



# THE APPRENTICES

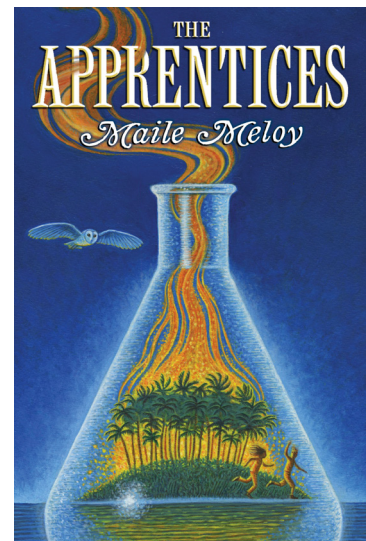
## MAILE MELOY

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Fiction, B paperback

**RECOMMENDED AGE:**  
YEARS 7–9



### Text's Teaching Notes for the Australian Curriculum

- ▶ Text's teaching notes are designed for teachers to explore the novel in line with the *Australian Curriculum: English*.
- ▶ Questions are divided into stages: from pre-reading to post-reading and include suggested tasks for assessment.
- ▶ An ACARA coding system connects each task to the *Australian Curriculum: English*. It includes links to strands, modes, general capabilities and cross-curriculum priorities.
- ▶ Refer to the legend below and the accompanying [Australian Curriculum: English Scope and Sequence reference chart](#) to decipher these codes.
- ▶ Students can record their responses in writing through reading journals, online discussions or verbally in classroom discussions.

<b>Strands</b>	LA – Language LT – Literature LY – Literacy
<b>Modes</b>	W – Writing L – Listening R – Reading
<b>General capabilities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li> Literacy</li> <li> Ethical behaviour</li> <li> Intercultural understanding</li> <li> Personal and social capability</li> <li> Critical and creative thinking</li> <li> Numeracy</li> <li> Information and communication technology</li> </ul>
<b>Cross-curriculum priorities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li> Sustainability</li> <li> Asia and Australia's engagement with Asia</li> <li> Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures</li> </ul>

### SYNOPSIS

It's been two years since Janie Scott has seen Benjamin Burrows, the apothecary's son who stole her heart. The memories of using magical potions to save Benjamin's father and stop a Soviet nuclear test would seem unbelievable if it wasn't for her diaries. Janie is now sixteen and has become preoccupied with her ambitious chemistry project that could have a huge impact on the world's water supply. But an unexpected turn of events sees Janie expelled and her project disappear. She suspects the powerful Mr Magnusson of stealing it, but she is going to need help to get it back.

Unbeknown to Janie, Benjamin and the apothecary are on the other side of the world using their elixirs to heal the wounded in war-torn Vietnam. But Benjamin has created a formula that allows him to see into Janie's world. Will Janie find a way to get a message to Benjamin? And will her friends find each other in time to reveal the true threat of their danger?

*The Apprentices* is the delightful sequel to the much-loved *The Apothecary*. The great combination of fantasy and adventure will engage young readers as the characters chase each other across the Pacific Ocean on their quest to solve the mystery.

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Maile Meloy is the award-winning author of the short story collections *Both Ways Is the Only Way I Want It* and *Half in Love* and the novels *Liars and Saints* and *A Family Daughter*. *The Apprentices* is the sequel to her first novel for young readers, *The Apothecary*.



## BEFORE READING

1. How reliable are our memories? (ACELT1619)  
(ACELT1803) LT, R, W 🧑🏫

Write down one of your earliest memories in as much detail as possible. Ask someone else who was there, such as a sibling, friend or parent, to see if they have a similar recollection.

2. What can prompt our memories? (ACELT1635) LT, R, W 🧑🏫

Make a list of memory triggers (diaries, pictures, objects, smells etc.) and discuss. Research has proven a strong link between scent and memory, making smell one of the most powerful memory triggers. Write down a memory that is prompted by a smell. Compare it to your memory from the first activity. Which is more lucid?

3. What are the characteristics of a fantasy novel? (ACELT1629) LT, R, W

Ask students to make a list of common elements found in fantasy novels that they can look out for as they read *The Apprentices*: magical powers, talking animals, supernatural creatures, imaginary worlds, a villain (often only revealed at the end) and a fight between good and evil etc. Based on other stories and films they know, are fantasy novels always set in a mythical place? How can fantasy elements be mixed with reality?

## WHILE READING

*The Apprentices* includes many words and ideas that you may be unfamiliar with. Keep a note of any challenging terms and find a definition for them for example:

apothecary, Pharmacopeia, desalination, trigonometry, exile, Epsom salts, magnesia, glassine, mortar and pestle, Quintessence, Communists, Soviet spy, Vietminh. (ACELY1722) LA, LT, R, W

1. Keep a reading journal and make note of any details, clues or suspects that may help you solve the mysteries in the novel. As you read, pause and discuss your findings and suspicions with the class. (ACEL1771) LT, R, W
2. 'Using the Pharmacopoeia, Janie and Benjamin and their friend Pip had become invisible—actually invisible—as they tried to rescue the apothecary from his enemies.' P.3 What would be the advantages and disadvantages of being invisible? Identify places in the novel where it would be convenient for Janie to still have access to the invisibility potion. (ACELT1803) LT, R, W
3. Before Benjamin's code is revealed on page 63, ask the students to try and crack the code in Benjamin's three letters. Get students to create their own coded message using the same code in the novel or by creating a new code, such as assigning numbers

or symbols to letters of the alphabet. (ACELT1632) (ACELT1620) LT, LA, R, W

## AFTER READING

### Character

1. Which characters are the apprentices? Support your response with examples from the novel. (ACELT1619)

(ACELT1627) LT, R, W ⚙️

2. 'Had she become so single-minded that her point of vulnerability was a bunch of glassware and a titrating apparatus, and not the people she loved?' P.265

a) Sylvia tells Janie that Magnusson had used Janie's experiment to set his plan in motion and to ultimately get to her friends. Using evidence from the text, justify whether Janie cares more about people or her experiment. (ACELT1620) LT, R, W ⚙️ ⚖️

b) Janie's ambition makes her vulnerable, making it both her strength and weakness. What are the strengths and weaknesses of Magnusson, Sylvia, Benjamin, Mr Burrows and Jin Lo? (ACELT1744) LT, LY, R, W ⚖️ 🧑🏫

3. 'If you take a message back, there's an autographed picture for your sister in it.' P.135. How does Pip use his celebrity status to his advantage throughout the novel? (ACELT1620) LT, R,

4. "'I asked once if you were a Daisy Miller of an Isabel Archer, as an American girl abroad,'" he said.' P.360 These women are characters from Henry James's novels. Research these characters and identify any similarities to Janie. (ACELT1629) LT, R, W 📖 ⚙️

5. 'She wanted to crumple right there on the steps. But she had to move forward.' P. 58. Janie is faced with many dilemmas during the novel, but she doesn't give in. What motivates Janie to stay strong? (ACELT1635) LT, R

6. 'And Jin Lo, born in the year of the Snake, had become silent and dangerous, quick and cold-blooded.' P.117. Find examples of Jin Lo's behaviour to back up or challenge this description. Research the Chinese Zodiac and find out which animal is associated with your birth year. Identify any similarities to your own personality as described by this Chinese horoscope. (ACELY1774) (ACELT1635) LT, W 🧑🏫

### Style and Structure

1. Examine the third-person omniscient narrator. How would the story be changed if we read the story only through Janie's world? (ACELA1553) LT, R, W 📖 ⚙️
2. Which characters' viewpoints are not explored by the narrator? (Mr Burrows, Opal, Rafaello, Sylvia) Why? (ACELA1553) (ACELTT1627) LT, R
3. What strategies does the author use to explain the backstory of the first novel? Scan the text and



highlight any passages of exposition. (ACELY1773) LT, LA, R

- Raffaello gets a part in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Consider any parallels between Shakespeare's play and *The Apprentices*—love triangle, magic, dreams. (ACELT1629) LT, R
- Can you identify any loose ends to the plot that could be followed up in a sequel? (ACELY1773) (ACELY1627) LT, R

## Themes

### Friendship

- Now her friends needed her help. It seemed very simple.' P.211 Both Jin Lo and Pip travel across the world on the basis of a message delivered in a telegram. What does this tell you about their friendship with Janie, Benjamin and Mr Burrows? (ACELT1635) LT, R
- 'He was her only friend in a place where people were against her.' P.136 Raffaello does not play a part in the main adventure storyline. How important is Raffaello to the plot? What role does his friendship play in Janie's story? (ACELT1771) LT, R
- What is the overall message of friendship that is presented in the novel? (ACELT1626) LT, R

### Family

- "Such a sensible girl. So different from Opal. You're the daughter I should have had." P.192 What affect does Mr Magnusson's poor view of his daughter have on Opal's self-esteem? How is this visible? (ACELT1807) LT, R
- 'You always say we must do what we can to right wrongs.' P.197 Explain the lessons that Benjamin and Janie have learnt from their parents and how they demonstrate this in their behaviour during the novel. (ACELT1626) LT, R

### Roles of Women

- '...and the school prided itself on its progressive attitude toward women. It admitted a few girls every year, at a time when most girls' boarding schools were training young ladies to become suitable wives.' P.5 What were the common attitudes about women in the 1950s? Compare Magnusson's view of Janie to his view of his daughter Opal. (ACELT1633) LT, R
- 'It's hard for women to make a mark. You have to be determined.' P.265 During the 1950s, what were the options for women? Find examples in the text of the limited roles of women. How would Janie be able to make her mark during this period?(ACELT1633) LT, R
- In what ways is Jin Lo a role model to Janie? (ACELT1635) LT, R

### Sustainability

- "I'm trying to find an efficient way to desalinate large amounts of seawater. To take the salt out and make it drinkable, without using a generator, so that the ocean could be a water source more easily."

P. 8 Explain the impact that Janie's experiment would have on creating a more sustainable future. What other issues require sustainability? How else can we preserve or restore the environment? (ACELT1626) L, R, W

- "We don't originate it. The work is being done by the universe. We are the instrument, the vessel through which it flows. You understand?" P. 389 What message is the author giving about the roles and responsibilities of humans on the earth? (ACELY1734) LT, LA, R

### Power

- A thought occurred to her. "How much money has Mr. Magnusson given to Grayson Academy?" she asked.' P.25 Money equals power in *The Apprentices*. Find examples from the novel to prove this statement. (ACELT1621) LT, LA, R
- Magnusson believes that water will be a great commodity in the future. What does it reveal about his intentions that he wishes to buy Janie's experiment when it's finished? (ACELT1620) (ACELT1627) LT, R
- Janie may not be able to control the headmaster or Mr Magnusson, but she does have persuasive techniques. How does Janie manipulate others, such as Giovanna and Sylvia, to get what she wants? (ACELT1627) LT, LA, R

## RESPONDING

- The characters in the novel rely on communication through letters and telegrams. How different would the story be if it was set today? (ACELY1734) LT, LA
- 'Danby laughed. "What a ridiculous question, Miss Scott. That's the whole point of an atomic bomb. If people aren't frightened of them, we can't have any peace.'" P.361 Respond to this statement by arguing your position on the use of atomic weapons. R, W
- 'You're sixteen now. Eighteen will come before you know it, and you'll be eligible for the draft.' P.21 Research conscription. Create a debate or essay that shows your opinion on compulsory military service. R, W, L
- 'Was it possible to lose hold of your own world by spending too much time looking at other people's?' P. 124. How has the use of social media—Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, blogs etc.—changed the way we live our lives? Do we spend too much time documenting our lives and reading about and viewing other people's lives than living our lives? Share your responses with the class. LT, W, S
- 'Jin Lo had always wanted to be able to swim beneath the waves, like a fish.' P.254 What animal would you like the power to transform into and why? LT, R, W