

# A TEACHER'S GUIDE FOR THE GHOUL OF WINDYDOWN VALE JAKE BURT

## ABOUT THE BOOK

In this action-packed mystery from award-winning author Jake Burt, fourteen-year-old Copper Innskeep holds Windydown Vale's deepest and darkest secret. He is the Ghoul that haunts the Vale, donning a gruesome costume to scare travelers and townsfolk away from the dangers of the surrounding swamps. When a terrified girl claims that she and her father were attacked by a creature, one that could not have been Copper, she threatens not just Copper's secret but the fate of all Windydown.

## USING THIS BOOK IN YOUR CLASSROOM

This guide is designed to help you incorporate *The Ghoul of Windydown Vale* into a standards-based curriculum. It contains a pre-reading activity, discussion questions, and post-reading activities. These activities and questions are aligned with the four strands of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) for English Language Arts and Literacy. The standards listed throughout the guide reflect the standards for grade six but the activities and questions can be adapted for grades four through seven.

This book can be used in many instructional contexts, including small groups, book clubs, and independent reading. Encourage students to keep their work in their reading notebooks or folders and bring them to reading conferences and group meetings to support their discussions with references to the text.

This guide is intended to support your classroom instruction. You know your students better than anyone else. Please adapt the activities and questions as needed to meet the needs of your students. We hope that you and your students enjoy this engaging book!



# BEFORE READING ACTIVITY

## SWAMP ECOSYSTEM

Explain to students that *The Ghoul of Windydown Vale* takes place in a swamp. Have them do brief research projects on this ecosystem to answer the questions: What is a swamp? Would a swamp be a good place to live? Why or why not?

CCSS for ELA and Literacy: RL.6.7, W.6.7

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Describe the town of Windydown Vale and the people who live there. Do you agree with Parsons that it should be called “the Jewel of the Mountains”?
2. What are the roles of Reeves and the other mayors in the town? How do the townspeople feel about them?
3. Why is Copper considered the pride of Windydown? How do you think this influences his decision to become the Ghoul?
4. Describe how the arrival of Annabelle and Shumpeter sets off a series of events that will change Windydown forever.
5. How do Copper’s feelings about Annabelle differ from Liza’s? What do you think is the reason for this?
6. When did you begin to think that Annabelle and Shumpeter might not be trustworthy? What did they say or do that influenced your thinking?
7. When Copper learns the truth about Annabelle, he accuses her of lying to him all along. Annabelle responds by saying that Copper was also lying by pretending to be the Ghoul. When she says, “A legend’s nothing but a lie that’s had time to grow a beard,” what do you think she means?
8. What do Copper and Annabelle find buried in the mud? How does this discovery challenge Copper’s beliefs about Reeves and the other mayors?
9. How does Reeves’s appearance seem different to Copper after he learns the truth about him? What does he mean when he says, “I’ve known Reeves my whole life, and he’s never looked like this ... even though it’s the same as he’s always looked”?
10. What does Reeves finally reveal about how Windydown Vale was really founded? How have he and the other mayors deceived and manipulated the townspeople? How does Reeves try to justify what they did?
11. Copper’s father calls the messy, dangerous parts of life “broken windows,” and says that once you endure them you see the world a little clearer. How have Copper’s experiences been a broken window for him? How have they challenged his perceptions about reality?
12. What difficult decision does Copper make at the end of the book? Do you agree or disagree with his decision? Explain your answer.
13. The author often ends chapters with cliffhangers. Why do you think he does this?

CCSS for ELA and Literacy: RL.6.1, RL.6.3, RL.6.5, SL.6.1

## AFTER READING ACTIVITIES

Explain to students that a theme in literature is the underlying message or big idea of a story and that the author conveys this through the characters, setting, and plot. Have students decide what they think is the central theme of *The Ghoul of Windydown Vale*, noting that they may have different views on this. Have each student create a theme chart and write the theme they have chosen at the top. Below it they should list specific details from the story that support their theme. Provide time for students to share their charts with the class and display them throughout the room.

CCSS for ELA and Literacy: RL.6.1, RL.6.2, SL.6.4

## POINT OF VIEW

Explain to students that *The Ghoul of Windydown Vale* is written as a first-person narrative using Copper's point of view. Have students write an essay on how the author develops Copper's point of view throughout the story. They should include how this perspective influences the way the reader experiences the story. Does it enhance or limit their understanding of the story? Why do they think the author chose to write this story from Copper's point of view? Have students share their essays with the class.

CCSS for ELA and Literacy: RL.6.1, RL.6.6, W.6.1

## WRITER'S CRAFT

Explain to students that the author uses descriptive language, including similes and metaphors, throughout the book to create vivid images of events, characters, and setting. Have them reread chapter nine, focusing on how imagery is used to describe the setting of Old Windydown and have them draw a picture based on these images. Provide time for them to share and compare their illustrations with a partner, explaining which words and phrases influenced their drawings. Encourage them to use descriptive language in their own writing.

CCSS for ELA and Literacy: RL.6.4, L.6.5

## THE SWAMP AS A SYMBOL

Explain to students that authors often use something concrete to symbolize an abstract idea in order to enhance the reader's understanding of a story. Have students meet in small groups to discuss how the swamp serves as a symbol for what is going on in Windydown Vale. They should use their illustrations of Old Windydown and their theme charts to support their ideas. Encourage them to restate each speaker's claims and ask questions for clarification.

CCSS for ELA and Literacy: RL.6.1, RL.6.4, SL.6.1, SL.6.3

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