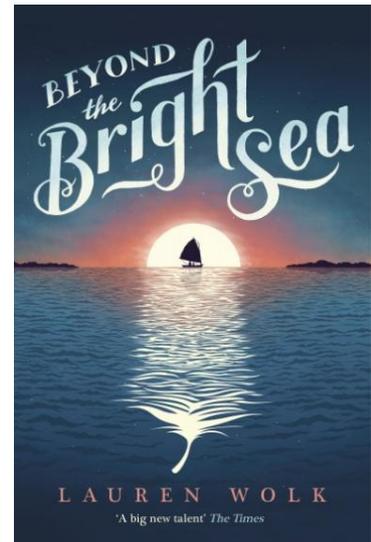


2018 Carnegie Medal shortlist Talking Points

Title: **BEYOND THE BRIGHT SEA**

Author: **Lauren Wolk**

Publisher: **Corgi (PRH)**



The book begins with a prologue, which is supposed to tantalise a reader and make you want to read on – how does the author do that in *Beyond the Bright Sea*?

SETTING AND PERIOD

For this book, Wolk recreates a 1920s setting. She has said she likes to include just enough historical detail (so it feels real), but not too much (so it's too alien to the readers) – what kind of period detail did you notice? Do you think the way she uses this is effective?

If you read the author's note at the back of the book, what did learning about the real place that inspired this setting add to your experience of reading the book? (Had you heard of the Elizabeth Islands before? Did this book make you curious to find out more about them in real life today?)

The island setting is important to the book. "An island is one thing when a man has a boat, quite another when he doesn't," says Miss Maggie. What's the appeal of island setting in a book?

One of the aspects of the period that we learn about in the book is how leprosy patients were treated at the time. Did this surprise or shock you? Was it what you'd have expected?

OSH

How would you describe Osh's character? He can be anti-social, and he carries some dark secrets, but he is kind-hearted enough to take in and care for the baby he finds. Why do you think he does it?

We're told that if Osh was starving he would just cut one arm off a starfish – what does this tell us about him?

What do we – and Crow – learn about Osh's past as the book unfolds? Does what you learn about his background, his experiences, change how you think of him?



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THE OTHER CHARACTERS

Compare how much we learn about Osh's background to how little we learn about Maggie's. There's so much we never know. Did you find yourself wondering about her back-story, or speculating about it?

At what point in the book did you come to understand who the villain of the book was, and why he was a threat to Crow? Is he a typical fictional baddie?

Why are the other islanders wary of Crow? There are at least two quite different reasons why they might not have made her welcome...

SOLVING MYSTERIES

The book is full of mysteries – the most important, perhaps, is that of Crow's origins. How much were you able to guess in advance from the clues the author gave you?

Crow says she carried her questions around with her *"like a sack that got heavier as the years went by, even though I had become accustomed to the idea of it. Even though I was not unhappy with the life I had."* Why has it taken her so long to start trying to answer the questions?

New mysteries keep being added to the book – but some will never get solved, and they're left open for the reader to keep wondering about. Do you like that, or do you feel the author should tie up every loose end tidily before the book is over?

Crow's aim is to assemble answers to the big question about her own background – but does she learn the answers to other bigger questions along the way?

FAMILY

How does Osh feel about Crow's curiosity about her origins?

What do you think the book tells us about how identity is defined, and how family is defined?

CONCLUSIONS

Wolk has said she likes her books to contain "the juxtaposition of the dark and the light". How does she balance these things in the ending of *Beyond the Bright Sea*?

She has also said that she misses the characters, and "maybe I'll write a sequel . . ." So what do you think should happen next?

AND FINALLY...

Does this Carnegie-shortlisted book deserve to win? Why, or why not?



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