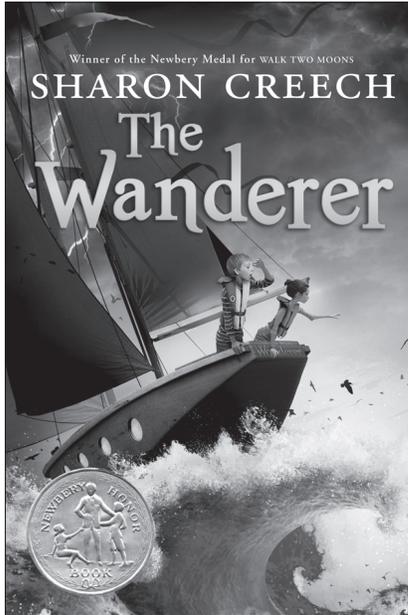


THE WANDERER



Setting the Scene

Thirteen-year-old Sophie, her two cousins, and her three uncles sail across the Atlantic Ocean to England in a forty-five-foot sailboat to visit their grandfather in England. Sophie tries desperately to prove herself as a sailor, and she and her cousin Cody record the adventures and dangers they experience on their transatlantic journey.

Before Reading

The Wanderer begins with this quotation:

“This tale is true, and mine. It tells
How the sea took me, swept me back
And forth . . .”
—anonymous, “The Seafarer”

Ask your students to consider this quotation. What does it tell them about the story to come? Have any of them been to sea? Does the quotation remind them of the ocean? In what ways?

Discussion Questions

1. Chapter 1 begins with Sophie’s poetic musings: “The sea, the sea, the sea. It rolled and rolled and called to me. *Come in*, it said, *come in*.” We see variations on these lines echoed throughout the book (pp. 87, 99, 106, 113, 160, 176, and 190). How do the slight changes in this refrain reflect Sophie’s changing relationship with the sea?
2. In what ways is *The Wanderer* like a mystery novel? How does the author “drop clues” for the reader? Did you find it suspenseful?
3. The book first switches from Sophie’s to Cody’s point of view on page 27, the first entry in his “dog-log.” It’s our first hint that Sophie is an orphan and has only lived with her current parents for three years. What was your reaction when you found out? Did it change your view of Sophie’s reliability as a narrator?
4. Sophie’s father calls her Three-sided Sophie on page 3: “one side is dreamy and romantic; one is logical and down-to-earth; and the third side is hardheaded and impulsive.” Do you agree with his assessment? Can you find moments in the book that reflect these three sides of Sophie?
5. Sophie is the only girl on a crew of men and boys. How does Sophie feel about this? Do the boys and men treat her differently because she is a girl? If so, how?
6. Uncle Stew decides that each crew member has to teach the others something while on the trip. What does each of the young people’s choices—Cody’s juggling, Sophie’s storytelling, and Brian’s points of sail—show us about these three characters? What do the crew members’ attitudes toward one another’s choices tell us about them?
7. The characters in *The Wanderer* all deal with pain differently. What are some of Sophie’s challenges and survival mechanisms? Cody’s? Uncle Mo’s? Uncle Dock’s?
8. Sophie’s evolving relationship with Cody is one of the cornerstones of *The Wanderer*. How does Sophie’s impression of Cody change from the beginning when she wonders “if he has any brains in his head” (p. 48)? How does Cody’s impression of Sophie change?
9. Sophie has a recurring dream she calls “the one with The Wave” (p. 142). What role do dreams play in this novel?

