

WITCH

FINBAR HAWKINS

TEACHING RESOURCES



FIRST LOOK

Look at the cover. What do you think the book is going to be about? What genre is it? Take a careful note of the different creatures illustrated on the front. How many can you see?

The book opens with two quotes.

Discuss: Why do you think the author has chosen these? Look at the dates and sources. Can you find the rest of the poem, *My Witche* by Nicholas Breton. It's an epigram. What is an epigram? And what is Breton doing with this poem?

The other quote is from the King James Bible.

Discuss: Were you aware that the word 'witch' was in the Bible? What do you think about this? The word is translated from the Hebrew word *mekhashepha*, which could be translated as poisoner, magician, idolatress. Think about how language can be translated in different ways for different purposes. Is there a reason that the word was translated as 'witch' in the King James Bible in 1611?

Now look at the poem or song that opens the book. Is this original? Does it remind you of any other song or poem? What are the key phrases? Why do you think it mentions 'Mother', 'dancer', 'wind', and 'sun'? What does it mean 'the day that will be'? What is it about?

WRITING STYLE

OPENING

'I never did no magick.' (Page 1)

A first sentence can tell the reader so much.

Discuss: What information are you being given by these five words? Is it a powerful opening?

Activity: Find other first lines that open novels. What makes a first line powerful or memorable? What is your favourite opening line?

Read Chapter One.



WITCH

FINBAR HAWKINS

TEACHING RESOURCES



Style: Finbar Hawkins uses a distinctive style for his novel, a first-person narrative with a strong authentic style. Look particularly at the repetition, the vocabulary of the natural world, and words that are no longer used in common parlance such as ‘afeared’.

Discuss: What does ‘voice’ mean? What makes the passage distinct from your voice? Which patterns of speech are clear in the narrator’s text? Think about the sentence structure, the choice of vocabulary, and repetition.

Activity: Write two passages. First, continue from the end of the chapter in the same style. What aspects of language and grammar do you need to use? Think about the shortness of your sentences, and the use of first-person narrative.

Secondly, re-write part of the first chapter in a different narrative voice. You could use closed third person, or a distant third-person or omniscient narrator. How different can you make the text sound, while still narrating the same events?

Look at the way the narrator pulls in the reader:

‘That’s what they were, see.’ (Page 2)

Discuss: Is the character addressing the reader directly? How? Does she do this elsewhere? Why are italics used for some of the speech in the first chapter? What can you tell about the main character from the opening chapter?

‘We saw ourselves in the water. Dill, skin and bone, pale as morning milk, her hair black and thick as a rook’s nest. And me taller, my cheeks, my arms all mottled over, like drops of brown rain, my hair long and red. The colour of anger, Mother used to say.’ (Page 7)

Discuss: The author gives a visual description here. But how else does he show Evey’s character in the first chapter?

Activity: Draw a first impression sketch of Evey and Dill from the brief description of them in the water’s reflection.

WITCH

FINBAR HAWKINS

TEACHING RESOURCES



USE OF LANGUAGE

Now look at the language of the first chapter in more detail.

'If Mother had not taught things, perhaps they would not have come. If we had left on the first whisper of hunters. If she had listened to me. If I had listened to her. If. If. If.' (Page 22)

Discuss: How does Finbar Hawkins build tension? Does he drop clues about what might happen later in the novel? Look at his use of repetition.

Activity: Many stories play with the idea of 'what if'. What if something was different? Think about your own life. Is there a moment of sliding doors/crossroads, in which you could have taken a different path/different direction? Write a short story as if you had chosen the other path.

Now think about Hawkins' use of simple sentences, adjectives, adverbs, verbs, similes.

'She was pale as birch bark.' (Page 2)

'I remember her cry, like a fox snared.' (Page 3)

'...her eyes coals in the fire.' (Page 3)

Discuss: When Hawkins uses metaphor or simile, he uses items from nature. Why is this?

Activity: Look at the vocabulary in the first chapter. What does this tell you about the time and place the story is set? Which words give you the impression that this is a historical novel. Compile a list of similes from the novel. Now write a list that Hawkins couldn't use because they would be anachronisms.

For example:

'...her arm hanging as a spider's thread broken in the breeze.' (Page 5)

compared to:

'...her arm hanging as a telephone wire broken in the breeze.'

WITCH

FINBAR HAWKINS

TEACHING RESOURCES



POWERFUL VERBS

Hawkins uses lots of powerful verbs to move the story forwards. Can you spot these in the first chapter, for example, ‘a shriek that shanked deep as a knife.’ or ‘pulled,’ ‘kicked,’ ‘scratched,’ ‘struck,’ ‘to skewer,’? (Page 3) Now look further in the book.

‘I swung my words at her.’ (Page 25)

‘...climbing into the day.’ (Page 34)

‘...as the hill swelled behind us...’ (Page 45)

‘They gobbled and trilled, before they hefted up, and winged across the rocky path to the woods.’ (Page 78)

Discuss: How does Hawkins re-appropriate verbs and use them in new ways? What effect does this have on the reader. Does it make the sentence work harder?

Activity: Can you find further examples of this in the book?

PERSONIFICATION OF NATURE

Throughout the novel Hawkins uses personification when writing about nature.

‘Rain was after soaking us.’ (Page 11)

‘Croake Farm crouched on the hill.’ (Page 11)

‘...the rain combed our tired heads.’ (Page 11)

‘A tree creaked like it moaned to be let in.’ (Page 12)

‘The sun had clambered from her bed...’ (Page 107)

‘...the garden slumbered...’ (Page 107)

WITCH

FINBAR HAWKINS

TEACHING RESOURCES



Discuss: What effect does this have? Does it have a cumulative effect? Why do you think Hawkins does this? Is nature instrumental in the plot?

Activity: Write your own descriptive passage using personification of a natural element. See if you can extend the device over a paragraph. Make a list of natural elements and attribute emotion and action to them. For example, is the sun happy or sad? Is the ocean fierce or cowardly? Compare with a classmate.

SETTING – TIME AND PLACE

Hawkins doesn't name the place or time period in his novel, but he does drop clues. Can you spot these?

'And he meant no harm, hailing as friend in this warring time, when a stranger would kill another for king or country.' (Pages 83-84)

Discuss: In which time period is the book set? Which clues in the text lead you to think this? What about place? Look at the description of the landscape, the walled city, and the grand house.

Activity: Research the English Civil War. Who was fighting whom and why? Create a PowerPoint explaining the timeline and main points of the English Civil War. Who won?

Discuss: Witch-hunting grew in popularity during the civil war. Discuss why you think this is.

CHARACTERS

EVEY

The novel is written from Evey's point of view.

Discuss: Is Evey a reliable narrator?

Evey's motivations are clear from the first chapter.

She is seeking revenge for the death of her mother, and is fuelled by anger.

WITCH

FINBAR HAWKINS

TEACHING RESOURCES



*'Know this, I will not rest till balance got.
Till time turned back. Till light be sought.
Till dogs be dirt and death by done.
Till then. Only then, know this.'* (Page 5)

Revenge is a good tool for an author as a key motivator for their main character, but it can shed light on the character too. How much will the character sacrifice to enact revenge? How much will the character's family or moral values be compromised in order to enact this revenge? Look carefully at Chapter 3 (Croake's Farm).

Discuss: What is your opinion of Evey here? Is she a likeable character? Does she do unlikeable things? What does seeking revenge cost Evey?

Activity: Think about other revenge stories. Do they explore revenge as a theme rather than just as a plot device? Write your own story in which the protagonist seeks vengeance. Will you highlight how the motivation came about, as in Evey's case, or will you start later in the story? Why does your main character believe they've been wronged, and what does the revenge cost them?

Throughout the novel, Evey is grieving.

*'Tears lined her cheeks. But I felt raw, and empty. I wanted everyone to leave me be.
Mother was dead. For ever.'* (Page 19)

'If Mother had not taught things, perhaps they would not have come. If we had left on the first whisper of hunters. If she had listened to me. If I had listened to her. If. If. If.' (Page 22)

'And I saw Mother in her face, and I was happy and sad at once...' (Page 33)

Discuss: How does Hawkins portray Evey's grief. How many different emotions can you identify (such as emptiness and regret)?

Activity: Maybe you have experienced grief yourself, perhaps for a family member or friend, or even a pet. It can help to express the many emotions associated with grief.

Choose one of the following options: write a letter to the deceased person or pet, write a song or poem about them, draw a picture. If you haven't experienced grief yourself, perhaps you can partner with someone else and help them.

WITCH

FINBAR HAWKINS

TEACHING RESOURCES



*'Dill gave a shrug.
'We all die, Evey,'*

*She jumped her fingers across that pup's jaws, mouthing to catch those pesky things.
'Don't we, my sweet? Yes, we do. I will, and you will, and Evey will...'*
(Page 33)

Discuss: Do you think that people in the 17th century had more experience of death at an early age? Can you draw any connections between the novel's emphasis on nature and the death and violence portrayed within the book?

'Beyond them I knew was the sea. I had only seen it once, a memory more like a dream.'
(Page 44)

Read the rest of this page.

Discuss: What do Evey's memories tell the reader? Do they help to round her character? Can memories give comfort to a person grieving? How?

Activity: Identify an early memory. Does it feel dreamlike? Now create a memory box – storing items that make you remember a particular event or person. Objects can be helpful in summoning up events and circumstances.

'Another pebble dropped into the pool of my memory.' (Page 55)

'Memory moved in me, like a hand dipped to cool water.' (Page 103)

Discuss: Why does Evey describe her memories with water metaphors?

Activity: Are memories fluid? Ask a member of your family to describe an event at which you were present. Compare the differences between their memories and yours.

Play the 'object tray' game with your classmates. Everyone must study a tray with 24 random objects on it for one minute. Then the tray is taken away. See who can recall all the objects. Do different people remember the objects in a different order?

In the first chapter, the reader is given an idea of Evey's appearance from her reflection in the water.



WITCH

FINBAR HAWKINS

TEACHING RESOURCES



Activity: Can you now make a fact file about Evey? List her physical attributes, such as hair colour and complexion, but also her personality traits, skills, aims, family members.

Activity: Draw a table of adjectives that describe Evey. Write the adjective in the column on the left, and use the column on the right to give evidence from the text. For example, Evey is brave. This is shown by her willingness to seek revenge on her own. Are there other examples of Evey being brave? Now fill out the rest of your table.

Discuss: How does Evey's character develop over the novel?

Activity: Can you plot a line graph with the major incidents that happen? How do these change Evey? Does her emotional state change?

The names of characters are important in novels.

Discuss: Why do you think the main character is called Evey?

'Mother said it was my naming. For that queen had marked me so and taken my hair as a token. Now I would be one with her kind, could call on them, would know their words.'
(Page 49)

Read Chapter Six. Evey is also called: Eveline of the Birds and Evey Red Braid.

Discuss: Why do you think this is? Do you have a nickname? Where did it come from? If you could equate your name with a creature, which creature would it be?

Activity: Research the attributes of your chosen creature and create an artwork of how it represents you.

GREY

'A shape came on through the trees. Its white hands like gloves, hair long to its waist, as a blanket of silver threads.' (Page 54)

Discuss: What is your first impression of Evey's aunt? How does the author make her seem villainous? Why do you think Evey trusts Grey?

'I wanted to laugh as I watched him shake. I had power over him. It felt good.' (page 24)

WITCH

FINBAR HAWKINS

TEACHING RESOURCES



Discuss: Who wields the most power in the book? Evey or Grey? Are there different ways to exert power. Why might power be dangerous?

Activity: Grey is the villain of the book, betraying her coven. Create a mind-map with Grey's villainous attributes. You might want to include her shapeshifting, or her smell, 'Like dead flowers' (page 73).

ANNE GREENEYE

'Fine ladies did not act this way.' (Page 132)

Discuss: Is Anne a fine lady? Use evidence to support your answer. It may depend through whose eyes she is seen?

Activity: How does the author use language and description to describe Anne's reliability. For example, 'steady green gaze.' (Page 93) Make a list of other examples.

'This strange woman of the wood...' (Page 95)

Discuss: How is Anne portrayed through her response to nature? What effect does this have?

'That fire burned brighter and bolder in her, and I would follow its flame.' (Page 144)

Activity: Find examples of where Anne is portrayed as light or heat, and with colour. Why does Hawkins do this?

There is a distance between Anne and her father since the death of her mother and then her sister.

"He was so angry, Evey, driven by grief. I pleaded with him, that I might have something of her. All I have is that painting. Nothing more." (Page 124)

Activity: Write a letter to Anne's father from her. You might choose to expose the truth of how Jane really died, or you might ask him to share his grief of Anne's mother more. What would you want to say to him if you were Anne? Remember that Anne is a 'fine lady', and the language should be formal.

'The girl who was not Dill looked back to me. I was no lady like her mistress.' (Page 111)

WITCH

FINBAR HAWKINS

TEACHING RESOURCES



Activity: Identify the differences between Anne and Evey. These mark the hierarchy of society. Look at the clothes, their speech, and how they are treated by others. Make two columns and record the differences side by side. Now study the many similarities between them. Are they more different or more similar?

Discuss: Do we still have class differences in society? How does this manifest today? Why has Hawkins chosen to point out the many similarities between Evey and Anne?

Hawkins introduces Lady Greeneye in a dramatic chapter, with the death of Cooper.

Activity: Write and draw a storyboard as if you were a film director shooting this scene. Which camera angles would you choose, when would you zoom in? Alongside your storyboard, choose which actors you would have for each character, and accompanying music and effects.

EVEY AND DILL: SISTER RELATIONSHIPS

Much of the novel reflects the idea of sibling rivalry and sister relationships.

‘How I wanted to pinch her, pull her hair.’ (Page 18)

Discuss: Why does Evey say this about her sister, Dill?

‘Croake nodded, as Dill helped him to drink. How good she was. How bad I was.’ (Page 27)

Discuss: How does the author show Evey’s anger towards Dill at the beginning of the novel? Identify the dramatic language used to portray this. Do siblings often display opposite attributes? Why does Evey think this?

Activity: Have you ever been jealous of a sibling, cousin or close friend for an ability of theirs? How did you deal with it? Can you think of other stories with sibling rivalry? Discuss with your talk partner.

“I know what it is to be a younger sister.” (Page 55)

Discuss: What does Grey mean by this? Do you feel that your siblings are treated differently from you depending on where they come in the family structure?



WITCH

FINBAR HAWKINS

TEACHING RESOURCES



Activity: Make a kindness log for a week (this involves kind acts that you do for your siblings). Does it improve your relationship?

Look again at the scene with the parting of the sisters in Chapter 8.

Discuss: Which literary devices does Hawkins use to make this scene powerful?

Activity: Write a diary entry as if you were Dill left at the coven. What are your feelings about Evey? How do you experience grief for the loss of a parent, but also a sister? What solace or learning do you get from the women in the coven?

*'This was the same Dill who most likely hated me for leaving her.
I wiped my eye.'* (Page 104)

Discuss: How does Evey's attitude change towards Dill? Think about the following emotions: anger/dislike/guilt/compassion/regret.

Evey and Dill's relationship reflects Anne's and Jane's, as well as Evey's mother's and Grey's.

Discuss: What similarities or differences can you see in their relationships?

Activity: Find other famous sister relationships – this might be other portrayals in literature, or real people. Were they rivals or friends? Make a PowerPoint about the relationship to show your class.

THEMES

WITCHCRAFT

*'No matter that Mother healed them.
Cured their stock. Smacked their children into the world.'* (Page 1)

Discuss: From the title of the book and the first line, 'I never did no magick.' (Page 1), Hawkins sets out the theme of witches and witchcraft.

But what does the narrator mean by 'no matter that Mother healed them.' How does it immediately introduce the idea of witchcraft as ambiguous?



WITCH

FINBAR HAWKINS

TEACHING RESOURCES



Identifying a witch:

“I care not for any god.” I spat to the cross above his bed.’ (Page 23)

“And witches are wicked, my lady. Did your mother never tell you that?” (Page 118)

“My mother told me...” Anne’s voice ran like clear water. “She always told me that a witch is a healer and a helper. A sage.” (Page 119)

“Wise women, scryers, healers! Whatever names we have for them, they had the witching way.” (Page 143)

Discuss: What is a witch? Are witches real? Are witches good or evil?

Activity: What does the reader learn about witches from the novel? Pay attention to Chapter 8, in which Evey and Dill arrive at the coven.

Research: How were witches viewed in the 17th century?

Discuss: Are witches a representation of female empowerment? Why were they seen as a threat to the patriarchy? Is ‘witch’ used as a pejorative term today? Why are stories of witches so popular today?

Activity: Create a brainstorm mind-map on witches. You may wish to include words such as ‘wise,’ ‘healer,’ ‘midwife,’ ‘scapegoat.’

Anne and Evey both talk about witches being healers, and it was a common attribute that these women often worked with herbs and plants to produce ‘medicines.’

Discuss: Think about the linguistic use of nature in the book, both as setting and as metaphor. Is Hawkins insinuating the importance of nature to these women by doing this? Is nature a force for good in the novel?

Activity: Can you think of any ‘natural’ cures? Do some research in the library and online to find out some plant medicines. Can you draw up a prescription for a friend? Describe the problem and then offer the cure.

Discuss: How are herbalists thought of today? Is there still suspicion? Why do you think medicines are regulated in modern society?



WITCH

FINBAR HAWKINS

TEACHING RESOURCES



MAGICK

Evey's magick is found through the scrying stone, inherited from her mother:

'The Wolf Tree Stone. Mother's scrying stone.' (Page 2)

Discuss: What is a scrying stone?

Look at the passage beginning *'You screamed. I wrestled to be free.'* On page 79.

Discuss: Who is Evey addressing in the second person use of 'you'. Is this passage a memory or a future projection, or is it something happening at that time that Evey is seeing/imagining? Have you ever had a premonition, a déjà vu? Can these things be explained by science?

Activity: Do you have a precious object that gives you confidence or makes you feel as if you have a power? Describe it.

If you could have any power or magic, what would it be? Discuss with a classmate or friend. Which other objects do you associate with witchcraft? Draw and label them, and then compare with a classmate.

The other object that persists throughout the novel is the rose. It seems to be emblematic of Jane:

'He peeled back the petals... He dropped the red bud, pressed it beneath his boot.'
(Page 109)

'The old man hobbled to another budding rose.' (Page 119)

'I swung into that scarlet cloak of her lost Jane, a smell of rose petals as it settled about me, its hood falling over my eyes.' (Page 126)

Discuss: Which other stories have you read in which the rose is a symbol or key object.

Activity: Which flower would you compare yourself to? Do some research and see if your flower has a particular meaning. Shakespeare often used flowers and plants as symbols – see if you can find examples.



WITCH

FINBAR HAWKINS

TEACHING RESOURCES



WITCH HUNTING & PERSECUTION

'For witches are wicked, evil things and must be hunted.' (Page 16)

Discuss: Does Evey mean this? Why were witches hunted?

"When my mother died, Anne moved to the window, "my father blamed witchcraft, said she had dabbled, had been punished by God." (Page 124)

Activity: Imagine you are a witch hunter. Create a poster for a wanted witch. How would you describe how people can identify a witch in their community?

'That painting of her mother, her hand upon a scrying stone. A witch in this house of rose beds and gilded windows. A witch like Mother. Witches everywhere.' (Page 124)

Discuss: Why is this surprising to Evey? If witches are from all echelons of society, how does this fit with the image of witches advertised by witch hunters?

Think about the time in which the book is set. What did people believe in? What was the role of religion and science?

Discuss: Why was it hard to prove witchcraft existed?

Research: Which natural occurrences in history were attributed to witches? For example, extreme weather or crop failure. Can you find evidence of these in the time in which witches were hunted in England?

WITCH FINDERS

"The Witchfinder? Matthew Jacobs!" (Page 183)

Although Hawkins has created a piece of fiction, he has taken inspiration from a real Witchfinder General, Matthew Hopkins.

Activity: What can you find out about the real Matthew Hopkins. Create a PowerPoint about him.



WITCH

FINBAR HAWKINS

TEACHING RESOURCES



A CULTURE OF SUSPICION

“He is pressed by those around him. The puritan church. The militia. The will of the people. Their fear and suspicion.” (Page 128)

“These are stories to keep us locked up at night. This war with the king has brought suspicion at every door. That my wife, like many others should be saved by a witch, but then sudden they are hunted. Why is this?” (Page 191)

Discuss: How does your culture or community or upbringing affect the way you think? Who enforces the rules in your community? Is any culture forbidden? Are any rituals prohibited?

“Our children are hungry. Our village has suffered much in the fighting. Our crops failed, and there was no harvest...there was nothing... those parliament soldiers took it all.” (Page 140)

Discuss: Why, in times of division, do people look for someone to blame? Can superstition ever be a good thing? Think about why people might have come up with superstitions as a way of explaining the unknown? Do you have any or know any superstitions? Can you write a list?

Activity: Hold a witch accusation (with supervision only). Ask questions of your peers to see if they would fit into the mould of a witch in the 17th century. For example, do they believe in God? Do they have a cat? Are they female? Can they swim?

Now see if you can convince others in your class with the evidence that you have gathered.

Activity: Design a leaflet that informs your community of how to protect themselves from being suspected of witchcraft.

“All witches must die. There can be no trace of their foul work in God’s new kingdom.”
(Page 223)



WITCH

FINBAR HAWKINS

TEACHING RESOURCES



Discuss: Do you think it was easy to convince people that witches existed? Which other groups of people have been persecuted through history? Are there still cultures and minorities now who face persecution. Where? What can be done to stop this?

Activity: Write a letter to your MP about one of these causes. Remember to use persuasive language and present evidence and facts. Think about what else you could do.

A FAIR TRIAL

“For we all know they are witches, good people! We know what they are about, do we not? They have bedeviled your lives. Cursed you, harmed you, made you suffer. And for that, they must pay for their wickedness, their treachery, their wilful crimes!” (Page 262)

Re-read Chapters 30-34

Activity: Write a newspaper report of the trial. Remember to include where, when, what, who and why. Which witness reports would you include?

Discuss: What’s the difference between justice and revenge? Is this a fair trial?

Activity: What makes a witness reliable? What does impartiality mean? Look at the vocabulary used in the trial scene. Compare with a modern trial – is there a judge or jury? Is there direction to be impartial? Are there advocates for both sides? Is there a clear law and punishment? What does the term ‘beyond reasonable doubt’ mean?

Activity: Research and create a display about the Pendle Witch Trials in 1612. How are they similar to what Hawkins has described in his novel?

*‘Men swung by their feet. Soldiers firing blind.
Women hung by their hair. Children swept up, swallowed.’* (Page 299)

Discuss: Is it ever right to fight injustice with violence? Can you think of modern examples of both injustices and peaceful or violent protests?



WITCH

FINBAR HAWKINS
TEACHING RESOURCES



WOMEN'S RIGHTS

LANGUAGE

Look at the different vocabulary used throughout the book to describe women.

'...my red fox...' (Page 88)

'...my red rose...' (Page 89)

"I'm coming, my red wench!" (Page 90)

"...he looks to me a waif, my lady." (Page 108)

'Jane wasn't like me. She was wilful and wild.' (Page 127)

'...a noblewoman.' (Page 139)

"Wise women, scryers, healers! Whatever names we have for them, they had the witching way." (Page 143)

'And Evey, not Jane, smiled her vixen smile.' (Page 171)

Discuss: How does language sexualise, demean or belittle women? When does it empower them?

"You fight like the girl you are!" (Page 303)

Discuss: Have you ever been accused of doing something 'like a girl'? Was this a demeaning insinuation?

Activity: Have a look at the advertising campaign #LikeaGirl from Always, Procter and Gamble. It set out to challenge the idea that females were not good enough, or not as good as men.

Watch the video here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XjJQBjWYDTs>



WITCH

FINBAR HAWKINS

TEACHING RESOURCES



Discuss: Do you think the company managed to change minds with their video? Did they re-appropriate the phrase, 'like a girl'? What effect did the video have?

Activity: Make your own advertisement that shows empowerment of women. Which product are you trying to sell? What message are you putting across? Look carefully at the language you use.

'A stumble of women...' (Page 263)

Hawkins has made up this collective noun, but the use of collective nouns is telling, both in this novel and in the English language.

Activity: Make a list of collective nouns. Remember to include collective nouns for women, men, wives, husbands, witches. Where does the word 'coven' come from? Investigate the collective noun for crows and look again at the trial scene.

AGE

Hawkins also draws attention to the difference in age between the women, and how they are treated. Again, look carefully at the language used.

"And then what, child?" Croake said. "What will you do?" Child was I? (Page 22)

'One moment a child she was, another older than her years she seemed.' (Page 34)

'like we were babes in the crib.' (Page 57)

Discuss: Does youth make Evey and Dill more vulnerable, or more powerful? What makes the most difference to being a woman and how she is treated by others – looks, age, wealth, or position in society? Is it different now? Does Evey use her age to her advantage?

Activity: Have a look at famous women as they are portrayed in today's media. Search through magazines and social media (under classroom supervision).

Are they described differently at a certain age? Are they described differently because of how they look? (Can you find incidences in which they are called 'witches?')



WITCH

FINBAR HAWKINS

TEACHING RESOURCES



SEXUALISATION

Re-read Chapter 10.

'I thought who was this man who made me feel so afeared to be a woman.' (Page 87)

Discuss: How and when does the encounter between Evey and Cooper become threatening? Why does Evey feel particularly threatened as a woman? Look carefully at the language used by Cooper. Does it become sexualised? Is Cooper more dangerous because he is a man? Does Evey feel threatened more as a woman or as a potential witch?

Activity: Look at the author's use of sense of smell in this passage to convey danger. Write your own threatening encounter, using smell as a warning signal.

Now compare this encounter with Evey's battle with Tall One in Chapter 39.

'Our blades kissed hard...his smitten maid.' (Page 341)

Discuss: Does Hawkins confuse violence and sexual language here too? Why?

GENDER EXPECTATIONS

'Angry. Men.' (Page 1)

Discuss: Are men more powerful in the novel? Are there any good men in the novel?

"For truth is the story we make, girl..." His voice swelled, like he roused a beloved crowd. But only I was there to watch his great show. "And it is men like me who will make the story of this land you hear? Men like me!" (Pages 342-3)

Discuss: What does Tall One mean by this? Is history made by men? Is history the truth? Are there different expectations of gender in your society? Are there different rules for young and old?

Activity: Take a particular event in history and see if the primary sources are mainly from men. Can you find an era in history in which the primary sources are from females? Do you feel there is an imbalance?



WITCH

FINBAR HAWKINS

TEACHING RESOURCES



PLAY-ACTING, COSTUME AND SONG

'Her smile wilted as she helped me from my old Evey clothes...I brought that dragon dress about my shoulders, felt its sigh of cotton lace.' (Page 123)

'Those people saw not me, but a fine lady, riding her fine steed.' (Page 139)

"And," Jane's sweet purr played him like the cat that pawed the mouse...' (Page 204)

Evey dresses as Jane to go to the Witch Trial. Look at how she speaks differently as Jane.

Discuss: What is the power of costume? Can dressing up change how a person feels, or behaves?

Activity: Create your own costume using re-usable materials. How have you transformed yourself, and how will you behave or feel differently? Think about which props make a difference too?

Discuss: How do women use dress and make up today? Do women 'act' a role? Does society have an expectation of how women should look?

'I would play the dark witch, give him a fright.' (Page 24)

'I watched them move like paper puppets, the trees their stage...' (Page 331)

Discuss: Why is so much of what happens in the novel described as a show or playing? Have you ever dressed up as a witch on Halloween? What is the meaning of Halloween, and why is it still celebrated today with costume and dressing up?

'Upon a stage was an ugly crone cloaked in black, with a mask of nose and hair and teeth. The crowd booed. They loved to fear the witch, and quailed at her talons, her billowing cloak, her teeth that would tear their skin.' (Page 239)

'We would go as what they feared. We would go as what they would never forget. We would go as those foulest, wickedest witches.' (Page 246)

Activity: Experiment with make-up and dress and create a costume for a good witch and a bad witch, or a young witch and an old witch. How different can you make them?



WITCH

FINBAR HAWKINS

TEACHING RESOURCES



Look at the song on page 249.

Discuss: What is the role of song and poem in the novel? When do songs become chants or incantations? What is the difference between a lullaby, as sung here, and a song around a bonfire in a coven?

Activity: Compose your own song. Is it a lullaby, a chant, or other? When would it be sung?

BIRDS

*'A pair of fat pigeons preened and fluttered against the branches.
Are you lost, Eveline? Are you? Are you?'* (Page 77)

'I felt bold, like a hawk watching from the shade.' (Page 126)

'And like those birds, ever my friends, leading me on.' (Page 135)

*'An owl, a beautiful white queen, perched high on the houses...
This way, this way!'* (Pages 199-200)

*'I had made blood magick with a crow. I had found my witching way.
And it felt so good. Now I must finish my spell, and become a true witch,
like my mother, like my sister.'* (Pages 268-269)

"I'm no girl," I said, for I knew what I was at last, "I am Eveline of the Birds." (Page 340)

Discuss: How does the author use birds to help Evey? Are birds always a sign of comfort and help in the novel?

Activity: Make a poster about the different types of birds mentioned in the novel.

*'...as around me whirled and swooped and screamed, with all their black hearts,
a great and beautiful murder of crows.'* (Page 296)

Discuss: Can the swarming of the crows at the trial be attributed to a natural occurrence? Research the behaviour of crows.

Activity: Write the scene of the trial from a crow's point of view.



WITCH

FINBAR HAWKINS

TEACHING RESOURCES



FURTHER READING

A Skinful of Shadows by Francis Hardinge

Witch Child by Celia Rees

Witch Hill by Marcus Sedgwick

Children of Blood and Bone by Tomi Adeyemi

How to Hang a Witch by Adriana Mather

The Witches of Worm by Zilpha Keatley Snyder

The Thicket: A Path Begins by JA White

TEACHING RESOURCES COMPILED BY
CLARE ZINKIN

