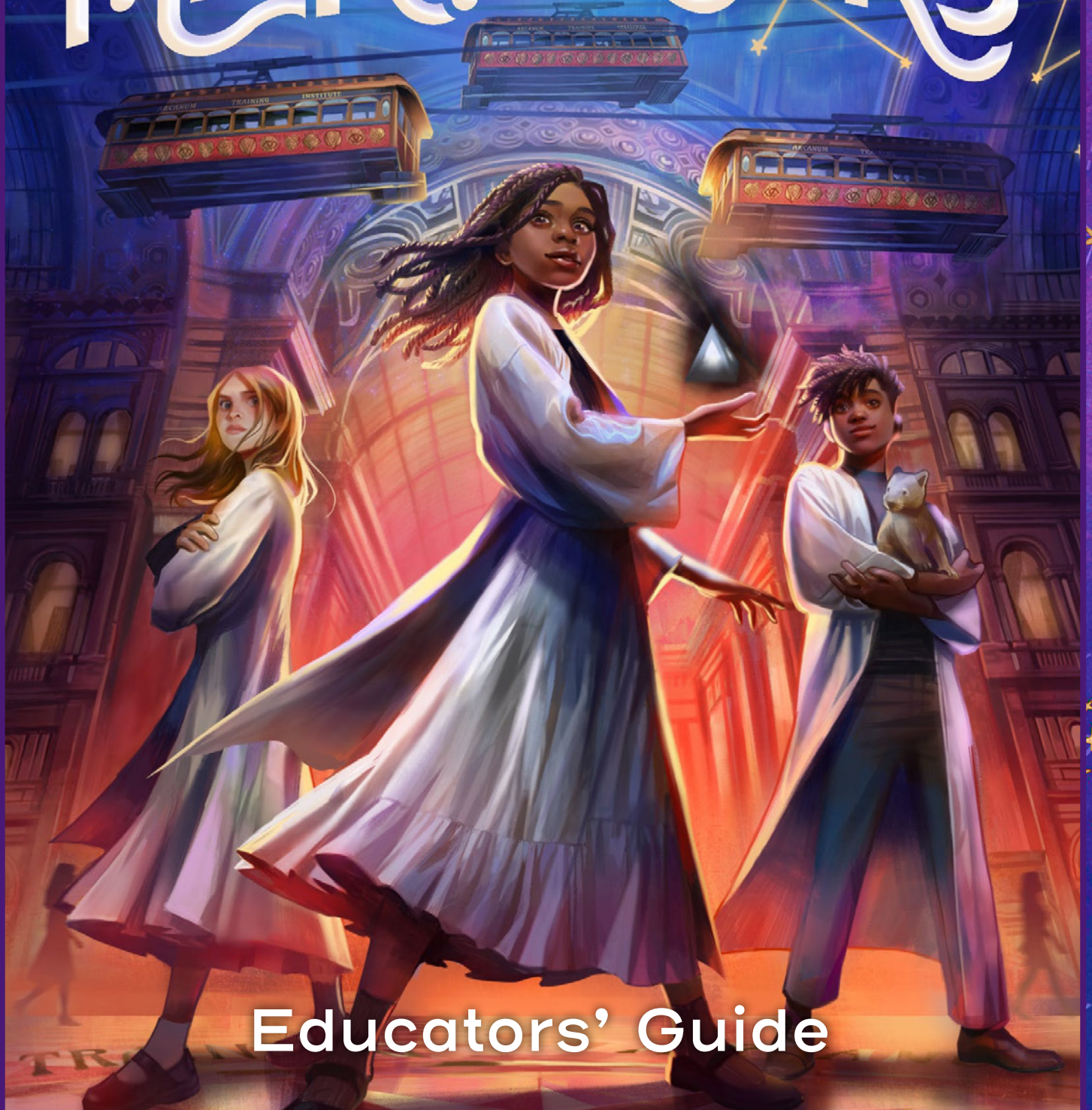


# THE MARVELLERS



Educators' Guide

Pisces

Tau

Gem

## About the Book

Dhonielle Clayton makes her middle-grade debut with a fantasy adventure set in a global magic school in the sky — an instant *New York Times* and #1 Indie Bestseller!

**“The Marvellers deserves the highest compliment I can give a book: I want to live in this world.”**

—RICK RIORDAN, #1 *NEW YORK TIMES* BESTSELLING-AUTHOR



Eleven-year-old Ella Durand is the first Conjuror to attend the Arcanum Training Institute, a magic school in the clouds where Marvellers from around the world practice their cultural arts, like brewing Indian spice elixirs and bartering with pesky Irish pixies.

Despite her excitement, Ella discovers that being the first isn't easy—some Marvellers mistrust her magic, which they deem “bad and unnatural.” But eventually, she finds friends in elixirs teacher, Masterji Thakur, and fellow misfits Brigit, a girl who hates magic, and Jason, a boy with a fondness for magical creatures.

When a dangerous criminal known as the Ace of Anarchy escapes prison, supposedly with a Conjuror's aid, tensions grow in the Marvellian world and Ella becomes the target of suspicion. Worse, Masterji Thakur mysteriously disappears while away on a research trip. With the help of her friends and her own growing powers, Ella must find a way to clear her family's name and track down her mentor before it's too late.



**“A gorgeous world filled with enchanting characters,  
*The Marvellers* will dazzle readers from beginning to end!”**

– KWAME MBALIA, *NEW YORK TIMES*-BESTSELLING  
AUTHOR OF TRISTAN STRONG SERIES

**“A fresh, intricately imagined world paired  
with a clever, endearing cast of characters.  
I can’t wait for every reader to find themselves  
in this story and dream of becoming a Marveller.**

– SHANNON MESSENGER, *NEW YORK TIMES*-BESTSELLING  
AUTHOR OF *KEEPER OF THE LOST CITIES*

**“*The Marvellers* is a rich, enchanted melting pot  
of magic, thrills, and color . . . filled with heart, wit, and humor.  
Reinventing the magic school trope is a tall order,  
but author Dhonielle Clayton is well up to the task . . .  
A tantalizing introduction to an exhilarating fantasy universe.”**

– SOMAN CHAINANI, *NEW YORK TIMES*-BESTSELLING  
AUTHOR OF *THE SCHOOL FOR GOOD AND EVIL* SERIES

## About the Author

**Dhonielle Clayton** spent most of her childhood under her grandmother’s table with a stack of books. She hails from the Washington, D.C. suburbs on the Maryland side. She is the *New York Times*-bestselling author of *The Belles* series, *Shattered Midnight*, co-author of *Blackout*, and the co-author of *The Rumor Game* and the *Tiny Pretty Things* duology, a Netflix original series. She taught secondary school for several years, and is a former elementary and middle school librarian. She is COO of the non-profit We Need Diverse Books, and President of Cake Creative and Electric Postcard Entertainment, IP story studios dedicated to diverse books for all ages.

She’s an avid traveler, and always on the hunt for magic and mischief. Her new book, *The Marvellers*, is her middle-grade fantasy debut.

# About this Guide

The Common Core Standards push readers to look closer when reading a text including examining author's craft and analyzing word choice and narrative elements. Clayton's novel *The Marvellers*, includes intricate themes, complex characters, specific word choice, and a well-crafted plot that allows the reader to deeply delve into the text. This teaching guide include discussion questions and language arts activities to be used in grades 4-8 as this text is read as a whole group, small group, or a combination. This guide could also be modified to be used with a student who is reading the novel independently.

The Common Core Anchor Standards in English Language Arts and National Council for Social Studies Themes that can be addressed using the discussion questions and activities in this guide are:

## English Language Arts

### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.1**

Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.

### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.2**

Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.

### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.3**

Analyze how and why individuals, events, or ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.

### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.4**

Interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text, including determining technical, connotative, and figurative meanings, and analyze how specific word choices shape meaning or tone.

### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.5**

Analyze the structure of texts, including how specific sentences, paragraphs, and larger portions of the text (e.g., a section, chapter, scene, or stanza) relate to each other and the whole.

### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.6**

Assess how point of view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text.

### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.10**

Read and comprehend complex literary texts independently and proficiently.

### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.1**

Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.

### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.2**

Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.

### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.7**

Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects based on focused questions, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.

## History

### **Theme 1: Culture**

Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of culture and cultural diversity.

### **Theme 2: Time, Continuity, and Change**

Social Studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of the past and its legacy.

### **Theme 3: People, Places, and Environments**

Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of people, places, and environments.

### **Theme 10: Civic Ideals and Practices**

Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of the ideals, principles, and practices of citizenship in a democratic society.

# Discussion Questions

Use these questions as reading check-ins, writing prompts, or classroom discussions throughout *The Marvellers*.

1. Why was Ella forced to switch rooms (p. 62)? Why did the Headmarvellers feel that her and Brigit would make good roommates?
2. How are words like uncivilized (p. 80) just a way of covering up racism and being afraid of differences?
3. Why do you think the author chose to have chapters telling both Ella's story and Gia's story?
4. How did Gia being labeled dangerous (p. 84) and being told she couldn't be a leader (p. 209) lend itself to her life of crime?
  - **Extension:** How can Gia's story be compared to many who end up incarcerated in the United States?
5. On page 93, how can the relationship between Conjurors and Marvellians be compared to white Americans and Black Americans in the United States throughout history?
6. Why do Caribbean and African Marvellians view themselves as different from Conjurors while, as Ella's gran says, "we're just cousins separated by water, time, and different experiences?" And why do you believe they exclude Conjurors now even though they, once, were excluded also?
7. Based on Aunt Sera's sharing on page 173-177, how did the Transatlantic Slave Trade lead to the creation of Conjurors?
8. After Brigit gets the world egg, Ella starts acting differently. Why does she begin acting the way she does?
9. Headmarveller Rivera stated that "many communities have struggled to acclimate to the Marvellian Way;" however, why do Marvellians automatically want outsiders of their community to change to their ways? What does this tell you about them?
10. Why would Marvellians want history to not include that a Conjuror built the Arcanum?
  - Ask the same questions that Ella asked herself on p. 394 using text evidence and prediction: Was Jean-Michel a founder? What had happened to him? Why had the Institute hidden this truth?
11. How is the quote on page 233 about surviving in both the Marvel and Conjuror worlds similar to code switching which is defined "broadly... [as] adjusting one's style of speech, appearance, behavior, and expression in ways that will optimize the comfort of others in exchange for fair treatment, quality service, and employment opportunities"?
  - Source: [The Costs of Code-Switching](#) by Courtney L. McCluney, Kathrina Robotham, Serenity Lee, Richard Smith, and Myles Durkee from Harvard Business Review

12. Why did Jason and his family keep it a secret that his mom is a Conjuror?
13. Conjurors, like many Black, Indigenous, and People of Color, share their history by passing down memories (277), Conjurors with magic while BIPOC with oral tradition. Why would having an oral tradition of history lead to erasure too often in written history (p. 288)?
14. Were you surprised by Ella's father's inclusion with the Aces? Why did he help them in the past? Why won't he help them now?
15. Did you predict what had happened to Ella's Aunt Celeste? Why or why not?
16. How does Brigit's learning of her mother's identity change how she views herself?
17. Why do you believe the author separated the book into four sections? How does each section compare to parts of a plot diagram?
18. Using Dhonielle Clayton's statements in the acknowledgements, how did the lack of diverse fantasy lead to the creation of *The Marvellers*?
19. What do you think is going to happen in the next book?
20. Extension Discussion Question: Who gets to decide "Whose customs got to be followed? Whose protocols were the best?" (p. 212)



# Classroom Extensions

Use these activities to extend your students' thinking and experience with *The Marvellers*.

## Intriguing Words

- Research shows that finding, defining, and discussing vocabulary within the context of reading is one of the most effective ways to learn vocabulary, and Dhonielle Clayton uses very specific word choice in *The Marvellers*.
- While reading, have students mark words that intrigue them. Intriguing words can be words they like, words they didn't know, words that they can tell were specifically chosen by the author, Italian words, etc.
- Using these words that are identified by your students, have your students create a word wall of the vocabulary from *The Marvellers* by picking five words that they liked learning the most and putting them, with their student-worded definition and a drawing/symbol to post, on the word wall. They should also put what page the word is on in the book. You can have them add anything else on the word wall index card as well such as synonyms, antonyms, etc.
- Before posting the word wall words on the wall, have students get in small groups and share their words with peers making sure to share why they chose the word and where it is in the book.
- Example of word wall index card:




### NEOPHYTE

Someone who is new to something



(Synonym: beginner, newcomer, new)

Page 53

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- Some examples of words (page #) found in *The Marvellers* that may be chosen are:

- mentor (52)
- scrying (69)
- uncivilized (80)
- bigotry (81)
- ostracized (81)
- discriminatory (81)
- slur (82)
- redacted (90)
- oscillated (97)
- sonar (106)
- palimpsest (152)
- garbled (153)
- lapidary (155)
- devolved (176)
- perpetuity (179)
- transmuting (180)
- dollop (206)
- bulged (227)
- walloped (308)
- dilapidated (350)
- abhorrent (381)

- **Extension Activities**

- Using the student-chosen words, create a list of “intriguing words” that your students found and challenge students to use some of the words in their own writing.
- Ask students to answer the following standards-based question about their intriguing word(s): Why would the author choose to use this word over a synonym? How did the author’s choice of this word change the tone or mood of the section the word is found in?



## School Integration

- Using [Learning for Justice’s Timeline of School Integration in the U.S.](#), [National Geographic Kids’ The Road to School Desegregation](#), and any other found resource, have students complete a comparison essay looking at Ella’s inclusion at Arcanum Training Institute compared to school integration in the United States.

## Paragons

- Self to Paragons Connection**
  - Label different parts of the room with the five different Paragons.
  - First, have students independently list their strengths and weaknesses.
  - Then, have them label each strength and weakness with either tough, vision, spirit, sound, or taste. Looking at their list of strengths and weaknesses, students can determine which of the Paragons they fit in the best.
  - Have all students move to the Paragon they felt they fit.
  - Once in their groups, they should add to the information about their Paragon found at the beginning of *The Marvellers* and create a profile for their Paragon based on their strengths, weaknesses, and personalities.
- Character to Paragons Connection**
  - After meeting and getting to know Ella, Brigit, Jason, and the other Year Ones (and before they are placed in their Paragon in chapter thirty-one), as a class predict what Paragon you all think each character will be placed using text evidence and Paragon information and complete the first three columns in this graphic organizer.

Character	Predicted Paragon	Why prediction?	Placed Paragon	Correct or Incorrect? Explain.

- After Chapter thirty-one, complete the final two columns.
- Extension Activity:** Have students, in pairs or small groups, create a quiz for sorting people into the Paragons.





## Food

- Before completing this activity, have a discussion as a class asking: why is food such a big part of the book?
- Once students have connected food to culture, have each student, using their own food experiences, emulate Clayton's alliteration (ex. 271) to make a menu of food that show their culture, family, tastes, etc. that they would want fed to them at the Arcanum.

## Underworld Mythology

- Although Dhonielle Clayton created her own Underworld Mythology, she includes aspects of mythology from real-world mythologies.
- Group students to research real-world mythological underworlds such as Diyu, Duat, and Elysium Fields.
  - Visit <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Underworld> to see various underworld beliefs by religion, region, or ethnicity.
- As they research, they should also compare what they find in their research and what is in *The Marvellers*.
- Once students have researched their underworld mythologies and compared it to *The Marvellers*, have them share with their peers using a presentation of their choice.

## Propaganda Against Conjuror

- Much of what is spread about Conjurors that make Marvellers hesitant to integrate their schools and communities is from word of mouth, redacted history, and op-eds from the news box. We see this particularly in Chapter Ten during Aunt Sera's first Conjuror lesson. Kids seeing Conjurors and their history through only one perspective has led to fear and prejudice. Use Chapter Ten to have a discussion around media literacy and perspective.
- **Extension Activity:** Two lessons can help students combat this in our world:

- **Media Literacy: CRAAP**

Students should use the CRAAP method when looking at sources. [Use Model Thinkers' CRAAP test and checklist](#) to show students how to analyze sources.

Have students complete the CRAAP checklist using websites you assign. Mix reliable websites with [fake ones](#).

- **History Perspectives**

At the 2022 Walter Awards, Kekla Magoon stated:

*If we don't have a lot of different perspectives telling history then we're never going to have a complete picture, showing our entire history. It's not \*alternative\* history. It is another perspective that rounds out what is known about the time period and expands our understanding of history. It's only enriching our understanding, not taking anything away.*

She also shared a tactical way she explains perspective. If you take a pen and look at it straight on, it is a circle. If you hold it up and down, it is a vertical line. If you hold it side to side, it is a horizontal line. But it is also a pen. All of these perspectives are correct. This example can be done with different objects to help students understand perspectives and that it isn't alternate history.

Then, move to looking at a time in history from different perspectives. [Teaching History's Multiperspectivity: What It Is, and Why Use It?](#) can help build this activity.



### Congo Square

- **Preteaching Optional Activity:** If able, read *Freedom in Congo Square* by Carole Boston Weatherford, illustrated by R. Gregory Christie
- Have students look at the history of New Orleans and specifically Congo Square.
  - **Resource option:** [GoNOLA's NOLA History: Congo Square and the Roots of New Orleans Music](#)
- Have students ask themselves why they think the author chose New Orleans and specifically Congo Square as a center of Conjuror magic and a safe place for Conjurors. Have students write a text-dependent essay sharing their thoughts.

## Prejudice

- So much of what we do on a daily basis, including the way we act, dress, talk, etc. has been mandated, like Masterji Thakur stated, “to honor order and tradition. But what happens when most of it is rooted in prejudice?” Like the Marvellian culture, we find ourselves using order and tradition to spread societal bias, prejudice, sexism, and racism.
- Have students look into rules, traditions, etc. within our American culture that they believe are rooted in prejudice and have them complete a research project determining where the rule came from, how it is built from prejudice, and how it could be changed to be more inclusive.
  - **Examples:** Dress code, School structure, Certain laws, Family expectations, etc.
- Have students share their research and project with the class.



This guide was created by Kellee Moye, a middle school teacher-librarian in Orlando, FL. Kellee is the author of various teaching guides for all levels; the co-author of the blog [Unleashing Readers](#); a jury member then co-chair of the 2020-2021 Schneider Family Award Jury; on the 2016-2018 ALAN Board of Directors and current social media chair for ALAN; a member of NCTE, ALAN, and ALA; and a member then chair of the Amelia Elizabeth Walden Book Award committee from 2012-2014. Kellee can be reached at [Kellee.Moye@gmail.com](mailto:Kellee.Moye@gmail.com).

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