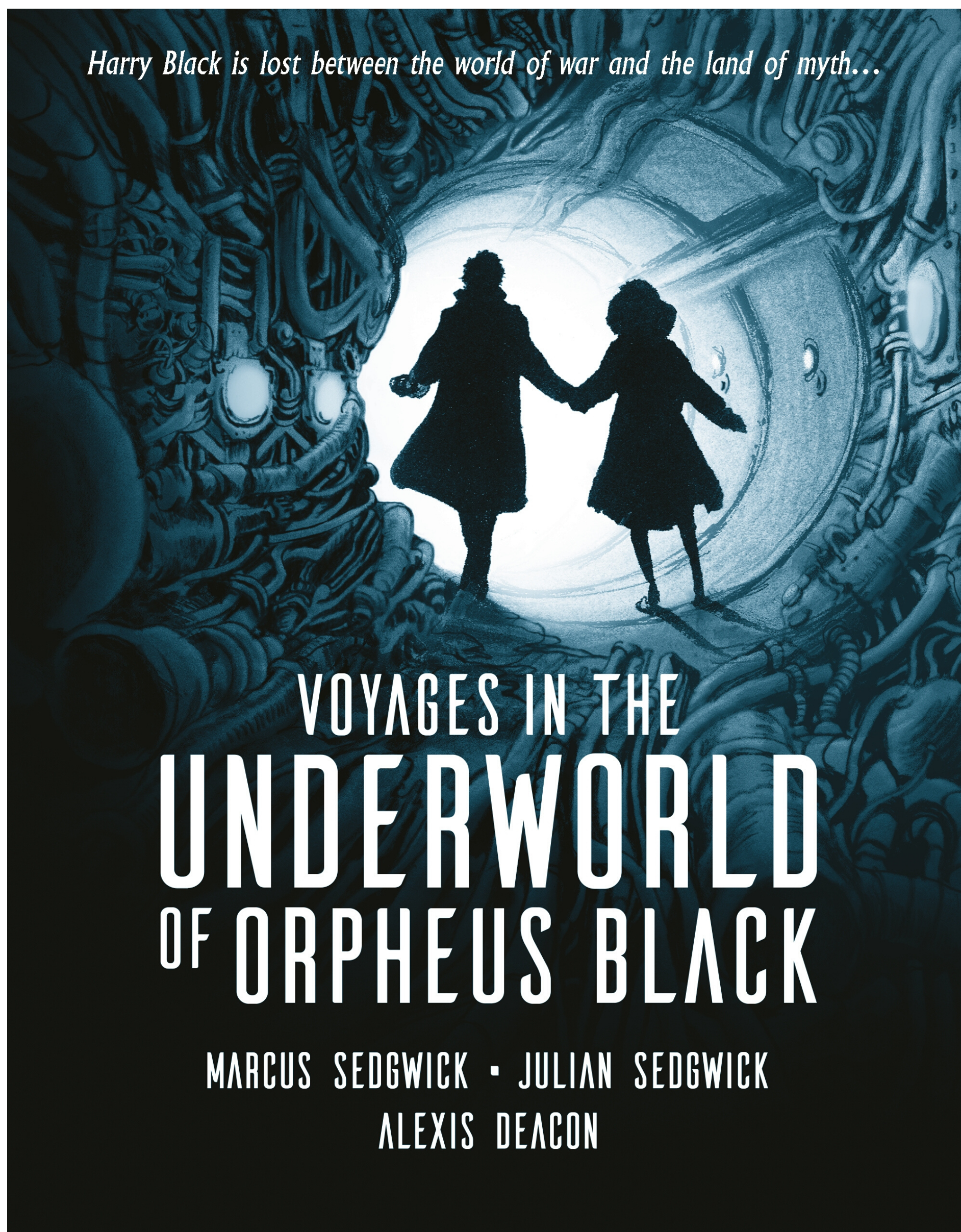


# CILIP CARNEGIE SHORTLIST 2020

## SHADOWING RESOURCES



## CILIP Carnegie Medal 2020

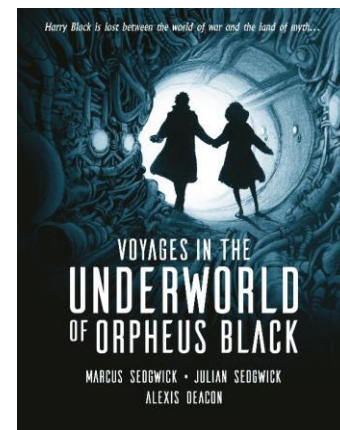
### TALKING POINTS

Title: **Voyages in the Underworld of Orpheus Black**

Author: **Marcus Sedgwick & Julian Sedgwick**

Publisher: Walker Books

Age: 12+



#### LONDON, 1944

- Does it matter whether you know much about the particular setting – the time and place – to have a better understanding of the story? Or could it be happening in any war, anywhere?
- How realistic is the book's wartime setting – is it supposed to be the real, recognisable 1944 London, or a distorted version of it? (And why?)

#### BROTHERS IN CONFLICT

- Why have Harry and Ellis fallen out? Do you feel you have to take sides, or can you see both brothers' points of view in the argument?
- What motivates each of them to meet up again at the White Horse?
- Why does Harry think the two of them would be a good match to produce a book together?
- How far is Harry prepared to go, what risks is he prepared to take, to find his brother again? How clearly is he thinking as he makes his decisions to look for him? (And what is fourteen-year-old Agatha's role in all this – at what point did you understand her role in the story?)

#### WAR

- Harry is a conscientious objector, so he doesn't go off to fight – how does he engage with the war instead? How does his art help him to understand it? (The power of art and creativity is certainly one of the themes running through this book.)
- Did the book's portrayal of mechanised warfare challenge how you thought about it, or confirm it? Has the way you think about war shifted slightly? The war in this book happened 80 years ago – what relevance does the powerful anti-war message have today?
- The writers' acknowledgments page at the back of the book reveals that their father was a Quaker, and, like Harry, a conscientious objector. Does knowing this about them change the way you think about the book they have written?

#### THE ORPHEUS MYTH

- When Orpheus first appears in the book, who did you think he was? Did his role become clearer as you read, or did he remain at least partly mysterious throughout?
- Did you know the story of Orpheus and Eurydice already? If so, which parts of that myth map onto this book? Did knowing the original Orpheus story help you to guess where the plot was going, or did the authors surprise you? If you didn't know the myth

already, were you aware there was a bit of the jigsaw missing as you tried to understand the story?

- The Orpheus character is part of a different world from the brothers' one (a kind of realistic war-torn London) – how does the blending of these worlds work?
- This is not the only book on the Carnegie Medal shortlist to rethink a classic story. What do you think is the appeal for a writer or illustrator to take an existing story as their starting-point?

### POETRY

- What effect does the poetry in the book have on your experience as a reader?
  - Does it slow your reading down or speed it up?
  - Does it pull you out of the story or suck you more deeply into it?
  - Does it increase the sense of magic or make the rest of the story seem rougher and more realistic by comparison?

### PICTURES AND WORDS

- The book is a beautiful blend of pictures and words working together. Which do you think came first, and why?
- Why are some of the illustrations in blue and white and some in black and white? How does the movement between these two strands of images this work for you?
- Do the pictures and the words create the same mood, or is there sometimes a tension between what they are doing?
- Can you describe the artist Alexis Deacon's style in this book? Have you seen the work of other illustrators that it reminds you of?

### THE NARRATIVE

- Did the story go where you expected it to, or did it sometimes surprise you?
- How much can you trust Harry's reliability as a narrator? What makes you doubt him?
- The text moves between the journal entries in prose and Orpheus in poetry, and these in turn are both woven through with the pictures. How well did the three different strands of storytelling work together to make a whole greater than the sum of its parts?
- This is not a book with simple answers, with a story that is always totally easy to follow, with everything neatly explained to the reader, where it is always clear what is real and what isn't. Instead the reading experience is often more mysterious, atmospheric and dreamlike. How did you enjoy that experience – was it a challenge, or a thrill?
- How satisfying did you find the ending? (It's a powerful way to end a story, but not a conventional one.)
- How much did the "documents" at the end of the book make you rethink what had gone before?

### AND FINALLY...

- Some books stay with you long after you've read them – they change the way you see the world. Was this one of those books, for you?
- Does it deserve to win the Carnegie Medal?

## FURTHER THINKING

CILIP works in partnership with Amnesty International and Inclusive Minds to raise awareness and understanding of the importance of human rights, inclusion and representation in children's literature. The discussion points below are intended to further stimulate reader's thinking on the themes explored in the shortlisted books.

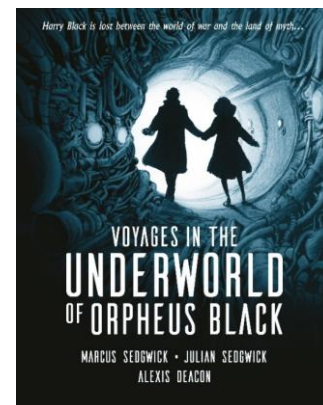
### CILIP Carnegie Medal 2020

Title: **Voyages in the Underworld of Orpheus Black**

Author: **Marcus Sedgwick & Julian Sedgwick**

Publisher: Walker Books

Age: 12+



#### Discussing human rights in this story:

Right to life and safety; right to be treated with dignity; right to asylum; freedom of thought, conscience and belief; freedom of expression; right to art and culture; right to peace and order; the Arms Trade.

- Do you agree that 'our true enemies are ourselves; our fears, our prejudices'? How can we overcome these?
- Who are the heroes of the stories that you read and watch? Are they the perpetrators or those affected by 'deeds so brutal'?
- Is it more acceptable to be a pacifist now? How do we remember those who were conscientious objectors?



#### Discussing inclusion and representation in this story:

- What does the book say about how war impacts mental health?
- Harry is judged for standing up for his beliefs, but he continues to do so anyway. Consider the importance and power of standing up for what you believe in.
- How effectively might the artwork help readers to understand or explore the story?



# ***Voyages in the Underworld of Orpheus Black*** by Marcus Sedgwick, Julian Sedgwick and Alexis Deacon

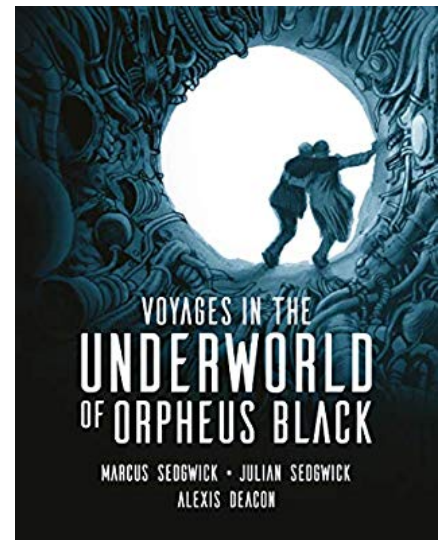
## **Before reading**

### **Making predictions**

- Complete the prediction tasks below. You can do this on your own, in a pair or as a group.
- When you have completed the tasks, pool all your ideas about the novel as a class.
- Keep a note of your ideas so that you can refer back to them as you read.

### **The front cover**

- On your own, in a pair or small group, examine the book's front cover.
- What do you think the book will be about? What type of book do you think it will be? (In other words, does it fit into a particular genre?)
- What is the likely audience for the book?
- Does it remind you of any other books? Does it make you want to pick the book up and start to read?



### **Looking inside the book**

- On your own, in a pair, or working in a small group, flick through the pages of the book.
- What strikes you as interesting about what you find? For example, what seems to be the relationship between the images and the text? Is the text always set out in the same way?
- Set yourself the challenge of finding up to 10 interesting things to say about the book before you have even read it.

**A taster**

- Read the extracts from the novel, below.
- How do they add to your ideas, questions and predictions about the novel, including what genre of story you might expect?

**1.**

I've died so many times it isn't funny anymore  
(and after the first death there is no other),  
but nevertheless,  
it must be said  
that I have learned a little more from each one.

**2.**

Death comes two ways, as I say: either with the rumble and sudden warning engine cut of the doodlebug, or silently; with the V2 you're blown to bits before you hear the roar of its engine and the sonic boom struggling to keep up. Three thousand miles an hour, Oakley said.

Three thousand bloody miles an hour.

**3.**

Would have been easier just to follow his projected plans for me. Into the family business and be part of the machinery of Black and Company, turning metal and chemicals I don't understand into intricate, perfect devices for the shortening of life. Just couldn't do it, though. I wasn't even sure why, at first, just know I couldn't sodding do it. Some other blood must run in me! So now Ellis is angry and hurt and dismissive of his little brother who wants to play with paint at a time like this.

## During reading

We recommend working through the novel without pausing too often, then doing some more substantial work afterwards..

You can use the points below to help you to keep a journal while reading. You could also use them as the starting point for discussions with other readers.

- Thoughts about the different voices in the book: Harry's journal and Orpheus's poetry.
- Thoughts about the use of images. e.g. how do they link in with or add to the story? What different types of images are there? What would the book be like without images?
- Thoughts about setting the novel in London during World War Two.
- Thoughts about the links to Greek myths - did you notice or understand any? Would a reader need an understanding of Greek myths (especially the story of Orpheus) to understand the novel?
- Thoughts about some of the stranger parts of the novel. E.g. when Harry leaves eyeballs in different places that he visits.
- Thoughts about the character of Agatha and her relationship with Harry.
- Thoughts about the language and how this varied according to the different writing voices.
- Thoughts about the use of documents, such as letters and notes to the reader.
- Thoughts about the ending – both how the story finished for Harry, and the documents that came afterwards.

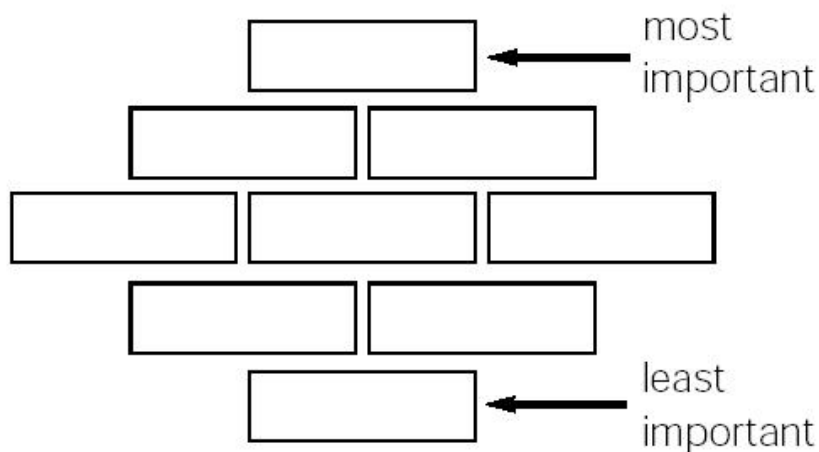
## After reading

### What is the novel about?

- Below are nine suggestions for what *Voyages in the Underworld of Orpheus Black* is about.
- Working on your own, in a pair, or small group, rearrange them into a 'Diamond 9' formation, as shown below.
- Compare your arrangement with another pair or group and discuss any differences.

<i>Voyages in the Underworld of Orpheus Black</i> is about ...		
... the close link between mythical stories and real-life stories	... the trauma of living through the bombing of a city	... the power of art (writing, pictures etc.) to help people in difficult circumstances
... the importance of living by your principles	... the way that bravery can come in many different shapes and sizes	... the importance of family
... the difficulty of working out what is real and what is not real	... the power of story-telling to help us make sense of a complicated world	... the importance of helping others

### Diamond 9 pattern



## **Adapting the story of Orpheus from Greek mythology**

The writers of *Voyages in the Underworld of Orpheus Black* have clearly been inspired by the character of Orpheus from Greek mythology, and the best-known story about him.

- Read the brief detail of Orpheus below. (You can research more about him online if you have time.)
- How does this fit in with what you read in the novel? Does it add to or alter your understanding of the novel in any way? Does the novel offer the reader a satisfying reading experience even if they don't have this knowledge?

*Orpheus was a poet, musician and prophet in Greek mythology. The stories about him claim that he could charm all living things and even stones with his music.*

*The most famous story in which Orpheus figures is that of his wife Eurydice. While walking in tall grass at her wedding, Eurydice was set upon by a satyr [a lustful, drunken woodland god in Greek mythology, represented as half human, half horse]. In her efforts to escape the satyr, Eurydice fell into a nest of vipers and suffered a fatal bite on her heel. Her body was discovered by Orpheus who, overcome with grief, played such sad and mournful songs that all the nymphs and gods wept. On their advice, Orpheus travelled to the underworld. His music softened the hearts of Hades [ruler of the underworld] and Persephone [wife of Hades], who agreed to allow Eurydice to return with Orpheus to earth on one condition: he should walk in front of her and not look back until they both had reached the upper world.*

*Orpheus set off with Eurydice following, and, in his anxiety, as soon as he reached the upper world, he turned to look at her, forgetting that both needed to be in the upper world before he could do this. She disappeared into the underworld for the second time, this time forever.*

## Talking points

Discuss with a partner, or in a group, your thoughts about the following points that emerge when reading *Voyages in the Underworld of Orpheus Black*. Alternatively, you can write down your own responses to some or all of the points.

1. While the book is set during a real historical moment – World War Two – many of the events described seem to go beyond what could realistically have happened. Which of these more far-fetched events stood out for you? Why do you think the writers chose to take the story in this direction?
2. Flick through your copy of the book, focusing on the images. How many different types of image can you identify in terms of style and content matter? Why do you think the artist has used different styles? Which do you like best and why?
3. Pick your favourite image from the whole book: explain what you like about it, and its significance to the novel as a whole.
4. What are your thoughts about the character of Agatha? What is her role in the novel? Why do you think the writers chose to include her?
5. When Harry and Agatha go deep underground in their search for Ellis, they meet a character called Old Jimmy. 'Old Jimmy' is a nickname for the devil and this is clearly a part of the novel that is not particularly realistic. What is going on in the novel at this point? What are the writers trying to make readers think?
6. What do you think about the sections of poetry that run throughout the novel, narrated by Orpheus? How do they fit in with the rest of the novel?
7. What are the differences between the brothers, Harry and Ellis Black? Why do you think the writers chose to make them so different, certainly in their approach to war? You might like to consider their family's business when talking about this.
8. Harry, it seems, is putting together a book called 'Warriors of the Machine', made up of images and words. What do you think is the relationship of this book to the one you actually read?

## **Harry Black in the middle**

Harry is the central focus of the narrative. To help you remember and think about everything that Harry was involved with, and to prepare you for more substantial writing about his character, you should produce a diagram of his relationships in the novel.

- On your own, in a pair or in a small group, draw Harry Black in the middle of a large sheet of paper. Label the picture with words and phrases that describe him.
- Write the names of other key characters in the novel, or draw pictures of them, around the edge of the sheet: Ellis Black, Agatha, Greene, Orpheus, Mr Black (Harry and Ellis's father), the unnamed fiddler, ARP man, Old Jimmy.
- Draw arrows between Harry Black and the other characters and write along the arrow the nature of their relationship, including key moments described in the novel.
- Draw arrows between other characters where links exist. For example, between Ellis Black and Orpheus. Write along the arrow the nature of their relationship, including key moments described in the novel.
- Compare what you have identified with anyone else who has done the same task.

## **Editing the book**

Imagine that the editor of the book has suggested cutting the poetry sections from the novel because they don't think they add to the storyline.

- In role as the writers, Marcus Sedgwick and Julian Sedgwick, write an email to your editor, explaining why you included the poetry sections and why you think that they should stay.

## Reading the reviews

The extracts, below, are all from reviews of the book.

- Decide on your own, or with a partner which reviewer comes closest to your own view of the book.
- Working on your own, write your own paragraph to express your views about the novel. You can draw on the review extracts you have read if you wish.
- Share your ideas with others who have read the novel.

*Voyages in the Underworld of Orpheus Black* is one of those books that you are never fully sure on what is happening but you don't want to put it down either. A storyline that both keeps you engaged and totally confuses you, plus it's a little strange too.

*Customer review on amazon.co.uk*

It is a challenging and, at times, confusing read as the complex plot, layers of meaning, different genres and ever-changing pace asks a lot of its young adult readers. It is worth the effort as the storytelling is bold, ambitious and profound. Not a book the reader will easily forget.

*Reviewer, The School Librarian*

Ambitious, clever and intriguing, it will appeal to students who are confident readers and pupils studying art, classical civilization, history and English Literature. It will also resonate with those who have an enquiring mind.

*Reviewer, Reading Zone*

This fascinating and engaging story, told through prose, poetry and stunning black and white illustrations, takes on a surreal, fantastical quality - you are never sure what is real and what is imaginary. A thought-provoking and striking experience!

*Reviewer, Carousel*

## Cards for literary analysis

These cards have been designed for use with any short story or novel. You can select a particular card to work with or rely on your teacher to give you a particular area of focus. You could then work through the bullet points on your card or select a few that seem most interesting or relevant for a particular text.

### Setting

- In which different settings does this story/novel takes place? What part does each setting play? Which setting is most significant and why?
- How important is setting to the story/novel as a whole? Does the setting have a particular impact on the story/novel, or could it be set almost anywhere?
- What difference would it make if this story/novel was set somewhere else? E.g. another country, a rural rather than urban setting, in space!
- How effective do you think the writer has been in creating a sense of place? Are there any particular examples of setting you think are particularly well written? If so, why?
- Is there anything particularly interesting or special about the way setting is used and presented? In what ways is it similar or different to stories/ novels that explore similar themes and ideas, or that are written in the same genre?
- Find one or two bullet points from other cards that add to what you have discussed about setting. Explain the connections.
- Is there anything important that you've noticed that isn't raised on this card? What is it? Why do you think it's important?



### Characters

- Who is your favourite character, and why?
- Who do you think is the most important character, and why?
- Who are the other significant characters? What different roles do they have?
- What is special or unusual about the way one or more of the characters is presented?
- Which character would you most like to be friends with, and why? Which character might significant adults want you to be friends with, and why?
- Are characters paired or grouped in any particular ways? E.g. friends, rivals, etc. What ideas are raised by these pairs or groupings?
- Are the characters typical of ones found in this kind of story/novel? Are they distinctive and individual, or stereotypes? Explain your answer.
- Find one or two bullet points from other cards that add to what you have discussed about characters. Explain the connections.
- Is there anything important that you've noticed that isn't raised on this card? What is it? Why do you think it's important?



### Form and structure

- What do you think is interesting about the way this story/novel begins?
- What were the key moments in this story/novel? How did they shape the story/novel as a whole?
- If you had to describe the path of this story/novel, what would it be? E.g. journey from childhood to adulthood, from grief to happiness etc.
- What did you notice about the end of this story/novel? Was it what you were expecting? Did it tie up loose ends, or leave some things unresolved?
- Does this story/novel belong to a particular genre? If so, how does it fit in with other stories that you know in the same genre?
- Does the story/novel use just one form or does it include more than one E.g. letters, diary entries, poems, newspaper reports
- Find one or two bullet points from other cards that add to what you have discussed about form and structure. Explain the connections.
- Is there anything important that you've noticed that isn't raised on this card? What is it? Why do you think it's important?



### Themes and ideas

- What, to you, are the five most important themes and ideas in this story/novel? If you had to narrow your list down to one theme or idea, what would it be and why? In what ways is this theme presented? E.g. if the theme is love, what exactly does the story/novel have to say about love?
- Does this story/novel deal with big issues that affect the whole world, or small ones that affect individual lives? Give reasons for your answer.
- Does this story/novel contain any themes or ideas that have made you look at the world in new ways? If so, what are they, and how have they changed your views?
- Does this story/novel contain any themes and ideas that explore how people should act and behave? If so, what are they and do you agree with how they are presented?
- Are the themes and ideas presented in ways similar or different to other stories you have read, including stories of the same type, or in the same genre?
- Find one or two bullet points from other cards that add to what you have discussed about themes and ideas. Explain the connections.
- Is there anything important that you've noticed that isn't raised on this card? What is it? Why do you think it's important?



### Language

- Identify one or two of your favourite passages in the story/novel where language is used particularly well? Explain how it is used.
- How would you describe the language used in this story/novel overall? E.g. poetic, plain, chatty etc.
- Would you say the language in this story/novel is original or creative in any particular way? If so, how?
- Are there any patterns in the language used? If so, what are they, and what is their effect? Are there any other patterns, such as of imagery and symbolism?
- How is dialogue used in the story/novel? Do characters, for example, speak in particularly distinctive ways?
- Is the language similar to how it is used in similar kinds of stories/novels? If so, in what ways? If not, why not?
- Find one or two bullet points from other cards that add to what you have discussed about language. Explain the connections.
- Is there anything important that you've noticed that isn't raised on this card? What is it? Why do you think it's important?



### Narrative

- How does the writer try to capture and keep the reader's attention? How successful are they in doing this?
- Is the narrative told in order from beginning to end (a linear narrative), or does it move backwards and forwards in time? What is the effect of the order in which events are told?
- Can you think of any other ways the story/novel could be told? For example, by a different character, or in a different order? How would this affect your experience of reading?
- Would you say that this story/novel is told in a particular original or creative way? If so, how?
- Is this story/novel told in a way that is typical for its genre?
- Find one or two bullet points from other cards that add to what you have discussed about narrative. Explain the connections.
- Is there anything important that you've noticed that isn't raised on this card? What is it? Why do you think it's important?



### **Point of view and voice**

- Through whose eyes do we see the events of the story/novel? Do readers get just one point of view or several?
- What do you find interesting about the point or points of view presented?
- If the story/novel is told from different points of view, how does the writer do this?
- What would the story/novel be like if told from someone else's point of view? Whose point of view would you choose, and why?
- How would you describe the tone of voice used to tell the narrative? Does the narrative draw attention to itself by using a particular tone, or is the tone pushed to the background? What is the effect of the choice made by the writer?
- Find one or two bullet points from other cards that add to what you have discussed about point of view and voice. Explain the connections.
- Is there anything important that you've noticed that isn't raised on this card? What is it? Why do you think it's important?



### **Audience and overall personal response**

- Who do you think this story/novel was written for, and why? Are there any other groups of people who you think should read it?
- What was your experience of reading this story/novel?
- What would you recommend about this story/novel to other people?
- Which parts of this story/novel did you most enjoy? Were there any parts that you didn't enjoy?
- Do you think this story/novel could be improved in some way? If so, how?
- What other stories (or films, TV, plays etc.) does this story/novel remind you of? In what ways?
- Who do you think should read this book and why?
- Find one or two bullet points from other cards that add to what you have discussed about personal response and audience. Explain the connections.
- Is there anything important that you've noticed that isn't raised on this card? What is it? Why do you think it's important?



These cards are from the *EMC Curriculum Plus Card Collection*. Each box includes eight decks of three different sets of cards – enough for pupils to work in groups of three or four.

The cards are for: Literacy Analysis; Poetry Analysis; Critical Literacy

For full details visit <https://www.englishandmedia.co.uk/publications/emc-curriculum-plus-card-collection>