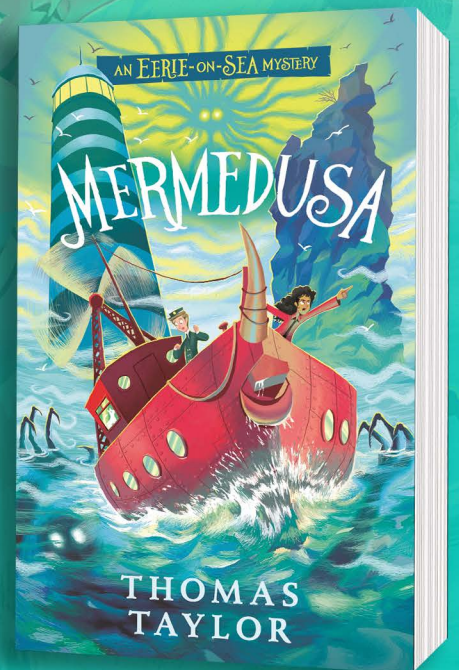
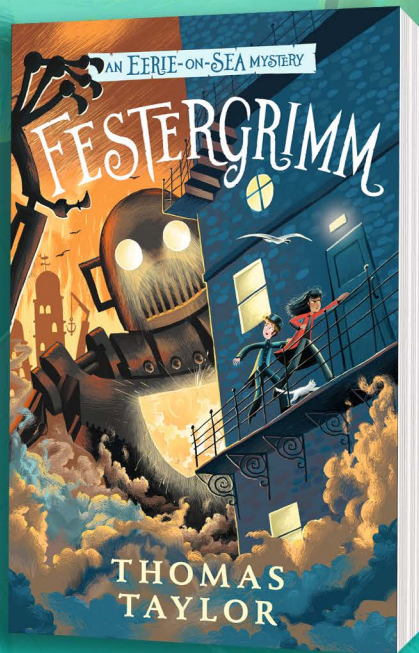
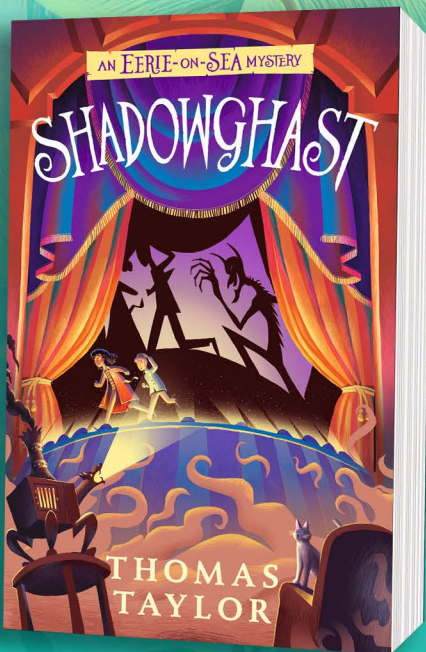


THE EERIE-ON-SEA MYSTERIES

DISCUSSION GUIDE



"Taylor's magical touch makes you believe the impossible."

Catherine Doyle



WALKER
BOOKS

THE EERIE-ON-SEA MYSTERIES

Discussion Guide

ABOUT THE BOOK

Mermedusa, the final book in the Eerie-on-Sea mysteries, is the brilliantly inventive conclusion to the fantastical adventures of Herbert Lemon and his best friend, Violet Parma. After run-ins with the Malamander, Gargantis, the Shadowghast and Festergrimm's inventions, Herbie and Violet are faced with their toughest mystery yet – the deepest secret of Eerie-on-Sea. With villain Sebastian Eels still acting suspiciously, strange rumours and even stranger noises, and a team of viral podcasters threatening to expose Eerie-on-Sea to the world, the friends must discover what's really happening to finally uncover the truth of their own pasts. A beautifully crafted read, *Mermedusa* is a perfect end to the series, full of Taylor's usual imagination, humour, warmth and brilliance.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Thomas Taylor is an award-winning author-illustrator for children. He illustrated the cover for the very first edition of *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* and has since gone on to write and illustrate several picture books and young novels; most recently he illustrated *Scarlett Hart: Monster Hunter*, written by Marcus Sedgwick. He lives on the south coast of England, and can be found on Facebook and Twitter: @ThomasHTaylor

GENERAL INTRODUCTION:

This guide provides topics and discussion points encompassing all of the Legends of Eerie-on-Sea, with specific reference to the final book, *Mermedusa*. Knowledge of the previous books is of significant benefit, however enough of the history of Herbie and Violet is contained within *Mermedusa* that it is not essential.

Many elements of the series are obviously fantastical, however it is worth bearing in mind the recurring themes of parental loss and abandonment, and ensuring relevant support is in place should this reflect the lived experience of any group members.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Getting started:

What did the group think of the conclusion of the Legends of Eerie-on-Sea? What did members most like about the book? Why? Was it a satisfying end? Can anyone tell the group how the ending made them feel?

1. Mermedusa & other monsters

"And hair like a halo of tendrils..." -p.55

Discuss the Mermedusa as a group: what was she like? Where might the name 'Mermedusa' have come from? Does she share any similarities with the inspirations for her name? How so? How did anyone in the group feel about the Mermedusa? Why? Did she remind anyone of other creatures? How does she compare to the other monsters in Eerie-on-Sea, the Malamander and Gargantis? And what about the Shadowghast? Who would anyone least like to meet? Why?



2. **Anomalous Phenomena**

"We 'go past mere anecdote to the truth that lies beyond'. It says so on our website." -p.21

What did the group think of the introduction of podcasters to Eerie-on-Sea? What did podcasting, as opposed to other forms of media, allow the author to explore? What would the potential impact have been of the podcast reaching millions of listeners? Would this have been a good thing?

EXTENSION: challenge members of the group to record a 'podcast' from Eerie-on-Sea. Who will they interview? What will they discover? They will need to cast peers as the various characters and can explore the technology required to create great audio content.

3. **Eerie-on-Sea – a town built on magic**

"In the beginning," she says, "when I was first ensnared, I had power still." -p.282

Look again at the Mermedusa's explanation from page 282. Does this explain everything odd about Eerie-on-Sea? What power brought her to the town in the first place? What might Eerie-on-Sea be like without the Mermedusa's magic and power?

4. **Happy birthday**

"And you certainly found your berth here, Violet. A year ago tonight." -p.116

What is significant about the 'birthday' tradition in Eerie-on-Sea? How important is it that Violet is given a birthday party? How does Herbie react to the party, when he didn't get a birthday party himself? And why might Mr Mollusc have come all the way to the bookshop, but not joined the party?

5. **Oddfrey**

'I suddenly understand something about Mr Mollusc and his long-lost friendship that I never would have guessed.'
-p.145

Why does Taylor wait until the last book to reveal the history of Mr Mollusc and Sebastian Eel's childhood together? How did anyone feel reading about the child Godfrey Mollusc? Did anyone change their opinion of him from earlier stories?

6. **Shipwreck Boy**

"When a lost thing," I say then, "has been in my Lost-and-Foundery, unclaimed, for more than a hundred years, it becomes mine. That's the rule." -p.309

As a group, talk back through Herbie's journey as Lost-and-Founder at the Grand Nautilus Hotel. By the end, has he been found, having been lost? How difficult would Herbie's decision to stay in the current time be, rather than go back to his original time? Is it a happy ending for Herbie? How did it make anyone feel?

EXTENSION: Imagine finding out you were born into a world one hundred years ago. What would it be like? Would anything be similar to your life now? Write a diary excerpt, or an account of your imagined life a century ago. Now, imagine going to bed and waking up one hundred years in the future – what might the world be like? Tell the story of your first morning in the future.

7. **Sebastian Eels**

"Oh, I can sort that," Eels says dismissively. "If I like. Now that I have this..." -p.298

How does the author change how the reader sees Sebastian Eels in *Mermedusa*? Did anyone change their opinion of him, compared to previous books? Why? Or why not? Was the loss of his sister really to blame for his later behaviour? What really motivated the character?



8. The weight of his own misdeeds

'And I explain how the famous writer of Eerie was magically crushed by the colossal weight of his own accumulated crimes.' -p.319

What happens to Sebastian Eels in the crystal cave? Why? Depending on the group introduce/check understanding of 'metaphor' – discuss how this applies to Sebastian Eels being crushed into a diamond by the weight of his own misdeeds. Is this a fitting end? Why does Violet throw the diamond into the sea at the end?

9. Erwin

"A town that has a talking cat in it," I say, "has surprises still in store, I reckon." -p.319

What part has Erwin the cat played across the books? How important a character is he? Why does the author make him a cat, and not, say, a dog, or another pet? You might like to discuss the nature of cats, and look again at the Mermedusa's explanation of her dwindling power on page 283.

10. Past and future

"The only thing more mysterious than magic," says a feline voice we have missed terribly, "is what tomorrow will bring." -p.318

Share the quotation given. What does Erwin mean? Who in the group agrees with Erwin? Why? All of the books in the series have involved trying to uncover the past, but Herbie and Violet now know what happened to them, and their families – all the mysteries have been solved. Is the end of the book the end of their adventures? Or is it the start of something new?

11. Undoings

'But then I slap myself – a big fat metaphorical slap, right across the noggin, because *What am I thinking?*' -p.316

Look at page 316 together, as a group. What does Herbie realise? What are the dangers he talks about, and what does he mean, that it's the sort of thing Sebastian Eels would do? Is it this danger that has created all of his adventures? If you had magic powers, how would you know when to stop using them? Who should decide who has the power to change things?

12. Chips it is, then...

"Whenever someone visits a battered old seaside town in the off-season, when most things are shut and the wind rattles the beach huts and drives rain up your nose, and only the locals are bonkers enough to go down to the beach, where treasures wash up with the tide, and legends abound, then I reckon they've been to Eerie-on-Sea already, Vi. Maybe without even knowing it." -p.319

What does Herbie mean in this quotation? What does the author mean? Are they the same thing? Discuss what it is/might be like, to live in a seaside town throughout the year. How could this inspire legends and stories like those in Herbie and Violet's adventures? What is/would be the best thing about living by the sea all year round?

EXTENSION: Whether you live near the sea or not, take inspiration from the Legends of Eerie-on-Sea and as a group research some of your local myths, stories, legends and superstitions. Challenge the group to ask friends and families for stories they may have heard about your local area. Collect all these stories together – could any of them inspire your group to write adventures of their own?



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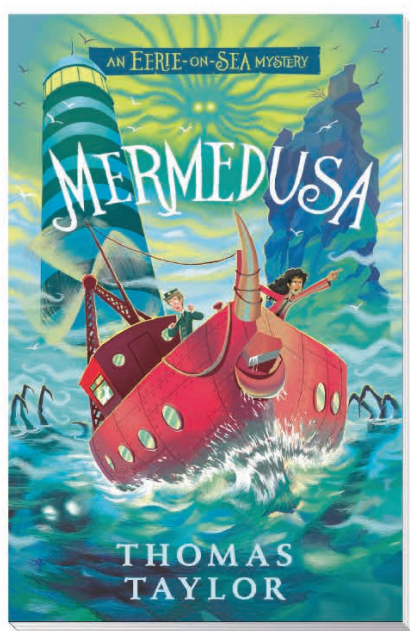
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