



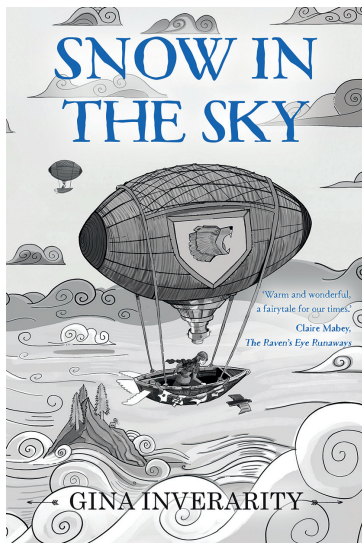
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TEACHERS' NOTES

Snow in the Sky

By Gina Inverarity

Notes prepared by Maddy Sexton and Gina Inverarity © 2024



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1. Introduction to *Snow in the Sky*

You may have read *Snow*, in which we first met our heroine and followed her adventures after escaping from her nasty stepmother. In *Snow in the Sky* we return to Snow's island and meet her new friends as they rescue a stranger and take on the ultimate adventure, flying above the clouding over.

From the back cover of the book:

It weren't me who opened the sky. I dint even die and come back to life, although everyone thought I did. I rose from my coffin and the clouds parted and we all saw the sun and the stars for the first time since the clouding over. But that break did not hold. Within months the clouds closed over, the sun was lost and the cold wrapped around us once again.

Snow and the hunter have made a life together in the mountain chateau but every day new people arrive, seeking refuge from the worsening storms and asking Snow to lift the clouds once more, something she insists she cannot do. One day a stranger from a distant land falls from the sky. She has come on a mission, and soon Snow, the hunter, and a one-eyed boy who sees everything will be drawn into an adventure that takes them above the clouding over. It may be that Snow can lift the sky again after all, but first she will have to find out who she really is, and where she's come from.



Author photo by Adam Loveys

2. Praise for *Snow*

'Snow's voice drew me in deep from the very first page and held me fast until the end. An evocative, powerful story full of heart and spirit.'

– Juliet Marillier, author of the *Warrior Bards* series

'Dark, enchanting and visceral. A classic fairytale brilliantly reimagined for our rapidly changing world.'

– Margot McGovern, author of *Neverland*

'I love *Snow*! It's so clever and just beautiful to read. What a great story.'

– Belinda Bolliger, Editorial Manager, Scholastic Australian Standing Orders

'Snow is a captivating character; the writing is evocative and the book is a tactile and visual delight. Five stars.'

– Katharine England, *Advertiser*

'One of the best young adult adventure stories published in a long time.'

– Erich Mayer, *Arts Hub*

'*Snow* ... will no doubt be regarded as one of 2020's best YA novels.'

– Joy Lawn, *Paperbark Words*

'Inverarity has pulled a thread from a great tapestry of storytelling and used it as the warp for weaving something entirely new.'

– Catherine Norton, author of *Hester Hitchins and the Falling Stars*

3. About the author

Gina grew up in South Australia and started work in publishing as an editorial assistant, receptionist and book packer after finishing university. Later, when her daughters were young, Gina worked as an editor at the wonderful children's publisher Omnibus Books. Her first picture book, *The Brown Dog*, was published by Working Title Press (now HarperCollins) in 2014. *Snow* (Wakefield Press, 2020) was her first young adult novel.

4. Inspiration behind the novel

Together with her partner Gina manages a harvested pine forest that is regenerating with native species. *Snow* was inspired by that forest. It's heartbreaking to imagine what sort of devastating impact aspects of climate change will have on this environment.

Young people are leading the way on anti-fossil-fuel activism and slowly changing the culture of denial. In *Snow*, Gina imagined a world that has returned to the wild and asks, can people return to a simpler way of living? In *Snow in the Sky*, she asks, can we undo the damage? What would it take and who and what would have to be sacrificed?

Snow in the Sky follows faithfully in the spirit of the first novel but also pushes the characters to delve deeper into the causes of climate collapse. As always, the human characters learn the most from their animal companions, and ultimately, it is the creatures of the land that save the island from further destruction. In this book, Little Bear and the falcon are joined by a street-smart city dog named Poke and a hawklet learning to fly.

5. Activities

Read a Shakespearean sonnet – don't worry, they're only short! – and use the Glossary in *Snow in the Sky* to translate any Old English words you find in the text. www.stagemilk.com/best-shakespeare-sonnets/

Snow in the Sky is a climate-change novel, which uses an ice age as the climate catastrophe that changed the world. The constant storms mean characters are always at risk, battling the elements to stay alive.

- Write a list of some of the things the characters living in this icy world do differently, or more carefully, because of the climate.
- Brainstorm a different catastrophe – flooding, nuclear war, drought, pandemic, whatever you can think of – and write a new list of precautions and changes the characters might have to make in order to live in this new world.
- Using your imagined catastrophe and your new list, write a scene in which Snow and her friends navigate a different kind of world.

Snow, her stepmother and the hunter are all based on the fairytale *Snow White*. Rose Red is based on the *Little Red Riding Hood* tale. Their established backstories have been updated and amended to fit into the world of the novel.

Choose a fairytale character of your own who you think might fit into the story, rewriting their backstory to bring it in line with the text. Would they become one of Snow's allies, or would they be antagonists, like Stoa?

6. Discussion questions while reading the book

Prologue

- Based on the prologue, what are your expectations for the novel?

Chapter One – The mountain chateau

- What do you think a normal day looks like at the chateau? What kind of chores might Snow and the residents find to do each day to keep their community running?
- The 'clouding over' has covered the sky for many years, and most people have never seen the sun, a blue sky, the stars or the moon. How do you think seeing the clouding over part for the first time might affect someone who has lived like this their entire life? What evidence from the text supports this?

Chapter Two – The flying-machine crash

- Snow's first reaction to hearing about the strange flying machine's crash is to go out and investigate. What does this say about her as a character?
- Dog-boy follows Snow and the hunter on their trek out of the chateau, despite not being invited to come and being completely unprepared for the journey. What does this say about him as a character?

Chapter Three – The mysterious visitor

- What are your first reactions and thoughts about Memma? Is she someone Snow and her friends can trust? Why/why not?

Chapter Four – A risky search

- Memma speaks in a strange dialect. Can you identify what it might be similar to? Why do you think the author has made this choice for the character?
- During their search, Memma tells Snow and her friends about her balloon, and demonstrates some of the technology she's brought with her. What does this tell you about the kind of place Memma has come from?

Chapter Five – Dog-boy's experiment

- What kind of person do you think Stoa is? We already know that Snow and the hunter don't trust him – do you agree with their assessment?
- Memma's motive for leaving with Stoa is clear: she needs the catalyst for her machine. Stoa's motive is less clear. Why do you think he chooses to hold on to the catalyst?
- Why do you think Dog-boy is so upset when Memma leaves?

Chapter Six – A visit to the tomb

- Snow visits the chateau's tomb to retrieve some coins from her mother's grave, which she then gives to Dog-boy to experiment with in the hopes of making more catalyst. How do you think Snow feels about this? Does she see it as a sacrifice?

Chapter Seven – Chasing Stoa

- Dog-boy tells Snow and the hunter that Stoa is responsible for the loss of his eye. Why do you think he lied to Snow earlier when he said he was born missing the eye? How does the truth change your perception of Dog-boy?

Chapter Eight – Fox's city

- What do the descriptions of the city tell you about life there?
- Memma tells Dog-boy that Stoa will let her fly away once he's made his money at the show. Based on what we already know about Stoa, do you think Memma should trust him?

Chapter Nine – Dog-boy in the sewers

- The group's plan to save Memma goes off without a hitch until Dog-boy steals the catalyst. The hunter is furious, but Rose Red and Dog-boy tell him the theft is part of a 'grand scheme'. What do you think they might be planning?

Chapter Ten – A grand scheme

- When Snow gives Memma the fire-mountain coins, Memma reacts strangely. Why do you think Memma is suddenly so curious about Snow's origins?
- The grand scheme is revealed – the group will make their own balloons to fly with Memma and help her melt an ice lake, which in turn will extinguish the volcano responsible for the clouding over. Compare this scheme with what you predicted at the end of the last chapter. How close were your predictions?

Chapter Eleven – The silk balloons

- The chateau begins working on the balloons that Snow, the hunter, Dog-boy and Rose Red will fly to fire-mountain. What effect does this new activity have on the chateau as a whole? What kinds of feelings do you think might be stirred up in the people living there?

Chapter Twelve – A long, hard storm

- The storm destroys a section of the chateau, endangers the goats, and sucks up all of the chickens, which is bad news for all in the chateau. What function does the storm serve in the context of the story?

Chapter Thirteen – Sickness in the chateau

- When the hunter falls ill with the sickness going through the chateau, Snow is terrified he will die. Why do you think this is?
- There are no medicines in Snow's world. Make a list of home remedies that might help a sick person feel better.

Chapter Fourteen – Flying school begins

- Snow and the hunter struggle with their flying homework until they decide to approach the checklists from familiar territory. What do you think of their approach? Does it give you any insight into how they navigate the world?

Chapter Fifteen – Three hawklets

- After her first flight, Snow can't wait to get up into the sky again. On the next flight though, she's frightened at the thought of flying through the clouding over. What do you think she's afraid of?
- The balloon fleet uses flags to signal to each other. Draw your own set of five communication flags, considering what messages you might need to convey to your fellow pilots when you're up in the sky.

Chapter Sixteen – Above the clouds

- Memma warns her fellow pilots that the airflow – air rivers – above the clouds can be unpredictable. Is this an example of foreshadowing? What do you think might happen?
- Make a list of words the author uses to describe Snow's experience of being above the clouds. How do they show how she feels?

Chapter Seventeen – The frozen lake

- The group fly through the beginning of a storm, barely landing their baskets before it begins. Do you think their handmade baskets would have held up well in a storm? Why/why not?

Chapter Eighteen – The drowned city

- Memma explains the science behind their plan while they wait out the storm, but the hunter isn't entirely sold, saying that 'some things can't be known by measuring' (pg 135). What do you think of this statement? Can you think of a real-world example that supports the hunter?
- After Dog-boy translates the story told in the mosaic to the group, Memma and Snow realise the coins they've been using as a catalyst match the coins from the story. What do you think this means?

Chapter Nineteen – The god of fire-mountain

- Snow has a way with animals that confuses the other characters. What does this affinity with Lady, Little Bear and now baby bear reveal about Snow? Why would the author choose to write a character with such connections to nature?
- If you have a pet, can you tell when it's hungry, or it wants to go outside? How can you tell? Write a paragraph about how your pet communicates with you, using examples.

Chapter Twenty – Snow climbs

- Memma says that 'All things can't be explained by the science we know' (pg 148). Does this surprise you? Do you agree that some things are inherently inexplicable?
- The ancient civilisation in the drowned lake seemed to believe that the volcano was a living being. After Snow returns from her climb, she dreams of a destructive wave. Is there a connection here? Why/why not?

Chapter Twenty-one - The Little Queen

- After Snow describes her dream, the group discover that Memma knew the potential devastation of her plan, and was acting on orders to carry it out. Looking back on Memma's past actions and decisions, were there clues that she wasn't being entirely honest with Snow and her friends? Use evidence from the text to support your claim.
- After the shock discovery about her lineage, Snow suddenly finds herself commanding Memma to keep her existence a secret. She wonders, 'Was ordering people around as I liked in my blood?' (pg 165). Discuss the question: are leaders born or raised?

Chapter Twenty-two - Flying home

- Memma has previously warned her fellow pilots that cooler air rivers are dangerous. Do you think the group's decision to rely on these unpredictable air currents is a good choice? If you do, why do you think this? If not, what would be a better choice?

Chapter Twenty-three - A dangerous rescue

- After being caught in the storm, Rose Red's balloon has frozen over and become dangerously light. In a panic, Dog-boy makes a rash decision that puts him in grave danger. Looking back on his behaviour up until this point, do you think this decision is in line with his character? How has the author established his personality to make this decision seem authentic?

Chapter Twenty-four - The descent

- Snow realises suddenly that they are flying over the frozen ocean. Write a short paragraph describing what you think an ocean might look like from above.

Chapter Twenty-five - An icy desert

- Stranded on the frozen ocean, Dog-boy suggests they follow the direction of the waves to find land. His reasoning is shaky, but the group trust him and decide to do as he suggests. If you were in Snow's shoes, would you trust Dog-boy's hunch? Why/why not?

Chapter Twenty-six - Mayor Fox

- Mayor Fox is a politician, and someone that Snow doesn't trust. How does the author convey Snow's feelings toward Fox? Use evidence from the text to support your answer.
- After their conversation, Fox decides not to help Snow and her friends in raising an army to protect their island. Are you surprised by his decision? Why/why not?

Chapter Twenty-seven- Snow visits the trees

- When Snow runs into Stoat in the woods, she is surprised when he vows to defend the island. Do you think enemies can ever truly be united in a common cause? Do you think Stoat will keep his word?
- Snow's mother's knife bears a strange inscription: 'The trees off'r wisdom f'r those who canst heareth't. Stirreth not, little one, stayeth quiet and listen' (pg 208). What do you think this means? What does it mean to Snow? Do these two meanings match up?

Chapter Twenty-eight - The princess and the king

- Snow and her friends know they are outnumbered by the king's army, even though his soldiers are less than impressive. Still, they stand strong against the threat. What does this tell you about real strength?
- Snow summons the animals of the island to help defend it from the king's army, telling him that 'the creatures of this land will rise up to repel you' (pg 217). How do you think this reflects Snow's relationship with, and respect for, nature?

Chapter Twenty-nine – Dog-boy and Rose Red

- Snow finally knows who she is and where she has come from. How do you think this will affect her life from now on? What do the final lines of the book suggest she might be thinking?
- Do you think this is a fairytale ending? Make a list of reasons why it is, and why it isn't, and compare your list with someone else's.

7. Key curriculum links

Learning Area, English Year 8–10 Based on Version 9.0 of The Australian Curriculum

www.v9.australiancurriculum.edu.au

Language

Understanding how meaning can be created through the use of literary devices such as simile, metaphor, allusion, evocative vocabulary and metaphor.

Examine and analyse text structures and language features, discussing their purpose and effectiveness in achieving their purpose/s.

Understanding punctuation conventions, and analysing how authors experiment with vocabulary and punctuation to add detail, meaning and emotion.

Literature

Share opinions about literature (language features, literary techniques, text structure and style), create personal responses to literature, interact with responses shared by peers, and analyse others' interpretations of literature.

Examine literary voice, and create literature with its own sustained voice.

Literacy

Interact with others to discuss and present an opinion on the use of structure and language features in texts, and explain their purpose and effect.

Understand how spelling is used in texts for different effects, including characterisation, representing accents, and communicating distinctive speech patterns.

8. Further reading

When the girl brought my bowl she was in and out through the door like she couldn't move fast enough. And when the lock clicked after her I found something she'd left. A knife. And not one for spreading butter, but a sharp one for slitting throats.

Locked in a cell by her stepmother, Snow grows small but she still grows. Even so, she's hardly a match for a world gone wild, where the sun has disappeared behind clouds for good. The night the hunter takes her into the forest with orders to cut out her heart, Snow makes him a promise she isn't sure she can keep. And then she runs.

Snow's life is no fairytale. As she grows up her path will take her into the mountains, over misty passes, desolate gorges and alpine rivers, as well as to the city, where she will make her case for the return of what is hers.

And her childish promise will not be forgotten.

A dark and lyrical *Snow White* retelling set in a post-climate-change world, *Snow* is a fairytale of the future.

