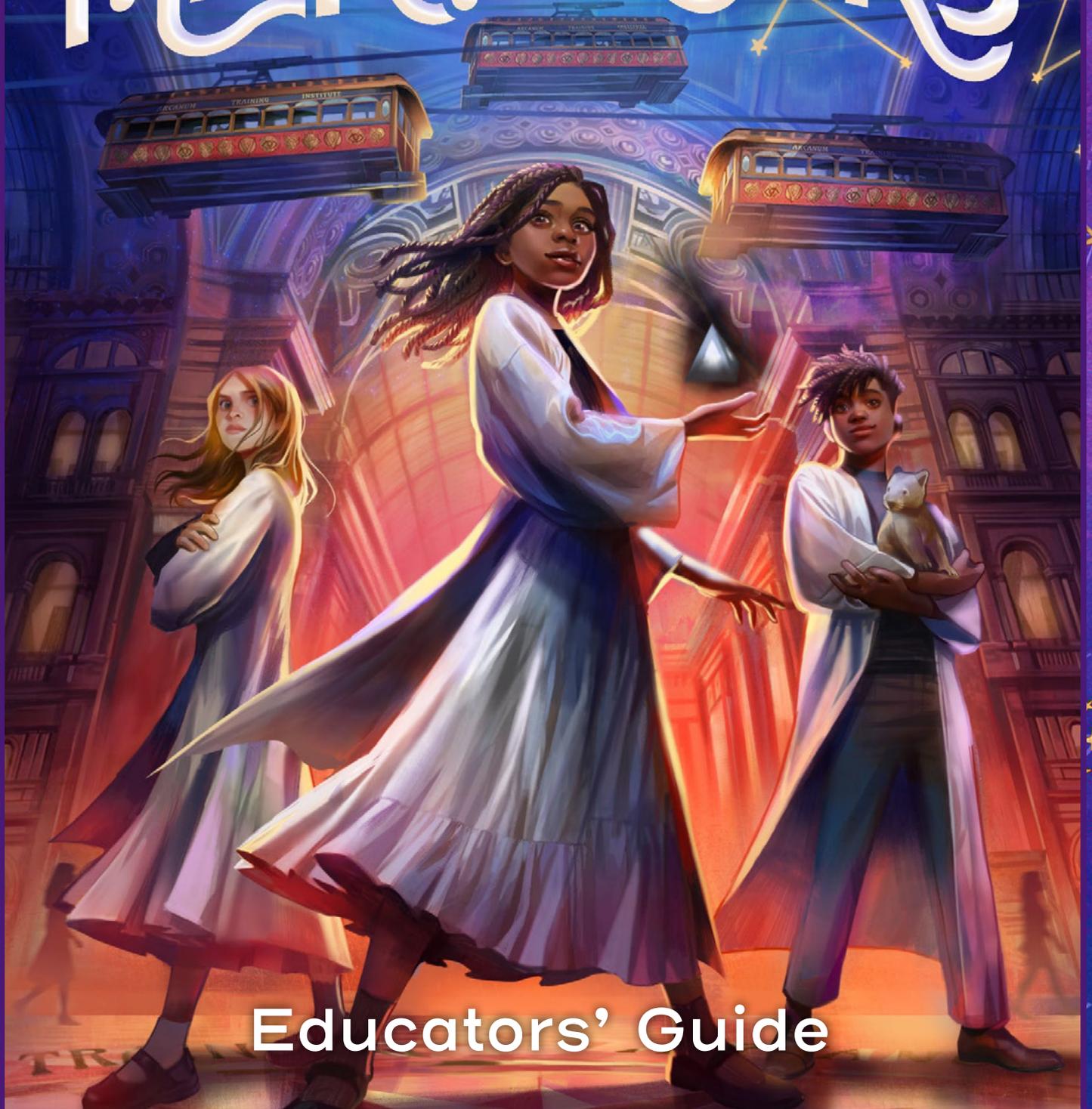


THE MARVELLERS



Educators' Guide

Pisces

Tau

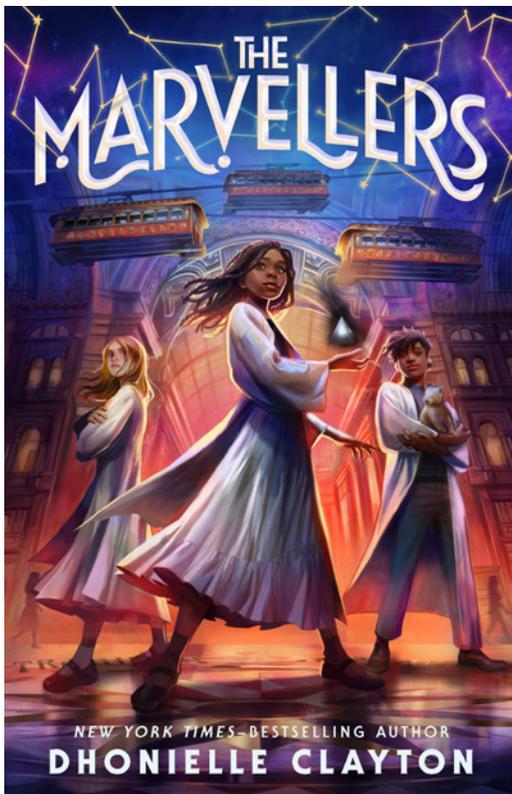
Gem

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.”

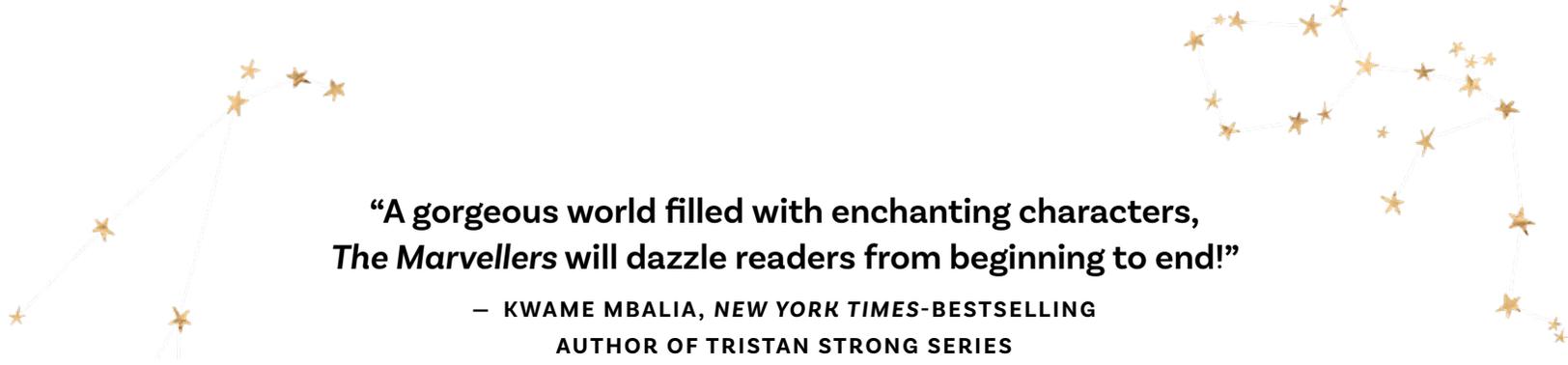
—RICK RIORDAN, #1 *NEW YORK TIMES* BESTSELLING-AUTHOR



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.

Preamble

Dear Reader,

As you embark on your journey with Ella through the Marvellian world, try to imagine it as one that exists right beside the one you've known your entire life. The mysteries and magic you will encounter here are a manifestation of humankind's quest for understanding and desire to build bridges between forces seen and unseen. Since time immemorial, societies have tried to make sense of mysteries in the world all around us. These most often showed up in educational systems as studies centered around mythological tales and creation stories. In many schools today, young people still learn about Greek and Roman mythology, but they seldom venture beyond to explore what is referred to as metaphysics, or beliefs people have that pertain to the spiritual world throughout our global society.

Here is your opportunity to explore magical places, creatures, foods, and practices through the eyes of all people of the world. You will travel to places in the Americas alongside Ella and be able to think about and discuss some of their magical histories. If you are lucky enough to live in New Orleans, New York, or any of the other places in the story, take this guide as your opportunity to explore more of what makes these places so special in the world of those who feel connected to magical traditions. You may find yourself wondering if what is presented is fact or fiction.

As is the case with any fantastic tale, you will find real places and people woven in alongside those Dhonielle Clayton has created for the purposes of making space for the imagination in a world where creativity really does create. Consider this book an invitation to read, discuss, and explore the magical communities that are all around us, the cultural ties that bind us, and the biases that if we are not careful, can tear us apart. So, let yourself become part of world creation by reading this story and integrating it into what you know or believe you understand about the world we live in.

Welcome to the world of *The Marvellers*.

Essential Questions



- How do individuals participate in and shape their communities? Conversely, how are communities created by individual beliefs and practices?
- What are some real-life examples of magical traditions?
- How do societal groups deal with conflict within communities?
- How can individuals use their gifts in the pursuit of justice?
- What biases do people often hold about the magical or supernatural world?
- How have humans historically tried to transform their world through the power of imagination?

Central Themes

- 1. Community** - The Marvellian world exists beside the world of the “Fewels” and that of the Conjurers. Each has very specific rules for members of the community. Consider the ways that communities are formed and how individuals are encouraged to change themselves to fit in with the rules of their community.
- 2. Exclusion vs. Inclusion** - At times throughout the story, Ella feels excluded due to her Conjuror heritage. This parallels the way many people have been excluded or judged based on the communities they come from. Examine the ways societies have historically treated those who are different and have stigmatized specific groups of people.
- 3. Conflict and Community** - As Ella encounters the Ace of Anarchy, she also must examine the questions she has about her own upbringing and place at The Arcanum Institute and in the Marvellian world. She ultimately has to decide how she will handle conflict in her community and how she can use her abilities to fuel the pursuit of justice. Discuss the way humans have handled conflict in our society and individuals like Gandhi, MLK Jr., Benazir Bhutto, or Malala who have had the ability to help us navigate conflict, and change the course of history through their words and actions.
- 4. Global Magic** - *The Marvellers* contains many areas of global magical knowledge. Some of it is ancestral knowledge that has been passed down through generations. Though magic has a very imaginary place in the Western world, this is not true everywhere. For some, the “Underworld” or the spiritual world of those who no longer live among us, for example, is very real and as much alive as the one we inhabit every day. Discuss magical traditions through time you may have heard of or experienced and allow the story to support a deeper exploration of them.

Standards

The following standards apply to discussion topics and activities in this guide.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.3

Describe how a particular story's or drama's plot unfolds in a series of episodes as well as how the characters respond or change as the plot moves toward a resolution.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.4

Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of a specific word choice on meaning and tone

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.6

Explain how an author develops the point of view of the narrator or speaker in a text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.9

Compare and contrast texts in different forms or genres (e.g., stories and poems; historical novels and fantasy stories) in terms of their approaches to similar themes and topics.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.6.7

Integrate information presented in different media or formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively) as well as in words to develop a coherent understanding of a topic or issue.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.6.2

Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.6.7

Conduct short research projects to answer a question, drawing on several sources and refocusing the inquiry when appropriate.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.6.8

Gather relevant information from multiple print and digital sources; assess the credibility of each source, and quote or paraphrase the data and conclusions of others while avoiding plagiarism and providing basic bibliographic information for sources.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.6.9.A

Apply *grade 6 Reading standards* to literature (e.g., "Compare and contrast texts in *different forms* or genres [e.g., stories and poems; historical novels and fantasy stories] in terms of their approaches to similar themes and topics").

Discussion Questions

HOME AND AWAY

1. What's a griot? What's the difference between conjuring and marveling?
2. What are the marks conjuring leaves on the body?
3. How is Ella different from those around her?
4. What kind of pets do you have? How are they similar to or different from the Conjuror's companions?
5. What does Ella want more than anything? Why?
6. According to The Conjure Edict, where are most conjurers from?
7. How does Marvellian magic compare to what you know about magic in your culture/society?
8. Which of the items on Ella's packing list interests you the most? Write a description of what it is/does. How do her items compare to what you would pack to go on a trip?
9. What was the first Conjure Ella ever did? What can you infer about her gifts from this?
10. What are the Marveller tenants? Do you have any comparable rules or social contracts in your society?
11. Anansi is a very important figure from West African, African-American, and Caribbean folklore. Have you heard of him before? If so, what do you know? If not, where could you find more information about him?
12. What are the Paragons? What do they control?
13. Who were the founders of the Arcanum Training Institute and what do their names tell you about what they believe in?
14. What do you notice about Ella's schedule? How is it similar to or different from yours? Which class do you think you'd like to take the most?
15. Why is Ella so resistant to Jason's offers for help? What can you infer about her character by the fact she doesn't like to accept help so easily?
16. What's the significance of a bottle tree? Are there any plants or trees with magical or spiritual properties in your culture? If so, what are they?
17. Would you want your parents to decide your paragon, for an exam to decide, or would you prefer to decide yourself? What Paragon would you choose if you had to choose now?
18. Why and how did the first Marvellers come together?
19. Who are the Aces and what is their place in the Marvellian community?
20. Why do you suppose Conjurers are seen as "less than" in Marvellian society?
21. Who are the Fewels and what kind of treatment do they receive? Why are they treated this way?
22. How do people in the story communicate with one another beyond language barriers. What tools do we have in our world that are similar or used in similar ways?



23. Do any of the foods mentioned in the Dining Hall seem familiar to you? What kinds of foods are listed and how are they magical?
24. What's jollof and what are all the different places it comes from? Have you ever had it before?
25. What are the spiritual as well as the culinary properties of the spices mentioned?
What spices do you use?
26. What spiritual traditions for connecting with loved ones who have left the world of the living exist in your culture?



THE WORLD OF THE ARCANUM INSTITUTE

27. "Conjure is a bittersweet cross between rage and hope, but yet still full of love. We lived suspended. Every Conjuror from New Orleans to Havana to Cartagena, to Bahia knows that. A bruised fruit is still sweet, baby." --Aunt Sera (174) Why do you think Aunt Sera describes Conjure this way? What does she mean by being suspended?
28. What can you infer about each Conjuror or Marveller's family from the types of conjures or marvels they are able to do?
29. Have you ever been accused of something you didn't do? What did you do in response to the accusation? What did it feel like to be wrongfully accused?
30. Have you ever kept a family secret or a secret within your group of friends? Why? Did keeping the secret help or hurt those involved?

THE WORLD OF THE MARVELLERS



31. The dormitory towers are named after constellations. Which ones? What is the story of each constellation?
32. How does Ella's community feel about her crossing over into the Marvellian world? How do the Marvellers feel about her coming into their world?
33. Why do you think Ella and Conjurers are blamed for everything? Who are some groups that have been scapegoated or targeted in our world? Why do you think this happens?
34. What is the "Marvellian Way"? Why do you think Ella is being targeted?
35. What do you think about Ella's godmother's advice that "What's done in the dark doesn't stay there for long"?

THE CONJUREVERSE

36. Why might "bringing a soul out of the Underworld [have] consequences"? What have you heard, or what do you know about people who attempt to bring spirits from the beyond into our world after they have died?
37. Which of the Marvels do you feel most drawn to? Why?
38. What was revealed about the original founder of Arcanum and why was it so shocking?
39. What do you think of the line, "Scent delivers a memory to the mind that isn't impaired by time"? (389) Has this been true for you in your life? Think of an example and describe it.
40. What can you infer about Ella from the revelation of her Paragon and Marvel?



Journal Prompts:

1. What's Marvellous about you? Make a list of the top 10 things with 10 being just a little bit less marvelous than 9, and so on.
2. Have you ever communicated with someone you're close to just through your dreams or thoughts? If so, what was it like? Describe the dream or incident using as much detail as possible.
3. Think about the world we live in and people who live between cultures, races, languages, and ethnic groups. What might it mean to be a "bittersweet cross between rage and hope, but yet still full of love"? Can you relate to this? If not, what are some things you could do to become more empathetic and enlightened?
4. Who do you think is bullying Ella about her light and why? Have you ever been bullied about talents you have, or because you didn't have talents you wish that you did? Or have you ever witnessed someone being bullied before? Write about the incident in as much detail as you can.
5. In your opinion, what are some reasons people look to the stars for predictions about their fate? Do you know your astrological sign? Do you think it matters? Why or why not?
6. What are some injustices or inconsistencies you notice about how people are treated in the world of the Marvellers? What injustices exist in our world that are similar? *Ex. Those from certain regions of the country, a city, or a state, are often treated differently or as less than.*
7. What do you think of Ella's mama's words, "Some things have to be faced. They can't be avoided." (347) How do they compare to James Baldwin's words, "Not everything that is faced can be changed, but nothing can be changed until it is faced." Write a journal prompt exploring both quotes and their underlying ideas and how they connect to the story in *The Marvellers*.
8. How do you think you would react if you knew you had to face someone like Gia? What special skills would you use, or people would you call to help you?



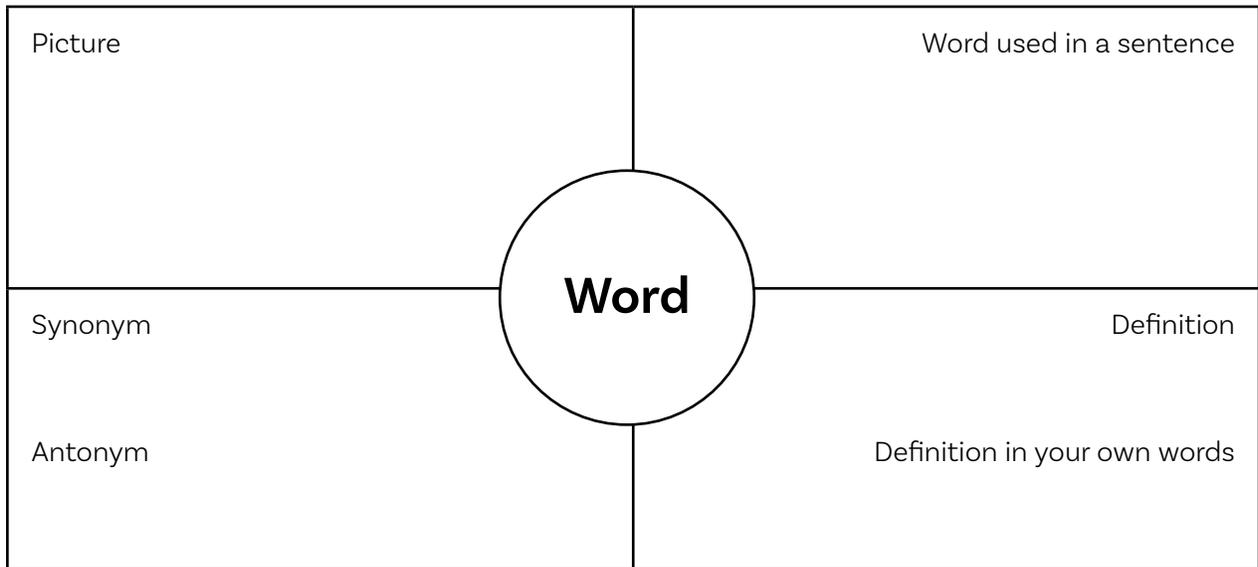
Other Activities

1. Create a body biography for any character indicating their thoughts (mind) feelings (heart) actions (hands) and desires (belly). Add their companion if they have one. Google images will have many examples, but here is one example of a [Body Biography](#).
2. Create a set of tenets or code of conduct for students at your school or in your classroom community. What are some rules or social understandings you all agree to abide by? Create a poster or banner with these tenets and post them in a place where they will be seen by all. Why do we need to have tenets or rules of conduct? What makes it so hard for a community to determine what rules to follow?
3. The Marvellian World is held together by families and friendships. As such, you will find the names of many authors mentioned in the book that are part of the family of folks who write literature. How many of them do you know? What books of theirs have you read? You may want to set aside a space in your classroom or create a Jamboard with book covers that show their titles so you have more stories to explore. Here are a few of their names:

Mark Oshiro
Kwame Mbalia
Anne Ursu
Ellen Oh
Tracey Baptiste
Meghan Cannistra
Ashley Woodfolk
Lamar Giles
Julie Murphy
Laura Ruby
Tiffany D. Jackson
Natalie C. Parker
Tochi Onyebuchi
Ashley Woodfolk
Adam Silvera
Brendan Kiely
Angie Thomas

4. Create a Venn diagram comparing and contrasting Marvellers & Conjurers. Don't forget to include the areas where they intersect.

5. Create a classroom word wall or chart with new words or terms as you read to develop a Lexicon for new terms that go with this new world. Make sure to include synonyms or real-world examples, a definition, and a small drawing to help you visualize what the world means. You can create these individually and add them to the word wall as you read, or divide the class into groups and have one person within each group be responsible for collecting new words.



<https://ksevilla.weebly.com/vocabulary-squares.html>

6. Complete this [Character Development Reading Log](#) for a character of your choice to track their development throughout the story. How do the characters change? Write a narrative with text evidence or create an annotated image or visual presentation using ThingLink or Animoto to describe the changes your chosen character undergoes throughout the novel.
7. Conjure marks are external signs of internal beliefs/power and they're not so different from tattoos that many people have in cultures around the world. Conduct some research about the art of tattooing in a specific country and culture around the world. Then, prepare a presentation to explain any typical types of tattoos, any commonly found symbols or language, and the actual process of getting a tattoo, whether it be ancient, or modern. If you choose, you may interview someone you know who has a tattoo of special significance. Take pictures of their tattoo and record their answers to questions you ask and add their information to your presentation.
8. Research the Transatlantic Slave Trade and the routes that slave ships took. How did traditions of conjuring travel from the African continent to locations of the African diaspora including the Americas and the Caribbean? Here are some resources to help you with your research.
 - [Voyages: The Transatlantic Slave Trade Database | The National Endowment for the Humanities](#)
 - [How some Black Americans are finding solace in African spirituality](#)
 - [African Diaspora Religions](#)

9. Draw your own version of one of the many maps mentioned on pages 41-43
10. Make a map of The Underworld using the information provided in the book. If you choose, you may research a depiction of The Underworld that is specific to a global culture and draw that instead. Include as much detail as you can and be sure to include any creatures or individuals known to inhabit the realm.
11. Draw a picture of a world-hatching egg. Explain each element of what owners will find when the egg hatches.
12. Research some Non-western constellation systems. What types of stories do they reveal about beliefs about how the world works? Do you have a preference for any? Why or why not?
13. Throughout the book there are news flashes. Using one or more as a model, create a news bulletin of your own providing information about something that has happened at school or in your world. It can be real or imagined.
14. What types of disguises do you think Gia may take on in future books? Complete the disguises in the chart at the back of the book with your predictions.
15. Write your own short story with the central characters from The Marvellers. Where will they go, what will they do, and who will accompany them? Remember to use [Freytag's Plot Pyramid](#) to include all appropriate parts of the story.
16. What do the Starfolk look like? What do you think Conjure companions, Rotties, Pixies, or Dirt Dobbins look like? *Use clues from the book to illustrate one.
17. Using what you know of the Hero's cycle, map out Ella's adventures and connect each part of her story to a stage in the cycle. You may choose the traditional cycle found, or a feminist version both of which are discussed [here](#).



Exploring the Conjureverse VS. The World of the Marvellers

Name: _____

Per: _____

Date: _____

For each of the following societies, find textual evidence to support your analysis of each environment.

Physical Setting: What does it look like, sound like, what kinds of foods do they eat in each realm?		
Realm	Text Evidence	Explanation
CONJUREVERSE		
MARVELLERVERSE		

Characters: Who resides in each environment, name some principal characters and their characteristics as well as any other information you find interesting about them.		
Realm	Text Evidence	Explanation
CONJUREVERSE		
MARVELLERVERSE		

For either the Conjureverse or the world of The Marvellers, unpack some of the conflicts that exist.

Conflict	Text Evidence	Explanation of evidence in my own words... <i>Ex. This example is evidence of... happening between...and...</i>
Character vs. Character		
Character vs. Society		
Character vs. Self		

SYNTHESIS: REAL-WORLD PARALLELS

Using any of the following resources, make a comparison between either The Conjureverse and The World of The Marvellers. Include quotes from the charts you've created above AND one of the following resources:

[Ruby Bridges | National Women's History Museum](#)

["Santeria": La Regla de Ocha-Ifa and Lukumi | The Pluralism Project](#)

[Live Science: Alchemy](#)

[Exploring the World's Creation Myths : NPR](#)



Create a World Egg “Malysvit”

Name: _____

Per: _____

Date: _____

Create your own World Egg in the space below, then describe it at each stage:
closed, hatching, open. What will the owner see when it finally hatches?

Closed: Color, texture, external appearance	
Hatching: Color, texture, external appearance (any additional sounds or sights)	
Open: Colors, internal landscape and structures (any additional sounds or sights). You may choose to explain the change of day to night and how this alters its appearance.	





Name: _____

Per: _____

Date: _____

Choose from any of the following activities:

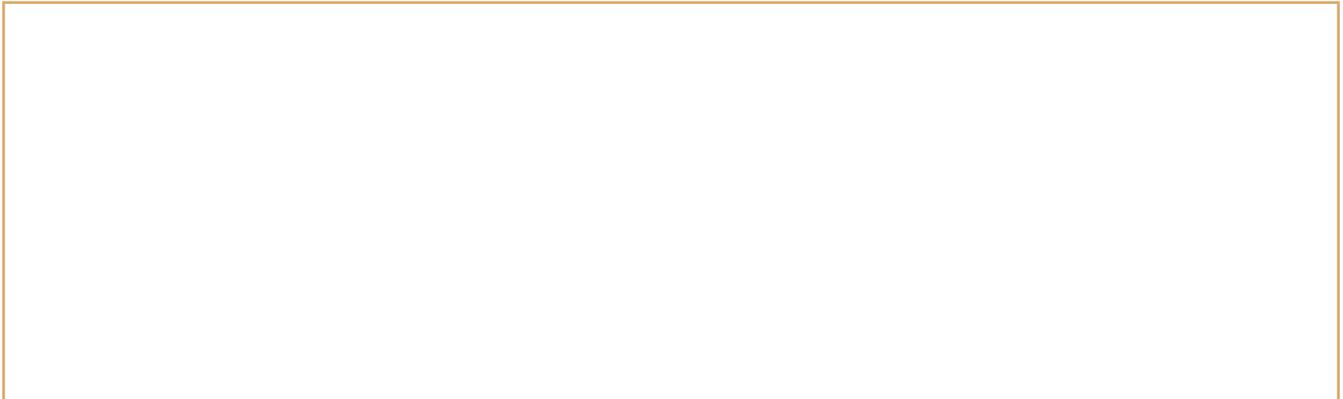
PART ONE

What are the friendship and/or family alliances that exist in the Marvellian and Conjure worlds? Draw a bottle tree for your family or group of friends or those that you've discovered in *The Marvellers*. Make sure to indicate how each individual is connected and how they help one another.



Make your own class schedule using classes you read about in *The Marvellers*. Explain which class appeals to you most, and why. Add two electives that are your own invention.

Choose one magical creature and draw a diagram of it. Explain its magical properties.



PART TWO

Which world appeals more to you, the Conjure world, or the Marvellian one? Why do you suppose they are so often put at odds with each other? Justify your answer with examples.

Take note of some names and ethnicities mentioned in the book. What do you recognize? What is unfamiliar? If you find an unfamiliar word or name like “Ananasi”, do some investigating and find out the geographic region from which the word originates. Then, place pins on a map to indicate all the places in the world with people, customs, traditions, foods that appear in *The Marvellers*.

Create a recipe for one food mentioned in the book or one food you eat in your culture that may have healing properties, (ex. Some cultures drink certain teas to calm the nerves.)

Create a compendium of magic practices for the geographic region of your choice. Consider search terms like: “Eastern Magic”, “North, West, East and South African Magical Beliefs”, “Magical practices of the Americas” and “Caribbean magical beliefs and practices”. Don’t forget to include mythology or creation myths and beliefs about the spirit world in your searches.

Here is a resource with some terms to get you started:

[Globalization of the magic concept | Britannica](#)

PART THREE

What is unique about Ella among the other attendees of Arcanum Training Institute? Why might this make her uniquely suited to deal with The Ace of Anarchy? Draw a profile of Ella and inside her head, write words that describe her. Then, write a short, constructed response explaining what makes her unique and different from the other attendees of Arcanum Training Institute and uniquely suited to deal with potential danger.



Which of Ella's friends is most like one of your friends?

Which of Ella's instructors is most like one of your mentors, teachers, or instructors? How so? Make a venn diagram that compares/contrasts one of Ella's friends with one of yours and one of Ella's instructors with one of yours.

Create a WANTED poster for the Ace of Anarchy. [Here is a resource to help.](#)

PART FOUR

What is a misconception those in the story have about the Ace of Anarchy? What is true? Make a T-chart with some individuals in society or groups of people that are believed to be the cause of chaos or trouble. Provide evidence for each side with what is fact, and what is fiction.

What are some characteristics that each of Ella's friends has that make them useful to her as helpers on her mission? Who in your life helps you navigate life's challenges? Write a short narrative about a person in your life who helps you navigate life's ups and downs.

Ella's family is very important to her. Read the Star Posts throughout the book, then write your own Star Post to members of your family. What would you tell them to encourage them?

When Ella's Conjure/Marvel is revealed, what does it reveal to readers about her? Write a constructed response paragraph analyzing Ella's character and explaining what her Conjure/Marvel reveals about her. Then, explain what yours might be and why you think yours would be what it is.

This guide was created by Julia E. Torres is a Language Arts teacher at a public high school in Denver, Colorado. She is an expert in secondary writing and reading instruction, including accelerated reading and writing instruction for multilingual students and those learning in urban environments. Julia facilitates workshops and professional conversations around the country pertaining to best practices in reading and writing instruction, culturally sustaining pedagogies in language arts, as well as digital literacy and librarianship.

The art in this guide was created by [Juan Manual Moreno](#) and is the copyright of Dhonielle Clayton.