

HOLD FAST

BY BLUE BALLIETT

SCHOLASTIC, 2013

Synopsis

Early and her family lose their apartment home in Chicago after her father's sudden disappearance. The three of them are forced to make their home in a city shelter for the homeless. But Early knows her father would not vanish without a valid reason. She begins to question the official version of her father's continuing absence. The underworld of smuggling books and valuables forces its way into their lives. The mystery becomes even messier as Early delves into the background of her father's work.

Hooks

- How would you react to losing your home? Where would you go? Whom would you ask for help?
- All of the activities in the shelter encourage people to keep on with their lives. What would you suggest to a shelter as a possible activity?
- Privacy can be at a premium in a shelter. Where would you go to be by yourself?

About the Author

Blue Balliett is the author of several bestselling, acclaimed mystery novels. She wanted to be a writer from when she was eight years old. She loves to play with words and see how they integrate. She grew up in New York City. Even though she is as known as Blue, her birth certificate states that her first name is Elizabeth. Ms. Balliett found she could hang around museums after school with her friends. This long exposure to art reflects back in how comfortable she feels when incorporating it into her writing. She prefers to write in her laundry room in her home in Chicago, Illinois.

Related Links

www.blueballiettbooks.com

Connections

Other Popular Books by Blue Balliett

The Calder Game. 2008.

Chasing Vermeer. 2004.

The Danger Box. 2012.

Pieces and Players. 2015.

The Wright 3. 2006.

Other Books Like Hold Fast

Danger goes Berserk. Mac Barnett. Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers, 2012.

The League of Unexceptional Children. Gitty Daneshvari. Little, Brown, 2015

Shadows at Predator Reef. Franklin Dixon. Aladdin, 2014.

Firestorm! Joan Hiatt Harlow. Margaret K. McElderry Books, 2010.

The Glass Sentence. S.E. Grove. Viking, 2014.

The Book of Storms. Ruth Hatfield. Henry Holt & Co., 2015.

The Monkey Howled at Midnight. Zack Norris. Sterling Children's Books, 2011.

The Adventure at Simba Hill. Susan Runholt. Viking, 2011.

Six. M.M. Vaughan. Margaret K. McElderry Books, 2015.

Activities

One Word Descriptors

Blue Balliett uses one word to describe each chapter in HOLD FAST. Create a chart of one word descriptors to describe school, home, and family. Do any of the same words appear in two columns? What about the same words appearing in all three columns? What can you conclude from this summary?

Puzzles/Mysteries

Early is trying to solve the puzzle/mystery of her father's disappearance. Write about something or someone that disappeared from your life. And was there a solution to the mystery?

Sequences

Draw or take photos of a sequence of events. Compare the effect of imagery with a written version of the same sequence. Which one is more powerful? Which one is more descriptive?

House vs. home

What is the house in your life? Is it an apartment, a condo, a ranch, a cabin, a separate house? Describe your home and its most important feature to you. Then either build a model of your own home, or create the fantasy version of your perfect house. Use legos, toothpicks, cardboard, pebbles, etc.

KEEPER OF THE LOST CITIES

BY SHANNON MESSENGER

SIMON AND SCHUSTER (ALADDIN), 2012

Synopsis

Sophie Foster is a bright 12-year-old high school senior with a photographic memory. Like many other high school students, Sophie feels like she is an outsider. Not only is she the youngest in her class, she also has the ability to hear the thoughts of others. Unable to quiet these voices, and faced with the truth that a mysterious stranger reveals to her, Sophie soon learns the reason behind her ability: she is an elf.

Transported into the elvin world and the Lost Cities, Sophie finds herself separated from her human family forever. Sophie learns that finding a place to belong is more complicated than she ever knew, even when she has finally found others that are like her. Harnessing her telepathic abilities and other magical skills, Sophie builds new friendships and bonds that just might help her find a place to feel at home.

The reader soon finds that Sophie still has secrets, and they're buried deep in her memory for good reason: The answers are dangerous and in high-demand. What is her true identity, and why was she hidden among humans? The truth could mean life or death—and time is running out.

Hooks

- How does a person deal with feeling like an outsider?
- Have you ever felt different from your friends and family? How do these differences make you special?
- Can you belong and still maintain your individuality?
- Do you believe there is a magical world that humans can't see?
- How important is friendship in becoming who we will be?

About the Author

Shannon Messenger graduated from the USC School of Cinematic Arts where she learned--among other things--that she liked watching movies much better than making them. She's studied art, screenwriting, and film production, but realized her real passion was writing stories for children. She's the bestselling author of the middle grade series, *KEEPER OF THE LOST CITIES*, and the *SKY FALL* series for young adults. Her books have been featured on multiple state reading lists, published in numerous countries, and translated into many different languages. She lives in Southern California with her husband and an embarrassing number of cats.

Related Links

[Shannon Messenger's Website](#)

[Keeper of the Lost Cities at Simon and Schuster](#)

[Book Trailer for Keeper of the Lost Cities](#)

[Educator's Guide](#)

[Series page](#)

Connections

Other Popular Books by Shannon Messenger

Keeper of the Lost Cities. 2012.

Exile (Keeper of the Lost Cities #2). 2013.

Everblaze (Keeper of the Lost Cities #3). 2014.

Neverseen (Keeper of the Lost Cities #4). 2015.

Lodestar (Keeper of the Lost Cities #5). To be published November 2016.

Let the Sky Fall. 2013.

Let the Storm Break (Sky Fall #2). 2014.

Let the Wind Rise (Sky Fall #3). 2015.

Other Books Like Keeper of the Lost Cities

The Lightning Thief (Percy Jackson and the Olympians #1). Riordan, Rick. Hyperion, 2005.

A Wrinkle in Time. L'Engle, Madeleine. Farrar, Straus and Giroux (BYR); First Edition edition 1962.

Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone. Rowling, J.K. Scholastic Press, 1998.
The Land of Stories: The Wishing Well. Colfer, Chris. Little, Brown Books for Young Readers, 2012.
The Unwanteds. McMann, Lisa. Aladdin, 2011.

Activities

Fakebook Fun

Simon and Schuster offers a [guide](#) aligned to CC Standards, written by Kathleen Odean, a former school librarian and Chair of the 2002 Newbery Award Committee. One activity suggested is “Fakebook Fun”. Sophie gets to know a lot of people at her new school and home. Have students choose Sophie or another character and create a Fakebook page for them. A Fakebook page looks like a Facebook page but doesn’t require logging into Facebook. Students can include a drawing for the character’s profile picture, list their friends, and put remarks on their timeline. They can list what music, movies, or books the character might like. Fakebook is part of ClassTools [here](#). NCTE’s ReadWriteThink also has a social networking profile tool located [here](#).

Wall of Wonderful Images

Also provided in the [guide](#) offered by Simon and Schuster is the wall of wonderful images. Have students find similes, metaphors, alliteration, and other images in the book that create vivid pictures in their minds. Have them draw or paint some images, including the words and page numbers. Create a Wall of Wonderful Images with the artwork. Once all of the pictures are posted, have a group discussion about what categories the author draws her images from such as nature, machinery, and so on.

Create your own schedule

Have you ever imagined what it would be like to attend Foxfire Academy? If you did, what kind of classes might you take? Download the schedule template and create your own schedule [here](#).

Determine your ability

Have students take the [quiz](#) to find out what their own ability may be. Have students write a response for the result and how that would impact their life and world.

Comprehension Questions and Study Guide

Kathleen Odean, a former school librarian and Chair of the 2002 Newbery Award Committee has created a series of [comprehension and discussion questions based on the book](#), including several activities previously mentioned and study questions linked to common core standards.

UPSIDE DOWN IN THE MIDDLE OF NOWHERE

BY JULIE T. LAMANA

CHRONICLE BOOKS, 2014

Synopsis

Hurricane Katrina's arrival in August 2005 in New Orleans, Louisiana disrupts Armani's ten-year-old birthday party. The struggle to survive and search for her family members amid the chaos creates a survival story of heroic proportions.

Hooks

- What would you do if a hurricane hit your home during a family celebration? What if the hurricane hit your school during school hours?
- Do you find that you usually know how things are going to turn out, like the end of a story? Have you ever been surprised by the end of a story?
- It is very hard to be logical when you are frightened. Who would you turn to for advice if your parents weren't available?
- Have you ever read a story where the characters are saying one thing but then the story reveals something else happening?

About the Author

A military family's frequent moves in the U.S. and Japan was the background for Julia Lamana's childhood. She was working as an after-school Literacy Specialist in Louisiana when Hurricane Katrina hit. She helped displaced children during this disaster. That experience gave her unusual insight as a survivor. Those ideas combined

in her writing of *Upside Down in the Middle of Nowhere*. This is her first book. Ms. Lamana currently resides in Greenwell Springs, Louisiana.

Related Links

www.teachingbooks.net (does have one resource listed for Julie Lamana)

Connections

Hurricane Katrina fiction

Another kind of Hurricane. Tamara Ellis Smith. Schwartz and Wade Books, 2015.

Finding Someplace. Denise Lewis Patrick. Christy Ottaviano Books, Henry Holt and Company, 2015.

Zane and the hurricane: a Story of Katrina. Philbrick, W. Rodman. The Blue Sky Press, an imprint of Scholastic, Inc., 2014.

Buddy. M. H. Herlong. Viking, 2012..

Hooper Find a Family: a Hurricane Katrina Dog's Survival Tale. Jane Paley. HarperCollins, 2011.

Hurricane Katrina, 2005. Lauren Tarshis; illustrated by Scott Dawson. Scholastic 2011.

Saint Louis Armstrong Beach. Brenda Woods. Nancy Paulsen Books, 2011.

A Storm Called Katrina. Myron Uhlberg; illustrated by Colin Bootman. Peachtree, 2011.

A Place Where Hurricanes Happen. Renee Watson; illustrated by Shadra Stickland. Random House, 2010..

Ninth Ward. Paul Volponi. Viking, 2008.

Ruby's Imagination. Kim Antieau. Houghton Mifflin Co., 2008.

Activities

Compare and contrast major environmental disaster in the U.S. for the past 15 years. Create a Word table with the name of the disaster, date column, place column, lives affected column, and monetary damage column.

People on the east coast of the U.S. fear earthquakes. People on the west coast fear hurricanes. State the differences and similarities of the two natural forces. Which one would you prefer to experience and why?

Draw a map, or locate on Google, of your hometown. Can you locate the major sites that would provide shelter during a disaster? How would you travel to that site without transportation in a car or bus? Create directions to reach that site from a school or a home.

