it illustrate her changing perspective?

3. “The guilt of that sinks me a moment.” (Chapter 30) – What is this literary technique, and what does it tell us about Sala’s appreciation for the value of life at this point in the novel?

Creative Task:

Write an anecdotal paragraph about a time when you were courageous, and what long-term impacts the experience had on you. (250 words)

Chapters 31-35

1. “‘I am!’ he sounds offended. ‘It’s my life’s work to save habitats from the irreversible damage humans inflict.’” (Chapter 31) – What literary technique is this, and what does it tell us about Drey’s character and his perspective of life?

2. “With my next breath, I hope Kib understands.” (Chapter 31) – What is this literary technique, and what does it tell us about both the importance of romantic relationships to individuals, and the role of romance in stories?

3. “I don’t need clouds passing across the sun anymore to recognise it as hate.” (Chapter 33) – What literary technique is used here, and how does this reflect how Sala is different now compared to Chapter 1?

Creative Task:

Martin Luther King Jr once said that “Every step toward the goal of justice requires sacrifice, suffering, and struggle.” Amelia Earhart once said that “Courage is the price that life exacts for granting peace.” Write some internal thoughts Sala might have as she contemplates the value of her own life at this point in the novel, which reflect these quotes. (100 words)

Chapters 36-40

1. “The lightness of a person’s body in death reflects the lightness of their heart when they lived.” (Chapter 37) – Rituals and beliefs about death can often tell us more about the living than the dead. What does the Ittan practice of making bodies look light when rolling them towards a wyann tree tell us about their cultural values?
2. “Hope can keep us going.” (Chapter 38) – In what ways does hope drive the plot of *When Dark Worlds Rise*? Use this and other quotes from the text to support your answer.
3. “I gaze across the lakewater and let it mute all the unknown questions ahead.” (Chapter 39) – What literary technique is this, and what does it tell us about Sala and her connection with nature?

Creative Task:

Rosa Parks once said, “Stand for something or you will fall for anything. Today’s mighty oak is yesterday’s nut that held its ground.” Write a letter to yourself about how you will personally endeavour to develop a strong enough mindset to ensure your decisions are never manipulated by avaricious others. (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 Worlds Rise*, 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, scapegoating, collective blame, confirmation bias, and economic dependency.
- Now that you've read the novel, how would you order the following contextual themes 1-12, with '1' being the most important, and what are your reasons?
 - o Scapegoating & Collective Blame
 - o Confirmation Bias
 - o Economic Dependency
 - o Cultural Rivalries
 - o Social Responsibility
 - o Courage
 - o Love (Family, Friendship, Relationships)
 - o Identity and Belonging
 - o Value of Life
 - o Sustainability
 - o Land Scarcity
 - o Technology



Margaret J Wheatley once said that, "We push to find the one simple reason things have gone wrong. We look for the one action, or the one person, that created this mess. As soon as we find someone to blame, we act as if we've solved the problem." John F Kennedy once said that, "Let us not seek to fix the blame for the past. Let us accept our own responsibility for the future."

- What analogies can you draw between these statements and the world of Palude? Use quotes from the text to support your answer.
- What is the difference between scapegoating and collective blame? Find examples of each in the text.
- What would be the advantages and disadvantages of Palude developing commodity dependency with another planet (i) over the next few months, (ii) over the next few years, and (iii) should that other planet be no longer able to buy exports from Palude.

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 is 'self-swap', and what does this rule tell us about mounder 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?
- 'Because sometimes there's no clear path' – In what ways is the novel's dedication developed as a motif throughout the text? Use quotes from the text to support your answer.

6. Understanding Character

- Find a key event for each main character – Sala, Kib, Aten, Tuni, and Drey – 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 impact of confirmation bias through her experiences in the novel? Use quotes from the text to support your answer.
- Which characters best illustrate the dangers of scapegoating and collective blame, 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

“Unless we confront our own darkness we only infect others with it.” (Sala, Chapter 25) – 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 test the way we think.’ 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 the Confluence militia find Aten and Tuni atop the Tucker Flats hillfarm. 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 about whether they can trust Nouk, 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:

- Scapegoating & Collective Blame
- Confirmation Bias
- Economic Dependency
- Cultural Rivalries
- Social Responsibility
- Courage
- Love (Family, Friendship, Relationships)
- Identity and Belonging
- Value of Life
- Sustainability
- Land Scarcity
- Technology

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

“The yellow birds stare at us, their screeching forming a rhythm as they flare their headcrests and rattle knife-sharp beaks along cage wires. The largest bird flaps its four black-tipped wings and raises its three-taloned claws in a show of strength. If it weren’t for the cage, I’d be running for my life. Although flightless, a mehmids thick breast and thighs give it a powerful long-jump that could easily catch a startled creature like me.”

In Chapters 10 and 11, Sala and Kib encounter mehmids birds. How would you feel if you encountered a mehmids? Would you be terrified, curious, or in awe? Write a scene where you encounter a mehmids, 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 mehmids. (500 words)

Success criteria:

1. The scene portrays a narrator’s reaction to encountering a mehmids.
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 an editor and mentor, inspiring writers to develop their craft. She teaches storytelling and writing at festivals, conferences, 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:

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

To connect with Zena on Instagram, Facebook, X, LinkedIn, TikTok or elsewhere:

[@ZenaShapter](https://www.instagram.com/ZenaShapter)

