



EDUCATOR GUIDE

OUR DIVINE MISCHIEF

BY HANNA C HOWARD



Educator's Guide for young adults, ages 13 and up
created by Jennifer Guyor Jowett

"The gods don't always do what we expect. But I believe they have good reasons for it. Sometimes, we just have to wait a bit to find out what they are" (51).



ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Hanna C. Howard started writing books in the fourth grade—and they were always about dogs. Her tastes have expanded since then, but her favorite stories still tend to have a dog in them somewhere. When she isn't writing or reading with a pot of tea nearby, she prefers to be in her rambling cottage garden, conjuring beauty and nurturing compost. She lives in Tulsa, Oklahoma with her husband, three young hobbit children, and their athletic rescue mutt.

PRE-READING ACTIVITIES

These pre-reading activities allow students to draw from pre-existing knowledge so that they are better able to make connections within the novel.

1. Have students consider the title *Our Divine Mischief* and make predictions about the book. They may share their answers with partners and within the whole group. Consider asking students to look for connections within their responses (what similarities do you notice in classmates' answers?).
2. Songs have an incredible power to move people to act, to inspire, to create. What song does this for you? In what ways does it move you?
3. Take a temperature gauge by having students stand on a line that marks their agreement/disagreement with one or both of these quotes: "Would you have me stop or fix every bad choice a person makes?" (356); "Do the gods ever give us just blessings? Or do they always come with curses as well?" (174). Discuss their reasoning. Ask students to place themselves on the line again after discussing (and again after reading), noting changes.

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PRE-READING QUESTIONS

1. Have you ever really wanted to do something and were told you could not? Describe what this felt like.
2. One of the main characters in *Our Divine Mischief* states, “I feel as if I am made of sea spray—light, leaping, free” (16). If you could choose an object to be made of, what would it be? What characteristics does this object represent to you?
3. How difficult do you think it would be to leave everyone and everything you’ve ever known? Why do you feel this way? (21)
4. Describe a time when you have come into doubt about something you strongly believed in.
5. To what lengths would you go to save something or someone you loved?

DURING READING

Comparison

The characters of Áila and Hew are introduced in the first two chapters. Compare their introduction. What details do we learn about them? How does the author color your perception of them? Do they have any similarities? Differences? What else do you notice?

Áila	Hew

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Verse

The character Orail is introduced through verse. Why do you think the author chose this format? What do you understand about the character through the poem (22–23)?

Symbolism

The sudden appearance of the two wolves in chapter 41 could suggest that they are symbolic or that they are a foreshadowing of something to come. What ideas do you have?

[CCSS.ELA-RL.7.1, 8.1; 9-10.1, 11-12.1; CCSS.ELA-RI.7.3, 9-10.3, 11-12.3; CCSS.ELA-W.7.1.A, 8.1.A, 9-10.1.A, 11-12.1.A; CCSS.ELA-W.7.10, 8.10, 9-10.10, 11-12.10; CCSS.ELA-SL.7.1.A, 8.1.A, 9-10.1, 11-12.1]

POST-READING QUESTIONS, PART ONE: SEA

1. When Áila heard the LaKinley suggest her family leave the village, she says she wanted to run out of their house—“to run and run and run, until I couldn’t run anymore. I wanted to run right out of my skin” (14). What does her reaction tell you about her as a character?
2. Áila says, “When we had to leave Learchlas and come here ... The way everyone looked at us. I never want to feel that way again” (15). Why do you feel this move was so difficult for her?
3. What is your reaction to the people of Carrighlas who change their treatment of Áila’s family once her da is fit enough to work (15)? Why is or isn’t this fair?
4. Why do you think Hew finds the gods to be loving and gentle despite having received a blank medallion (24)?
5. Do you agree with Hew’s auntie Denna that hardships build character (42)? Explain your reasoning.

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6. Hew believes that the gods don't see him as Unblessed. That they don't reject any of the people they've made (43). Why do you think he believes this? Why do you think the people of Carrighlas believe the opposite?
 7. "Tell us who you are" is the common refrain when someone returns from the Trial (44). Do you agree with Hew that the gods should not determine what someone becomes?
 8. Hew believes that Fáthair Firnan sees him as a tool "to be used for whatever needs he might have" (62). In what ways does Hew prove this not to be true?
 9. What is your reaction to Fáthair Firnan's description of Hew, that he is someone who could neither help nor distract Áila from her tests, someone who is unimportant and uneducated (63)? Is this how you have viewed Hew since his introduction into the novel?
 10. Hew wonders how he can possibly leave if "there is even one person here who truly needs my help" (64). What does this say about his character?
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POST-READING QUESTIONS, PART TWO: STONE

1. Áila states, "I chose this, Da. I have to find my place. That's not something you can protect me from" in response to her da's worry about not protecting her enough (66). To what extent do you agree or disagree with her statement?
2. Áila tells Hew, "I don't think you're unimportant" (73). Consider the weight of these words. How does this impact him? Why do you think she says this?
3. There is a noticeable difference in the verse found in chapter 18 compared with her previous chapters. How does Orail's voice change throughout the story?
4. How does Orail's description of the LaCrees match what you know of them already (100)? In what way did you believe the dog would see them?
5. Why does Áila believe "[her] will must be harder than steel" (103) if she is to pass the first Ordeal?
6. Why do you think Bráithair Gibrat treats Hew the way he does? (128)

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7. The author describes the god Lir's grief as waves crashing against cliffs, forever beating out the grief of the loss of his daughter (131). What other natural elements might be used to suggest grief? Explain.
8. How does the relationship between Hew and Áila change once Hew and Orail begin to communicate (144)?
9. Áila's family is present at the first trial but are not mentioned at the second (155). Why do you think this is? Use evidence to support your answer.
10. Áila asks Hew if his Unblessing is not a curse but a blessing he hasn't yet understood (174). How could this be true? What do you believe about his Unblessing?
11. If a spoken wish is binding, how might this present problems for Áila (181)?
12. Hew recognizes the significance of the Púcca in chapter 42 while reading to Gemma. What do you make of this? What of the other two stories? How might they hint at events to come?
13. Throughout the story, Hew demonstrates just how deep his faith is while Áila's doubts in the gods seem to deepen. Find evidence that proves these statements. Or make an alternative statement of your own and provide evidence.
14. A plot point is a moment in the story that impacts your character or the direction of the story. What plot point was the most impactful in part two? Support your answer with evidence from the text.

POST-READING QUESTIONS, PART THREE: SONG

1. The opening chapters of parts one and two both begin with Áila as the narrator. But Orail's chapter leads part three. What does this suggest? Use evidence to support your answer.
2. Hew and Áila adopt the guises of Hamish and Anna LacTalish in order to gain information. Who is more at risk in these pretend roles? Why do you think this?
3. Hew is desperate to have a plan when they attend the banquet (chapter 52). What suggestions would you give him as he prepares?

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4. Hew states that “it must be the clothes” (255) when he glances at the mirror and notices the change in himself. Do you agree with his assessment? Why or why not?
5. Compare Orail’s words in chapter 56 to those of chapter 5. What similarities exist? How has her voice grown and changed?
6. Why does it take the loss of Orail to cause Hew to question the gods (274)?
7. Do you agree with this statement: “You’ll never fix the world by trying to control everything in it” (277)? Explain your answer.
8. What causes Áila to trust Flora after she has experienced betrayal from Morgen (299)?
9. Chapter 67 begins with Hew negotiating with a guard. How effective is this? Do you believe this is a viable option for getting past the guard? Explain your answer.
10. Explore the symbolism in the two carriages that separate Hew and Áila (338). Make comparisons to how their lives have connected and separated throughout the novel.
11. Ona makes a sacrifice when she resumes living in Orail’s body. How big of a sacrifice is this? Explain your thinking.

[CCSS.ELA-RL.7.1,8.1, 9-10.1, 11-12.1; CCSS.ELA-RL.7.6, 8.6, 9-10.6; CCSS.ELA-RI.7.1, 8.1, 9-10.1, 11-12.1; CCSS.ELA-W.7.1.A, 8.1.A, 9-10.1.A, 11-12.1.A; CCSS.ELA-W.7.1.B, 8.1.B; CCSS.ELA-W.7.7, 8.7, 9-10.7, 11-12.7; CCSS.ELA-SL.7.1.A, 8.1.A, 9-10.1, 11-12.1]

POST-READING ACTIVITIES

Compare/Contrast

Which of the Ordeals Áila must attempt would be the most difficult for you? The easiest? Compare and contrast various aspects of them while conveying your answer.

Myths/Origin Stories

The story of Ona is an important one to the people of Carrighlas and leads to Fuiscea’s creation (4–5, 157). Write your own myth explaining how something came to

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be. Research elements of myths and include those within your story.

Poetic Forms

Orail's voice in chapter 35 shifts remarkably, changing and referencing various poetic forms and poets, beginning with haiku and ending with Shakespeare's iambic pentameter verse within the verse form Howard uses for Orail. Write your own poem explaining who you are while using a variety of poetic forms to do so.

Poetic Forms Research

Do some research on the Bard's verse (iambic pentameter), Burns's verse, limericks, and haikus. Write an argument stating how Howard's choice of Bard's verse for Orail works so well.

Essay

To what extent do you agree with the following quotes: "To love is to lose, and to win is also to lose" (340). "We can't change what was. We can both change what is" (341). Choose one and write an essay arguing your answer.

Anagrams

Áila's reflects, "I sit down on the edge of my cold bed and pull the blanket up around my shoulders, thinking of gods and dogs" (344). How much consideration do you think the author gave to the play on the letters for the words gods and dogs? What connections can be made between these words and Ona and Orail? Create a short story or poem (or any writing form of your choosing) that plays around with words that are anagrams of each other.

[CCSS.ELA-RL.7.1, 8.1, 9-10.1, 11-12.1; CCSS.ELA-W.7.1.A, 8.1.A, 9-10.1.A, 11-12.1.A; CCSS.ELA-W.7.1.E, 8.1.E; CCSS.ELA-W.7.7, 8.7, 9-10.7, 11-12.7; CCSS.ELA-SL.7.1.A, 8.1.A, 9-10.1, 11-12.1]

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