

## TEACHING GUIDE

# ABOUT THE BOOK

**M**otley Junior High: School for the Psychically and Celestially Gifted Terms of Enrollment

Signed: *Ebony Charmed*

Ebony should be excited about entering sixth grade to further develop her skills. And she would be. If only her lame abilities let her see more than three ghosts.

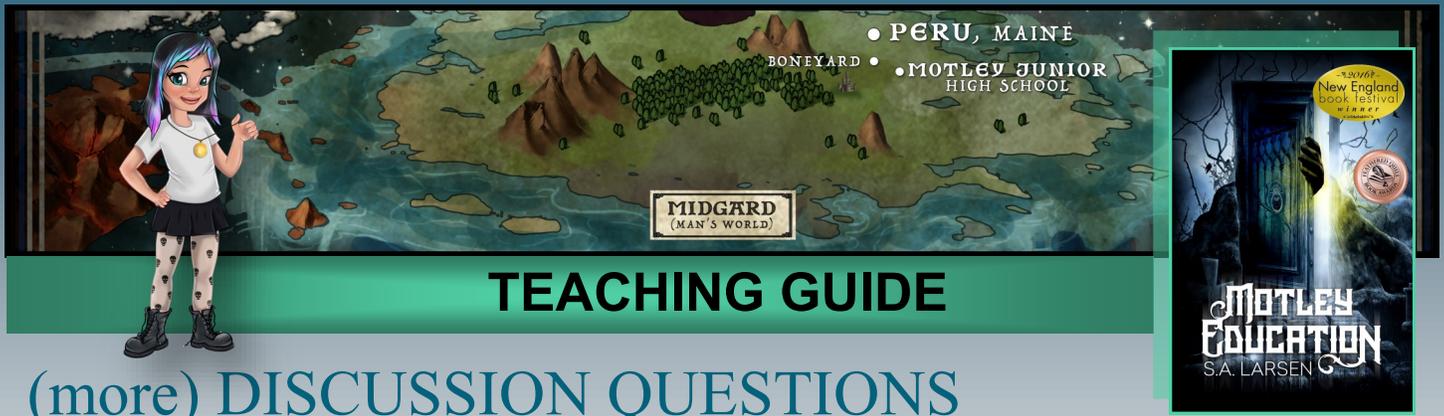
Struggling to live up to her gifted family, Ebony is horrified when she is branded a Seeker: someone who is neither Sensory nor Luminary. To top it off, her Deadly Creatures and Relics project – transforming a measly stick – seems destined for failure.

But there are doors to other worlds where creatures have been watching her. And when the truth emerges that her project is more than a stick, she knows she must act. Along with her best friend Fleishman and his pet lizard, Ebony finds herself wedged between prophecies and quests. Oh, and saving the entire spirit world from annihilation.

Ebony is not ready to be a hero. But a dark presence has already stolen more than one local kid. And this time, her failure is not an option.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How are the characters introduced and what is learned about them in this way? What does clothes, posture, and word choice say about them? *CCSS 4-7.RL.1, CCSS 4-7.RL.2, CCSS 4-7.RL.3*
2. What details of each character are plainly stated and which ones are inferred? How did students decipher what Larsen communicated? Have students explain thought process and give arguments supporting their conclusions. *CCSS 4-*



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### (more) DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

3. How many points of view is the story told through? Give examples. How does the point-of-view character affect the view of the world? *CCSS 4-7.RL.6*
4. Describe Ebony and Fleishman's friendship. Explore their difference approaches to it and why that seems to work for them, especially acceptance of differences and personal flaws. Give examples from the text. *CCSS 4-7.W.1, CCSS 5-7.W.2, CCSS 4-7.RI.1, CCSS 4-7.RI.5,*
5. What did Hela mean when she said "*Look beyond the extraordinary and you will see most value in the simplest of things.*"? *CCSS 4-7.RL.3, CCSS 4-7.RL.4*
6. Ask the students when they feel Ebony began to believe in herself. Have them support their findings. Then explore how that changed the direction of the story's journey. *CCSS 4-7.RI.8*
7. Have students find descriptive vocabulary aimed at painting a picture of spirits and ghosts. Have them interpret what they 'see'. *CCSS 4-7.RI.1*
8. What's the meaning of the Door to the Hall of Souls marking Ebony with a rune? Is there symbolism in the rune representing the word 'peace'? And how might that play into the story as the series advances? *CCSS 4-7.RI.2, CCSS 4-7.RI.5*
9. When Dad tells Ebony that the Well of Urd is inside each of us, what does he mean? How is the well in each student? How does that alter their view of the adventure of the story? *CCSS 4-7.RI.2*
10. What deeper meaning do the *Doors* Ebony can now open hold? What does this tell Ebony about herself? *CCSS 4-7.RL.2, CCSS 4-7.RL.4*
11. How does the author ground the reader with a sense of place as Ebony and Fleishman travel from their world to the different worlds within Yggdrasil? *CCSS 4-7.RL.5*
12. Discuss Cain's underlining motivation for helping his father. Have students use textual evidence and expand upon it. What did the writer leave out, yet is understood? *CCSS 4-7.RL.7*

## READING SKILLS

### STRUCTURE

Encourage students to explore what Larsen left out of the text, wanting them to make story conclusions on their own. Ask them what that does for their reading experience. Have them identify the order (or lack of order) certain parts of the story is told. Let them explore alternative ways to communicate the same information. *CCSS 5-7.RL.5, CCSS 4-7.RI.5*

### VOICE & VIEWPOINT

Have students describe the main narrator's voice. List textual examples supporting their findings. Now have them describe the second narrator's voice and show support for their determinations. How did they come to these conclusions? How is humor and other literary devices (gestures, analogies, metaphors, symbolism), used throughout the story and how does that affect the story? The reader's view of character? *CCSS 4-7.RL.5, CCSS 4-7.RL.6*



## TEACHING GUIDE

### More READING SKILLS

#### CHARACTER ANALYSIS

Pull at least three distinct characteristics from a few characters the class chooses. Compare the differences. The similarities. How did the author leave impressions of a character’s personality traits without stating them plainly? Which ones were stated outright? How did character development influence the story and the reader’s experience? CCSS 5-7.RL.4, CCSS 4-7.RL.5, CCSS 4-7.RI. 1, CCSS 4-

## THEMES

#### FRIENDSHIP

Ask students what makes a good friend and why. Have them explore the different relational friendships within the story—best friend, acquaintance, family, etc... How did Larsen show those differences? Give evidence to support conclusions.

#### SELF ACCEPTANCE

Have students discuss what self acceptance means to them and have them link those to Ebony’s journey. What were her reasons for feeling negative about herself? State specific examples and then find those that are inferred. Discuss how they came to those conclusions.

#### COURAGE

Define courage and then have students explain what courage means to them. How was courage

acted out in the book? What’s the difference between responding quickly and mulling over the risks? How were both techniques used in the story and how did each impact the reader’s view? What’s the difference between a hero and a coward? Give examples from the story.

#### FAMILY

Explore the different ‘types’ of families. Friendship, being accepted, and feeling like one can express themselves are all part of a family unit—blood related or not. Discuss how that affected these characters and how a different family or friend circle could have changed them. How could that be shown through writing?

\*\*\*CCSS 4-7.RL.1, CCSS 4-7.RL.2, CCSS 4-7.RL.3

CCSS 4-7.W.1, CCSS 4-7.W.1A

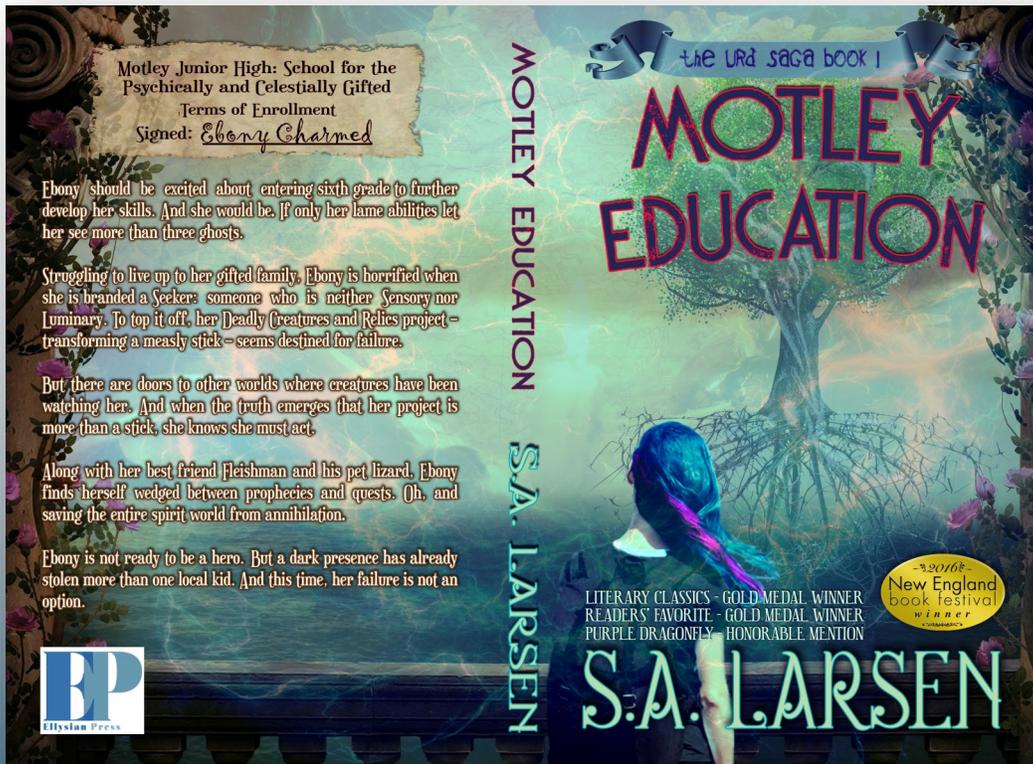
CCSS. 4-7.RI.1



## TEACHING GUIDE

### WRITING EXERCISES

1. Retell one scene from a different character's point-of-view. How does that change the story world? *CCSS 4-7.W.4, CCSS 4-7.W.5*
2. Locate specific vocabulary that explains the world and then use an outside source to compare and contrast actual facts with fiction facts. *CCSS 4-7.W.2.D*
3. Journal writing: Have students expound upon Ebony's inner thoughts and feelings when Mom disregards Ebony's pleas for help with her school project. (Chap.5) *CCSS 4-7.W.1, CCSS 5-7.W.1.A*
4. Choose one of the four worlds of Yggdrasil explored in the book and use a few outside resources to find more facts. Compare and contrast what was included in the text with the outside information. *CCSS 4-7.W.7*
5. Collect examples from the text that use the five senses. Have students replace one sense for another and ask what changed about the scene. *CCSS 5-7.W.1.C*





## TEACHING GUIDE

# ILLUSTRATIONS, MAPS, & SYMBOLS

Physical evidence, clues, and markings are used throughout the story to build the story world, add detail to scenes and to characters, and to advance the story adventure. Use the images below to expand upon how including these devices enriched the tale. *CCSS 4-7.RI.3, CCSS 4-7.RI.7*



Note: the other worlds of Yggdrasil will appear on this map as the series continues and journeys Ebony, Fleishman, and Lance to each place.



How does using visual images within Motley's two groups of students help the story? Clarify details for the reader? Uncover the word descriptions in the book and how these images support them as well as the characters.



## EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

*Norse Mythology is rooted in historical places, facts, and cultures from Ireland to Greece, from the Vikings to the Celtic people. The real Yggdrasil is infused with contrasting lands, creatures, beliefs, and ways of life. Characters, whether human or animal in figure, are endowed with rich backgrounds to inspire and teach. Many of the mythological tales can be deciphered and life lessons learned, which then can be applied to students lives.*

*And frankly, some students just might find a love for reading, history, and the application of both in life through mythology. Gosh knows, I did. ~Sheri*

**1. Compare and Contrast.** Have students re-search the different types of Norse characters—warriors, governors, teachers, caretakers, etc... Encourage them to find characters within the book that fit under each label. Also have them compare these titles with actual people in their lives. *CCSS 4-7.RI.9, CCSS 4-7.RL.9*

**2. Exploration.** Allow students to choose one of the nine worlds of Yggdrasil to research. Have them explain ways they could live on that world, what they'd do for work, and how they could build a community. *CCSS 4-7.RI.7, CCSS 4-7.RI.8*

**3. Super Gene.** Gather students to create a list of known powers/talents in mythology. Have

each student or team of students develop one super power. How would that affect their lives? What would change? Be the same? What problems might arise? *CCSS 4-7.RI.8*

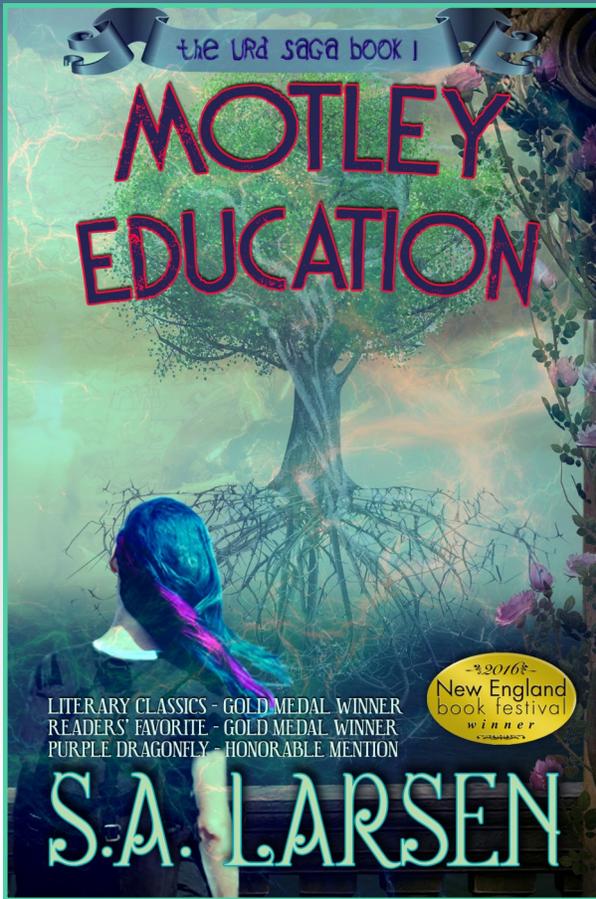
**4. The Past.** Break the class into two panels. Give each one major 'real life' world event and one major event from Norse Mythology. Have the students research to unearth how each event unfolded and see if there are patterns between the two. The drive for any pattern found could range from economics to emotional. *CCSS 5-7.W.2, CCSS 4-7.RI.9*



S.A. LARSEN is the award-winning author of *Motley Education*, the first book in a middle grade fantasy-adventure series, and *Marked Beauty*, her young adult fantasy-romance released October 2017. She can be found in the land of lobsters, snowy winters, and the occasional Eh'ya with her husband of over twenty years, four children, a spunky German Shepherd, and a trio of kittens. You can visit her online at [www.salarsenbooks.com](http://www.salarsenbooks.com), on Twitter @SA\_Larsen, & Instagram sa.larsen.



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# MOTLEY MULISHA MVP READING CLUB!

**Read the book & chat  
with the award-winning author!**

Chatting with readers is one of my most favorite things to do! And I'd love to talk with you about *Motley Education*. Mystery, magic, and mythology stalk Ebony and Fleishman at every turn. We can explore the spirited friendships they find, the mystical creatures they meet, and the importance of family along every twist of their corpse-raising adventure!

I'm offering this FREE reading club to any classroom or group that purchases a copy (or more) of *Motley Education*. This offer will extend to each consecutive book released in the series.

## Membership includes:

- \* Signed bookmarks & Motley group stickers.
- \* Skype, FaceTime, Google Hangout visit for 30 minutes, or classroom visit for 1 hr. (depending on travel distance)
- \* List of questions about the book, reading, & writing prior to our visit.



Want to meet online? In person? Or have me host a writing workshop for your group? Have questions or want to signup? Contact me at [sheri@salarsenbooks.com](mailto:sheri@salarsenbooks.com).



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