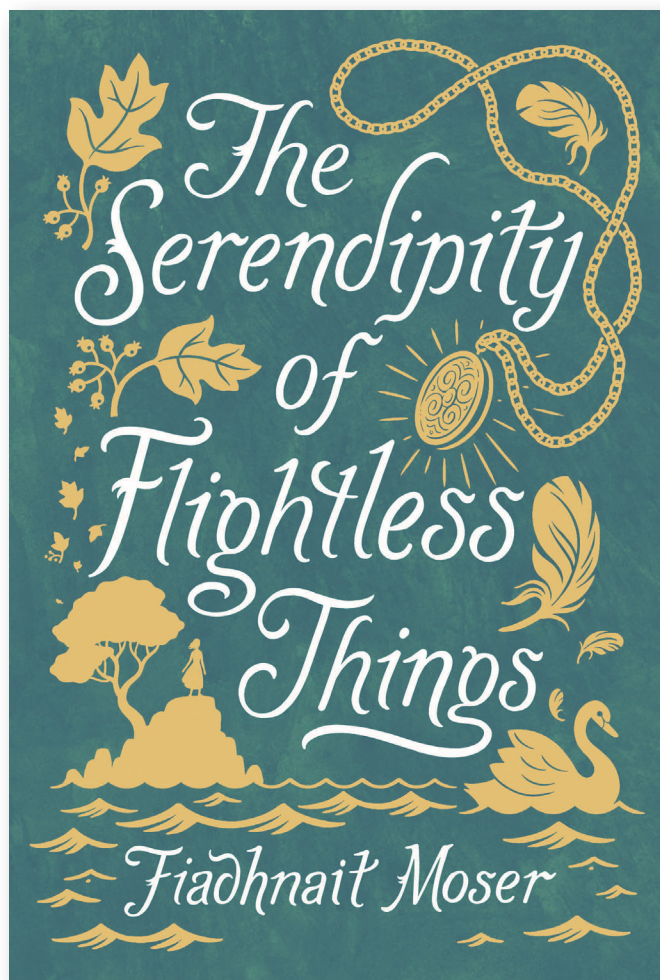


Classroom resources for

The Serendipity of Flightless Things



by **Fiadhnaid Moser**



little bee books



YELLOW JACKET

Reproducible Activity

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Project ideas

1. “Faerytale Retelling” Storyboard/Short Story Project:

SERENDIPITY is a retelling of Irish faerytale, The Children of Lir. In this activity, students create a storyboard for a faerytale retelling. Teachers and students discuss ways to spin a story by examining point of view, time and scope, setting, and key plot details. Students research faerytales either from their own or another’s culture. After choosing a faerytale to retell, the whole class uses a “What If?” brainstorming technique to imagine different ways a faerytale can be reimaged while keeping the bare bones of the story recognizable. Each student then creates a story board on a grid with both words and pictures that can later be developed into a short story.

2. “Setting As Character” Discussion/Prose Writing Exercise:

In SERENDIPITY, home is such an important concept to Finn, that the rolling hills, stormy seas, and magical forests of Ireland almost becomes a character itself. As this is an immigration story, culture is transported from one land to another, but always remains key to Finn’s definition of who she is. In a circle format, discuss what home means to each student, as well as how each student’s own culture impacts their sense of home. Questions such as “Can home be a person?” and “Can home be somewhere you don’t live?” and “Can home be somewhere imaginary?” may be addressed. Questions regarding culture may also be addressed, such as “What makes a culture unique?” or “How does your culture impact your daily life?” Discuss how one’s sense of home impacts one’s sense of self. Then, each student will choose either a real or imagined setting and “explode a moment.” Brainstorm by using the five senses as well as imagining what the setting means to the narrator and how the character’s sense of culture impacts their point of view.

3. “Creature Poetry” Poetry Writing Exercise:

In the story, Nuala chooses to turn her grandchildren into swans for very specific reasons. If you were an animal, what would you be and why? Write a poem about what it would be like to turn into that animal, or what attributes that animals has that you admire. Alternatively, research Irish mythical creatures and create a poem based on one that strikes your imagination. Include a drawing of your creature with your poem.

4. “Magical Realism Story” Short Story Project:

SERENDIPITY is a magical realism story. That means that only a tiny amount of magic is added to the story so that the reader might even doubt that the magic is real at times. In this project, students will try their hand at writing magical realism. They will choose from a list of ordinary objects that they would like to turn magical (shoes, necklace, pen, teacup, flower, perfume, eyeglasses, chocolate, book, etc.) and create a story surrounding it.

Discussion questions

1. Finn’s greatest desire is to find the Children of Lir, whom she believes are her long-lost siblings. Why do you think this is so important to her? What do the Children represent to Finn?
2. Finn wishes she could fly, and feels that that would be the greatest miracle of all. Why do you think this is? Use specific examples from the text.
3. Finn has a complicated, yet deeply loving, relationship with Nuala. Who in your life do you have a similarly complicated relationship with? What would it mean to you to lose that person?
4. Stories are Finn’s most precious treasures. What makes stories so important? Why is it important to tell stories?
5. Finn first experiences war when she travels to Belfast for a doctor’s appointment. She describes it by using the metaphor of the “greyman,” a creature from Irish mythology who settles a fog of fear throughout the land. When is a time in your life that you have experienced a “greyman”?
6. Years ago when Nuala traveled to Starlight Valley, she planted a hawthorn from Inis Eala to preserve her Irish heritage and feel more at home. When Finn travels to America, she begins to feel terribly homesick for her Irish culture. What does your culture mean to you, and how has it impacted your life?
7. When Aoife instructs Darcy to skin the swans, Finn offers to do it for her. Why do you think Finn offered to do this for Darcy? Would you have offered? What does this show about Finn’s character?
8. Loneliness and belonging are themes in *THE SERENDIPITY OF FLIGHTLESS THINGS*. When Finn immigrates to America, she feels out of place and just wants a friend. When is a time that you have felt lonely, or like you didn’t belong?
9. Aoife often entraps Finn out of a desperate desire to keep Finn from leaving her. Do you believe Aoife really loves Finn? Why or why not? What does love mean to you?
10. Why does Aoife want to separate people from their loved ones? Can you find compassion for Aoife’s story? Why or why not?
11. At the beginning of the story, Finn is beginning to doubt her belief in stories and magic. Tangible magic doesn’t appear until the end when Finn’s belief in stories is restored. Throughout the story, did you be-

- lieve that the Children of Lir were real? Or did you think they were just in Finn's imagination all along?
12. The hawthorn tree on Inis Eala, and its daughter tree in Starlight Valley, are symbols. What do you think they represent, and why?
 13. Why does Finn prefer to call miracles "serendipity"? Why does that word help her to have more hope?
 14. In what way do Finn, Posy-Kate, and Sojourn change throughout the story? What made these changes come about?
 15. What is your favorite part of the story and why? Which character do you relate to the most and why?

Grades 4-6 vocabulary

Serendipity (n)

1. an aptitude for making desirable discoveries by accident
2. good fortune; luck

Nimble (adj)

1. quick and light in movement; moving with ease; agile; active; rapid
2. quick to understand, think, devise, etc.
3. cleverly contrived

Perpetual (adj)

1. continuing or enduring forever; everlasting

Abyss (n)

1. a deep, immeasurable space, gulf, or cavity, vast chasm

Uncanny (adj)

1. having or seeming to have a supernatural or inexplicable basis; beyond the ordinary or normal; extraordinary
2. mysterious; arousing superstitious fear or dread; uncomfortably strange

Ignorant (adj)

1. lacking in knowledge or training; unlearned
2. uninformed; unaware

Precocious (adj)

1. unusually advanced or mature in development, especially mental development

Saunter (v, n)

1. to walk with a leisurely gait; stroll (v)
2. a leisurely walk or ramble; stroll (n)

Pallid (adj)

1. pale; faint or deficient in color
2. lacking in vitality or interest

Taut (adj)

1. tightly drawn; tense; not slack

Oriental (adj)

1. of, or relating to, or characteristic of the Orient, or East; Eastern

Splendor (n)

1. brilliant or gorgeous appearance, coloring, etc.; magnificence; pomp or grandeur

Fester (v)

1. to putrefy or rot

Subside (v)

1. to sink to a low or lower level
2. to become quiet, less active, or less violent; abate
3. to sink or fall to the bottom; settle; precipitate

Recoil (v)

1. to draw back; start or shrink back, assign alarm, horror, or disgust

Acrid (adj)

1. sharp or biting to the taste or smell; bitterly pungent; irritating to the eyes, nose, etc.

Vexation (n)

1. the act of vexing

[Vex (v): to irritate; annoy; provoke]

Avert (v)

1. to turn away or aside
2. to ward off; prevent

Chastise (v)

1. rebuke or reprimand severely

Colloquial (adj)

1. characteristic of or appropriate to ordinary or familiar conversation rather than formal speech or writing; informal

Rasp (v, n)

1. to scrape or rub roughly (v)
2. to utter with a grating sound (v)
3. a rasping sound (n)

Stark (adj)

1. sheer, utter, downright, or complete
2. harsh, grim, or desolate, as a view, place, etc.
3. extremely simple or severe

Vitality (n)

1. exuberant physical strength or mental vigor; power to live or grow

Ebb (n, v)

1. the flowing back of the tide as the water returns to sea (n)
2. a flowing backward or away; decline or decay (n)
3. to flow back or away, as the water of a tide (v)
4. to decline or decay; fade away (v)

Torrential (adj)

1. pertaining to or having the nature of a torrent

[Torrent (n): a violent downpour of rain; a violent, tumultuous, or overwhelming flow]

Disarray (n)

1. disorder; confusion

Grades 7-9 vocabulary

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1. disorder; confusion

Reading Quiz #1 (Chapters 1-6)

1. What word would you use to describe Finn?
 - a. Brave
 - b. Impatient
 - c. Imaginative
 - d. All of the Above

2. When does this novel take place?
 - a. 2019
 - b. 1852
 - c. 1971
 - d. Today

3. Who is Nuala in relation to Finn?
 - a. Her nanny
 - b. Her grandmother
 - c. Her best friend
 - d. Her swan friend
 - e. None of the above

4. What does Nuala give Finn on the cliff?
 - a. A Locket
 - b. A Pocket Watch
 - c. A Book
 - d. A Potion

5. In what Point of View is this novel narrated?
 - a. First Person
 - b. Third Person Limited
 - c. Omniscient
 - d. Second Person

6. Where does Finn live?
 - a. Kerry, Ireland
 - b. Glasgow, Scotland
 - c. London, England
 - d. Donegal, Ireland

7. Why is Finn jealous of the heather petals?
 - a. They are prettier than her.
 - b. They get to fly away wherever they please.
 - c. They get to grow tall and strong despite storms.

- d. They can be pressed in books to be cherished forever.
8. What makes Finn fall off the cliff?
- A witch
 - Nuala pushed her.
 - A mysterious bird
 - A hurricane
9. Who is Darcy?
- The pub owner
 - Nuala's daughter
 - Finn's 7-year-old neighbor
 - A fortune-teller
10. What is the name of the father in the story Finn tells Darcy?
- Lir
 - Sojourn
 - Mr. Quigley
 - Lorcan
11. How would you describe Sojourn?
- Kind
 - Sneaky
 - Handsome
 - All of the Above
12. What does Sojourn steal from Finn?
- Darcy
 - The Ogham runes
 - The swan story
 - Nuala's gift
13. What does Sojourn say is going to happen to Finn?
- She will meet a faery.
 - She will write a new story.
 - She will go to America.
 - She will join the Irish Republic Army.
14. What does Da tell Darcy?
- Darcy's father died in the war.
 - Da got Darcy new Irish dance shoes.
 - Darcy is moving in with Finn.
 - Darcy has to move to America.
15. What does Darcy give Finn?
- A locket
 - A shoe buckle
 - A handkerchief

Reading Quiz #2 (Chapters 7-17)

- d. A snork
- 1. What do Nuala and Da fight about?
 - a. Whether Finn can go to Belfast or not
 - b. Whether Finn can have cake or not
 - c. Whether Finn can sleep over at Darcy's house
 - d. Whether Finn is old enough to climb the Slieve League Cliffs
- 2. What does Finn do at Darcy's house?
 - a. Finishes telling the story of the children who turn into swans
 - b. Tells Darcy the story of two sisters with yellow hair and blue eyes
 - c. Tells Darcy she is going to America
 - d. All of the above
- 3. To where does Finn travel in the middle of the night?
 - a. Slieve Leage Cliffs
 - b. Maghera Beach
 - c. Inis Eala
 - d. Belfast
- 4. What does Finn see underwater while she is drowning?
 - a. A selkie
 - b. A girl
 - c. A whale
 - d. A mermaid
- 5. What do Finn and Nuala visit on the island?
 - a. The faery's castle
 - b. Aobh's grave
 - c. A library
 - d. The hawthorn tree
- 6. What represents serendipity to Finn?
 - a. The last hawthorn petal
 - b. The locket
 - c. Margaret, Ed, and Oliver
 - d. Inis Eala
- 7. Based on Finn's thoughts at Inis Eala, of what is she most afraid?
 - a. Drowning
 - b. Failure
 - c. Loneliness
 - d. The War

8. Who goes missing?
 - a. Pa
 - b. Sojourn
 - c. Darcy
 - d. Nuala

9. Why does Finn need to see a doctor?
 - a. She needs her lungs checked out because she almost drowned.
 - b. She needs her arm checked out because she fell on the cliffs.
 - c. She needs her stomach checked out because she drank some poison.
 - d. She needs her ankle checked out because she twisted it while Irish dancing.

10. To what does Finn compare the “greyman”?
 - a. The eerie fog that makes people feel sad.
 - b. The stray sheep wandering around the pastures.
 - c. The huge waves almost drowning her.
 - d. The ugly graffiti on the sides of gray buildings.

11. What character passes away?
 - a. Pa
 - b. Darcy
 - c. Sojourn
 - d. Nuala

12. Where does Da send Finn?
 - a. To live with her mother in Starlight Valley, Virginia
 - b. To a boarding school in Boston, Massachusetts
 - c. To an orphanage in Dublin, Ohio
 - d. To live with her uncle in Acorn Hollow, Georgia

13. What interesting news does Da give Finn?
 - a. He is leaving the war.
 - b. Her mother is alive.
 - c. He is moving to France without her.
 - d. Nuala was really a spy.

14. Why is it difficult for Finn to pack?
 - a. She keeps expecting to see Nuala.
 - b. Da keeps making her do extra chores.
 - c. She’s distracted by her plans to find the swans.
 - d. Sojourn keeps showing up and bothering her.

15. What does Finn pack?
 - a. Socks, books, funeral dress
 - b. Leaves, Sunday dress, locket
 - c. Field journal, locket, sweaters
 - d. Photograph, jeans, books

Reading Quiz #3 (Chapters 18-28)

1. Who does Finn meet on the plane?
 - a. Aoife
 - b. Nuala's ghost
 - c. Sojourn
 - d. Darcy
2. What is the first thing Finn sees when she reaches Starlight Valley?
 - a. A wall of thorn trees
 - b. A house made of glass
 - c. A swan in a river
 - d. A rocky cliff
3. How would you describe Aoife?
 - a. Outgoing and patient
 - b. Sophisticated and deceitful
 - c. Clever and eccentric
 - d. Shy and kind
4. When Aoife is leading Finn into Starlight Valley, Finn tells the story of a child who followed a faery into a beautiful place, but never returned to their family. Why do you think she tells this story?
 - a. It represents Finn's sisterly relationship with Darcy.
 - b. It represents Finn's feelings about being displaced from Ireland to America.
 - c. It represents Darcy disappearing from Ireland.
 - d. It represents being led into a deceitfully perfect place, which might contain evil beneath its surface.
5. What makes Finn feel upset when she arrives at Aoife's house?
 - a. Swan heads on the walls
 - b. Portraits of evil faeries
 - c. Poison on the counter
 - d. Pet ravens
6. Who is Posy-Kate
 - a. Finn's adopted sister
 - b. Finn's estranged grandmother
 - c. Finn's horrible aunt
 - d. Finn's new best friend
7. What name does Posy-Kate give Finn?
 - a. Finrose
 - b. Finley
 - c. Finnoodle
 - d. Finbird

8. What does Finn find on the trees?
 - a. Messages to lost loved ones
 - b. Graffiti
 - c. Muddy swan footprints on the branches
 - d. Swan feathers

9. What is Aoife's job?
 - a. Mayor
 - b. Veterinarian
 - c. Teacher
 - d. Heiress

10. Why does Finn play the song "Five Hundred Miles" by Peter, Paul, and Mary?
 - a. She is bored.
 - b. She feels trapped.
 - c. She wants to travel.
 - d. She is homesick.

11. What does Finn find in the attic?
 - a. A dead body
 - b. Darcy
 - c. A hawthorn tree
 - d. Sojourn

12. How is Posy-Kate's character first redeemed, in part, to Finn?
 - a. She has been helping Darcy.
 - b. She saved the swan from the train.
 - c. She helped Finn find Da's letters.
 - d. She made Finn a dress.

13. What is Darcy's role in Finn's life?
 - a. Helping her to believe again
 - b. Helping her to grow up
 - c. Helping her to become more adventurous
 - d. Helping her to become a better storyteller

14. How does Finn hide from Aoife in the attic?
 - a. She hides under the bed.
 - b. She hides in the rafters.
 - c. She climbs up the chimney.
 - d. She hides behind the door.

15. What job did Aoife give Darcy?
 - a. Skinning the swans
 - b. Brewing the poisons
 - c. Cleaning the slaughter room
 - d. Baking magical pi

Reading Quiz #4 (Chapters 29-36)

1. What heinous act does Finn offer to do for Darcy?
 - a. Kidnap Posy-Kate
 - b. Skin the swans
 - c. Steal from the Pegwitch
 - d. None of the above
2. What does Finn realize after offering to do the act in Question 1?
 - a. She loves Darcy.
 - b. She hates Sojourn.
 - c. Aoife is a liar.
 - d. She misses Nuala.
3. What does Finn find that Aoife has been hiding in the attic?
 - a. Da's letters
 - b. A weapon
 - c. A book of Nuala's stories
 - d. A funeral dress
4. What does Finn have to do to keep on Aoife's good side?
 - a. Compliment her
 - b. Do laundry for her
 - c. Tell her "I love you," and "I'm sorry"
 - d. Cook for her
5. How does Finn escape her room when Aoife locks up the manor?
 - a. She breaks out of the window.
 - b. She picks the lock.
 - c. Posy-Kate helps her.
 - d. She persuades Aoife to let her out.
6. How does Finn escape the manor?
 - a. By climbing up the chimney
 - b. By climbing down the tree outside her window
 - c. By wreaking havoc in the kitchen
 - d. By using the swans' magic
7. What does Sojourn reveal about Finn?
 - a. Finn is the Pegwitch's daughter.
 - b. Finn is a witch.
 - c. Finn was once a swan.
 - d. Finn is the Children of Lir's youngest sister.

8. What happens to Posy-Kate while escaping the Pegwitch?
 - a. She twists her ankle.
 - b. She loses her ring.
 - c. She breaks her arm.
 - d. She ruins her dress.

9. How do Finn, Posy-Kate, Darcy, and Sojourn, escape the Pegwitch?
 - a. They hide in a shop.
 - b. They drive a truck away from her.
 - c. They disguise themselves as trees.
 - d. They run back home.

10. Who do Finn, Posy-Kate, Darcy, and Sojourn meet after they escape the Pegwitch?
 - a. A nurse named Marcy Hayes
 - b. An author named Edward James, III
 - c. A lumberjack named Rodney Bilfer Jr.
 - d. A veterinarian named Ella-Marie Grace

11. What does the person in Question 9 tell Finn about Aoife?
 - a. She forces her residents to do favors for her in exchange for medical care.
 - b. She is planning on cutting down all the trees in Starlight Valley.
 - c. She tricks people into helping her by promising wealth that she doesn't end up providing.
 - d. She is planning on killing all the birds in Starlight Valley.

12. What does Aoife threaten Darcy with?
 - a. Finn
 - b. Food
 - c. Shelter
 - d. Her family

13. Why is Aoife holding two swans in the attic?
 - a. She plans on killing them in front of Finn.
 - b. She wants to make a dress out of them.
 - c. She wants to use them as wallpaper.
 - d. She wants to blackmail Finn with them.

14. What did Finn forget at the hawthorn tree?
 - a. Her locket
 - b. Sojourn
 - c. A swan
 - d. A bow-and-arrow

15. What does Fiachra and Conn tell Finn to do?
 - a. Save Darcy
 - b. Go home
 - c. Steal Aoife's key
 - d. Trust Peg

Reading Quiz #5 (Chapters 37-Epilogue)

1. Who is the Pegwitch?
 - a. Nuala's old friend
 - b. A witch
 - c. Finn's great-grandmother
 - d. Aoife's friend
2. What is the Pegwitch's job?
 - a. Doctor
 - b. Nurse
 - c. Animal Rescuer
 - d. Potion-Maker
3. What separated Nuala and her friends when she was young?
 - a. A hurricane
 - b. Aoife
 - c. A baby
 - d. Nuala's job
4. How would you describe Peg?
 - a. Wicked
 - b. Kind
 - c. Helpful
 - d. Both B and C
5. What event is happening at the manor?
 - a. A birthday party
 - b. A gala in Posy-Kate's honor
 - c. A Christmas party
 - d. A gala in Finn's honor
6. Who makes Finn's dress?
 - a. Darcy
 - b. Posy-Kate
 - c. Aoife
 - d. Peg
7. How does Finn sneak out the front door of the manor while everyone is preparing for the celebration?
 - a. She dresses as a maid.
 - b. She persuades the cook to let her out.
 - c. She tricks her nanny.
 - d. She doesn't—Aoife catches her.

8. What happens when Aoife eats the pie with the hawthorn berry in it?
 - a. The swans turn back into humans.
 - b. Aoife turns into a swan.
 - c. Nothing
 - d. Both A and B

9. How does Finn defeat Aoife?
 - a. Finn flies back to Ireland.
 - b. Finn eats the berry.
 - c. Sojourn uses faery magic.
 - d. Ena eats the berry.

10. What does Finn find out about who she really is?
 - a. She's part faery
 - b. She's related to Darcy
 - c. She's related to Peg
 - d. All of the above

11. How are the thorn trees destroyed?
 - a. Rodney Bilfer Jr. cuts them down.
 - b. Finn uses her faery magic by believing.
 - c. They are destroyed with the hawthorn berry's magic.
 - d. Aoife destroys them before being defeated.

12. What happens to Aoife?
 - a. She is sent to jail.
 - b. She dies.
 - c. She turns into a swan.
 - d. She is banished to California.

13. Where does the Epilogue take place?
 - a. Starlight Valley
 - b. Belfast
 - c. Inis Eala
 - d. Mr. McCann's Pub

14. What event happens in the Epilogue?
 - a. Finn's birthday
 - b. Darcy's birthday
 - c. Nuala's funeral
 - d. Christmas dinner

15. To what does Finn compare Nuala's ashes?
 - a. Swans
 - b. Snow
 - c. Hawthorn leaves
 - d. Heather

Answer Keys

QUIZ #1: 1:D, 2:C, 3:B, 4:A, 5:A, 6:D, 7:B, 8:C, 9:C, 10:A, 11:B, 12: D, 13:C, 14:A, 15:A

QUIZ #2: 1:C, 2:A, 3:C, 4:B, 5:D, 6:A, 7:C, 8:C, 9:A, 10:A, 11:D, 12:A, 13:B, 14:A, 15:B

QUIZ #3: 1:C, 2:A, 3:B, 4:D, 5:A, 6:A, 7:D, 8:A, 9:A, 10:D, 11:B, 12:A, 13:A, 14:C, 15:A

QUIZ #4: 1:B, 2:A, 3:A, 4:C, 5:C, 6:A, 7:D, 8:A, 9:B, 10:C, 11:A, 12:B, 13:B, 14:A, 15:D

QUIZ #5: 1:A, 2:C, 3:A, 4:D, 5:D, 6:B, 7:A, 8:C, 9:B, 10:A, 11:B, 12:C, 13:C, 14:C, 15:D