

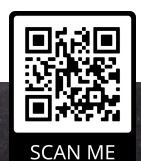


Discussion Questions and Activity Sheets

For Key Stage 2

Themes: Creative Writing | English | Art

[Purchase Whispering Hollow](#)



SCAN ME

CHARACTER STUDY PIPPA NEWTON

WHISPERING HOLLOW

While reading *Whispering Hollow* by Rachel Burge, gather information about the main character, Pippa. You should add to each category as the story develops and you learn more about her.



What do you know about Pippa?

What is Pippa's personality?
How does this develop throughout the story?

What challenges does Pippa face, and how does she deal with them?

What is Pippa's relationship like with Jed?
How does it develop throughout the story?



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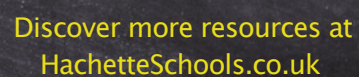
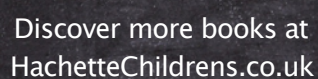


WHISPERING
Hollow

A vertical illustration of a garden path. At the top, there are red mushrooms with white stems and green leaves. A small red spider is on a green vine. Below the spider, there are blue bell-shaped flowers. Further down, there are more red mushrooms. At the bottom, there is a QR code and a small illustration of a person's head and shoulders.

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. On the left side, there are two small decorative illustrations: a red flower with green leaves near the top and a blue butterfly near the bottom. The rest of the page is empty, providing space for writing or drawing.

WHISPERING
Hollow
Lisa Thompson

[illegible]

MY SPRIGGAN

WHISPERING
HOLLOW

The spriggans are important characters in *Whispering Hollow* by Rachel Burge. Go outside and collect natural materials that you can use to create a collage of your very own spriggan. After you have created your collage, use it to inspire a character description. Think about its appearance, what it smells like, how it moves and what its personality is like.



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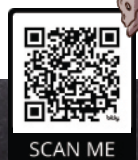
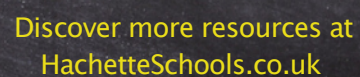
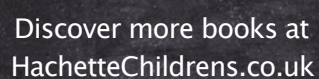


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WHISPERING
Hollow
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EXTRACT 1 TAKEN FROM CHAPTER 1

WHISPERING HOLLOW



Old Mamm Spriggan sleeps under a blanket of leaves, curled like a seed, tight as a secret. Now and then she twitches out a gnarly leg. Sometimes her long twig fingers scratch her head, dislodging a millipede burrowing in her brain. For days and nights through rain and shine she slumbers, giving herself back to the land until she's needed.

While she sleeps her mind fills with rotting things: mulch and manure, maggots and mould, putrid fluids and pungent juices reeking with the sweet-rich tang of decay. She dreams of the spinning Earth and scudding clouds, sunrise and moonbeams, cycles and seasons, longing for a time when she wasn't the last of her kind.

Best of all, is when she dreams of the girl.

She hugs herself with rough bark arms and grins when she thinks of the child's long auburn hair and eyes the colour of a mountain lake. How she'd like to

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taste those eyes. Pluck them out and roll them between her fingers, feel them slide cool and juicy down her throat.

Mamm can't remember exactly when she was last called into life, for time disintegrates quickly when you're in the ground, but she recalls that long hot summer week as if it happened only yesterday. The girl's trespass had caused her to wake in the usual way - the angry dark magic filling her with fury and summoning her to protect the glade. Her heart had beaten raw and ravenous with cruelty, yet she had only watched the child.

The girl was nothing like the others who'd been foolish enough to enter her domain. She dug her hands into the crumble-soft soil and laughed when a spider crawled up her arm. She swam the river in a thunderstorm and climbed the broken oak tree at night. She skipped through dew-wet grass and spun in circles, giddy on the magic of dawn.

Few humans were able to see Old Mamm, yet the girl had. If only the child had spoken to her that night. If only there was a way to get close to her . . .

Turning over, she wheezes a raspy chuckle then buries her face into the dirt and murmurs excitedly to the earthworms, 'Next time she'll speak to me, I'll make sure of it. Next time she'll be mine.'

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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- How do the author's descriptions of Old Mamm Spriggan help you imagine her? Which words or phrases give you a sense of what she is like?
- Do you think Mamm is a danger to the girl? Why do you think this?
- What kinds of images or feelings do you think about when Mamm's mind fills with rotting things? How does the description affect your mood or emotions?
- How does the author use nature to create images or feelings? Why is nature so important in this extract?
- What do you think will happen if Mamm and the girl meet again?



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EXTRACT 2

TAKEN FROM CHAPTER 10

WHISPERING
HOLLOW

towards the stone. Before she could wonder what it might mean, something rustled in the bushes.

Shaking her head as if rousing herself from a daydream, she checked the binoculars were still recording and lifted them to her eyes. Perhaps a fox or badger was about to enter the clearing? She fiddled with the dial and the grainy black-and-white image came into focus.

Pippa turned cold. There was something crouched at the edge of the glade, but it wasn't an animal. The creature had the skinny white limbs of a child, but something about its proportions made her shudder. They were . . . wrong somehow. It came to the height of her knee, yet it looked like a grown person. The thing turned its head and through a lank curtain of hair she caught a glimpse of a feral face and a flash of sharp teeth. Scrawny arms, as pale as bone, ended in black-clawed fingers. Within its grasp struggled a mouse.

Pippa swallowed, her mouth suddenly dry. She lowered the binoculars with shaking hands then blinked. There was nothing there. When she looked through them again the creature reappeared. It resembled an old man, but it had long whiskers, hairy pointed ears and eyes on either side of its head, like a rabbit. Pressing the zoom button, she watched as it

opened its mouth to reveal a row of needle-sharp teeth. It snapped the rodent's neck and greedily gulped at the air, seeming to drink something she couldn't see. When it was done, it wiped its lips with the back of its hand and threw the limp-bodied mouse into the grass.

Pippa's breath came hard and fast. She wanted to run, but some strange fascination kept her rooted to the spot. What was that thing? And why was she only able to see it through the binoculars? She stumbled back, her mind reeling.

Snap.

She'd stepped on a twig.

The creature swivelled its head towards her, its eyes glowing white in the darkness. A pair of huge leathery wings unfurled from its back and furiously beat the air. It shrieked, its face twisted with hatred, and she knew then that it meant to hurt her.

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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What do you think the creature Pippa sees through the binoculars might be? Why do you think it only appears when she looks through the binoculars?
- How does Pippa feel when she sees the creature? What would you do if you were in her place?
- What images come to your mind when you read about the creature's "needle-sharp teeth" and "black-clawed fingers"? What do you think about the way the author describes it?
- Why do you think Pippa is both scared and fascinated by the creature? Can you think of other situations where you might feel this way?
- What affect does the sound of the twig snapping have on the scene? How does it make you feel as a reader?
- How did Pippa know that the creature 'meant to hurt her'?



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EXTRACT 3

TAKEN FROM CHAPTER 25

WHISPERING HOLLOW



Pippa pulled his arm and helped him to sit up. He glanced around as if he didn't know where he was, and then a look of alarm flashed into his eyes. 'Pippa! Are you OK? Are you hurt?' She shook her head and his face filled with relief. He tried to move and clutched his leg. 'My knee,' he said with a grimace.

'Just stay still,' pleaded Pippa. 'Don't move.'

BANG.

The back door flew open, letting in a blast of icy air. Pippa feared the hidden folk had broken it down, but it wasn't them she saw.

It was the strange tree woman she'd seen that night. Her limbs were made from branches and covered with lichen, vines twisting along her shoulders and neck. She had a dirty hessian sack for a head, with two holes cut out for eyes; attached to it were long knotty ropes that hung about her face like hair.

'What is it? What's there?' cried Taylor.

'A spriggan,' she whispered.

'Like in the book?' asked Ollie.

Pippa nodded. Only she didn't resemble the elegant tree figure in the drawing. She wasn't much taller than Pippa and looked like she'd crawled out from the earth. Thick warts covered her elbows and knees, the cankers clustered like angry dark blooms, and between her knuckles and toes sprouted tiny grey

mushrooms. Her mouth was a split plum, ruby-red juices crusting at the corners of her lips. Worst of all were her eyes. A single acorn dangled in each of her empty eye sockets, swaying like a miniature bell.

'Can you see her?' asked Pippa.

'No,' said Ollie and Taylor at the same time.

Pippa pointed at the doorway and looked at Grandpa, but he shook his head. He couldn't see her either. She realised then that the hidden folk had stopped attacking and wondered if the spriggan had scared them away.

The spriggan walked forwards and a pungent stench rolled across the room, making the air taste green and wild. She smelled of the soil after it's been raining, and of rust; the sucked-penny tang of blood mixed with something bitter, herbs or the sticky sap of pine needles. Beneath it was a different smell: the sweet stink of fermenting fruit and musty decay. Although she didn't have real eyes, Pippa knew she could see her.

The spriggan beckoned to her and Pippa whispered, 'She wants me to go with her.'

'You can't!' said Taylor, grabbing her arm.

Not Jed called from the pantry. 'It's a trap, Pippa! Stay away from her! I know I'm not the same, but I still care about you. I don't want you to get hurt!'

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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- The back door slams open with a bang. How would you feel if you were in Pippa's situation at that moment?
- What are your first impressions of the spriggan based on her description? How does the author make her seem both magical and frightening?
- Pippa describes the smell of the spriggan with vivid detail. How do powerful descriptions of smells and sights add to the atmosphere of the scene?
- Why do you think Taylor grabs Pippa's arm and warns her against going with the spriggan? What does this show about Taylor's character?
- Not Jed warns Pippa against following the spriggan. How would his words influence her decision?



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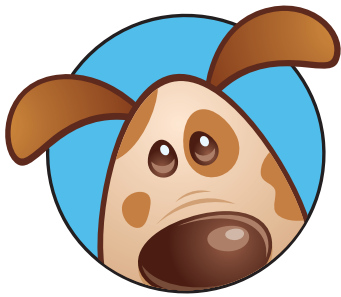


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