



The Worlds We Leave Behind

A.F. Harrold • Illustrated by Levi Pinfold

READING GROUP QUESTIONS AND NOTES FOR KS3 TEACHERS

INTRODUCTION

Suitable for: Ages 11+

Explore themes of: • Friendship • Responsibility • Loneliness • Ways of Thinking • Imagination • Storytelling
• Illustration

CONTENTS

- **READING GROUP QUESTIONS** *Page 3*
Objectives: To show understanding of the text and express own opinions of the ideas, characters and themes.
- **DISCUSSING KEY THEMES OF THE BOOK** *Pages 4–9*
Objectives: To be able to identify examples of actions and interactions from the book that demonstrate its themes; to further explore themes of the book through art, poetry, stories and group discussion.
- **ILLUSTRATION CHALLENGE** *Page 11*
Objectives: To explore the illustrative style of Levi Pinfold and create drawings in a similar way.



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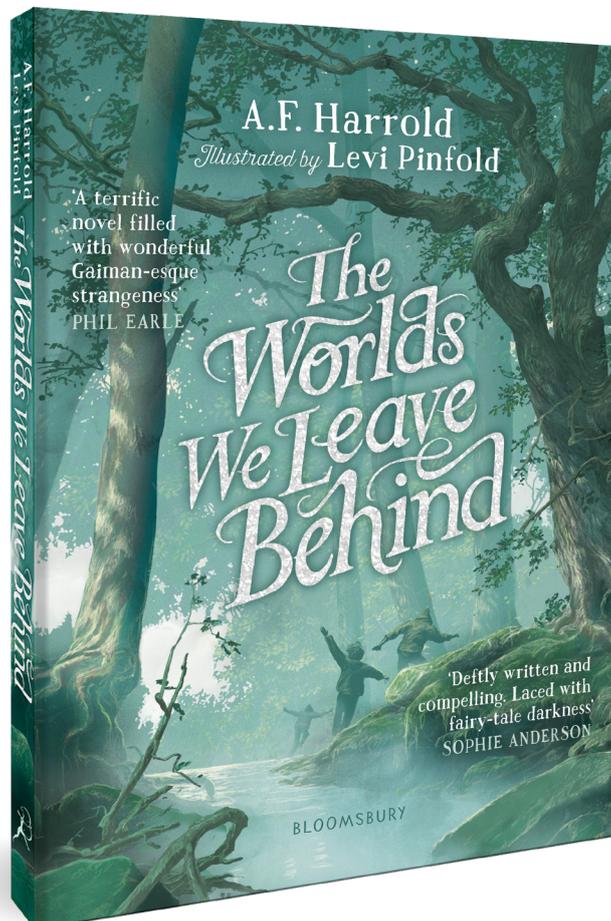
ABOUT THE BOOK

An extraordinary story about friendship and betrayal. Of revenge and retribution but also redemption. Perfect for 11+ readers who enjoy Stranger Things.

Hex never meant for the girl to follow him and his friend Tommo into the woods. He never meant for her to fall off the rope swing and break her arm. When the finger of blame is pointed at him, Hex runs deep into the woods and his fierce sense of injustice leads him to a strange clearing in the woods – a clearing that has never been there before – where an old lady in a cottage offers him a deal. She'll rid the world of those who wronged him and Hex can carry on his life with them all forgotten and as if nothing ever happened. But what Hex doesn't know is someone else has been offered the same deal.

When Hex's best friend Tommo wakes up the next day, he is in a completely different world but he only has murmurs of memories of the world before. Moments of *deja vu* that feel like Tommo's lived this day before.

Can Tommo put the world right again? Back to how it was? Or can he find a way to make a new world that could be better for them all?





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READING GROUP QUESTIONS

p6 - Why do you think Sascha wanted to follow Tommo and Hex?

p25 - Hex worries that he has '...burnt a bridge too far' with Tommo. What does he mean? Do you think he's right?

p38 - Were Sascha's brother and sister right to confront Hex about Sascha's accident? Explain your ideas.

p60 - Why does Hex think that the world is laughing?

p94 - Why does Tommo think Hex's dad is 'about as far away from Tommo's dad as you could get'?

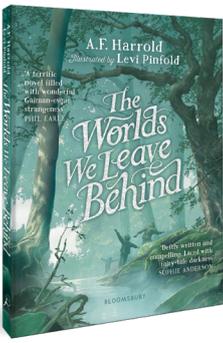
p109 - 'Maria came at them like a meteor. There was thunder in her eyes...' The author has used a metaphor and a simile here. Can you work out which is which? What effect do these writing tools have?

p124 - The author has created a new word 'mirroriness'. What do you think it means?

p171 - Agent Mimi Jofofski talks about déjà vu. Can you find out what this means? Have you ever experienced this feeling?

p193-196 - Why do you think the written story stops for a few pages and the illustrations take over?

P204 - Is Tommo right to try and make a deal with Missus to save Hex?



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DISCUSSING KEY THEMES

The Worlds We Leave Behind explores several different themes:

Friendship

Revenge

Responsibility

Loneliness

Ways of Thinking

Storytelling

Imagination

Take a look at the following extracts from *The Worlds We Leave Behind* and discuss in small groups how they are linked to the themes of the book.

Are any of them linked to more than one theme?

It was Tommo and a grown-up man and a teenager, and there was a buzz about them. Worry. Static in the air.

He dived into a patch of ferns and scabbled behind a tree, hoping they'd not seen him.

He knew, in his stomach, who they were.

It was Sascha's dad and her older sister, led by Tommo.

Tommo had *gone for help*.

He was a *hero* and Hex was in *hiding*.

But Tommo said he couldn't come out. Had to help his dad with something or other.

He sort of looked over Hex's shoulder as he said it.

Hex let out a dwindling, stuttering laugh and followed up with a string of loud armpit farts, but even that didn't make Tommo look at him properly. That'd always made him fall about before. It was guaranteed gold.

Tommo shook his head vaguely and said, 'Hex,' in an almost-sad sigh.



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'Don't you wish you could do something?'

He said nothing.

'Get your own back, I mean,' she said. 'Hector? The unfairness of it, the injustice, bubbles out of you.'

Hex said nothing.

'I can help,' she said.

'I can even the score,' she said.

'I can make it so they never hurt you again,' she said.

And as she spoke she leant forward and smiled, firelight flickering across her cheeks, stars in the depths of her dark eyes.

Hex's eyes flickered helplessly towards the sister, and the mother turned.

'Maria,' she snapped. 'What did you do?'

She straightened up.

The sister's cheeks flushed and she muttered something like, 'He got what was coming to him.'

But her mother clearly didn't think much of the words and, leaning straight over Sascha's head, she swung her arm out and slapped the older girl across the cheek.

'No fighting,' she said, pointing her finger like a wand. 'You've been warned before. You don't flipping well hit stupid little kids. First you lose Sascha, then you pick a fight. No! It's not on!'

He'd been wrong to snub Hex the day before, but he'd felt awful about Sascha's broken arm. Hex *had* been an idiot, chucking those stones around. Tommo shouldn't have joined in, but what was done was done, and now they were off to the seaside.

Sure, he could reach down inside himself and find, say, an answer that went, 'Because I thought it might make people laugh.' And that might be true, but it was only ever an answer to the question he found *after* the event. He hadn't sat there, bored with his book, thinking, 'I know what I'll do, I'll flick this rubber on this ruler and try to get it into Emma P's pencil case.' He'd just done it.

'I was sent with this,' he said, holding Agent Jofolofski's device up. 'Let me take Hector back and I won't set this off.'



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A CLOSER LOOK AT FRIENDSHIP

Friendships can change and shift over time as Hex found out when Tommo started to behave differently towards him.

- In this story Hex thinks he has ruined his friendship with Tommo. Is this really the case? Explain your thinking.
- What does the fact that Tommo has memories about Hex when nobody else does say about their friendship?

ACTIVITY: Create a forest full of friendship trees.

- Draw a cluster of trees with good solid trunks to create a forest.
- On each trunk write a word or phrase to describe a quality that you think makes a good friend.

Design, if possible, use Levi Pinfold's tree illustrations from the book to create a forest border on an A4 sheet for this activity (perhaps those on pages 232-233).

- Friendships are never perfect. Draw two or three rope swings in your trees. On each one, write something that you see as a challenge to a friendship.

TIP: By being aware of the challenges our friendships face, perhaps we can make sure that our rope swings are strong enough to deal with them.



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A CLOSER LOOK AT REVENGE

Revenge means getting someone back for something they've done. There are a lot of examples of revenge in this story:

- First Hex throws a stone at Sascha to pay her back for following them into the wood and spoiling his time with Tommo. (p16)
- Then Sascha's brother and sister want to get back at Hex for hurting Sascha. (p39)
- Missus offers Hex a way of getting revenge on Maria. (p54)
- She also offers Maria a way of getting revenge on Hex. (p78)

Q. How easily can revenge spiral out of control?

ACTIVITY: Write an acrostic poem to show how destructive revenge can be.

- An acrostic poem means that the first letter of each line spells out a word. In this case REVENGE
- You can use the book as an example or come up with your own ideas to help you.



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A CLOSER LOOK AT WAYS OF THINKING & STORYTELLING

Hex knows that he sometimes doesn't think before he does things. He always feels bad about these things afterwards. Look at this passage from page 35 as an example.

There was that time he didn't think, just before half-term, when Alfie Eaves had wet himself in class. The smell caught everyone's attention.

Miss Short had found him some fresh trousers from the lost property box, but Hex had got hold of the wet ones at break and had danced with them across the playground, holding them between his fingertips, and singing a song he'd just made up.

Everyone had laughed and laughed (wet themselves laughing, you might've said), all except Alfie, and Miss Short, when she saw.

- Have you ever done something without thinking it through properly? How did it impact on other people?
- This happens to all of us. What can we do to put things right in these situations?
- How can we try to avoid things like this happening?

ACTIVITY: Create a Story Jigsaw.

When Sascha makes up her stories, it is almost all down to her sub-conscience piecing together seemingly random thoughts.

Have a go at making up a story like Sascha's.

- With a partner, cut out the squares in the grid below to make a set of cards.
- Lay them face down between you and take it in turns to pick cards until you have eight each.
- One person can now turn all eight of their cards over. They have two minutes to create a story that contains all eight things on their cards.
- When they have finished, it is the other person's turn.



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ILLUSTRATION CHALLENGE!

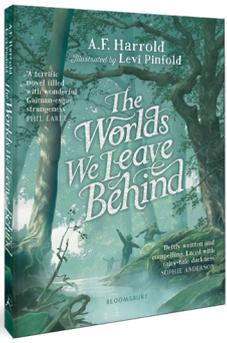
Levi Pinfold's illustrations are all tonal pencil drawings. What do you think these illustrations bring to the book?

Choose from one of the following scenes and have a go at drawing it in a similar way using pencils and rubbers.

- p8-9 Tommo and Hex go to the brook in the woods with Sascha following them.
- p42-43 Hex finds himself in the clearing with the cottage.
- P83 Hex wakes up in the middle of the night.
- P107 Tommo is flying high on the rope swing.
- P117-118 Tommo is inside the strange cottage with Missus and Leafy.

Note to teacher, it would be a good idea to have a variety of B grade pencils available for the children to use.

- Begin by doing a very rough sketch with a soft pencil and very little pressure. This will help you work out where you want to place everything in your composition. (Composition is the layout and placing of a picture.)
- Next add detail to your drawing.
- Use different pencils and pressure to show areas of shade and light. Think about where the light is coming from and where it will hit. How does this help to show meaning in the scene?
- If you want to highlight patches of brightness then you can use a rubber to strip the pencil marks right back to the white of the paper.



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RUCKSACK	INSECT	APPLE	SPACESHIP
SPIDER	BEE	TEAPOT	BALL OF WOOL
CROWN	CLOWN	BEACHBALL	POTION
PLASTER	TREE	CLOCK	CAULDRON
CHEF	CHILLI	TENT	LORRY
DOOR	COAT	DOUGHNUT	NOTEBOOK
CASTLE	LIZARD	SWEET	CAMERA
ELEPHANT	GHOST	DIAMOND	DIAMOND