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GLOAM

Ages 9+

Discussion Notes and Activities

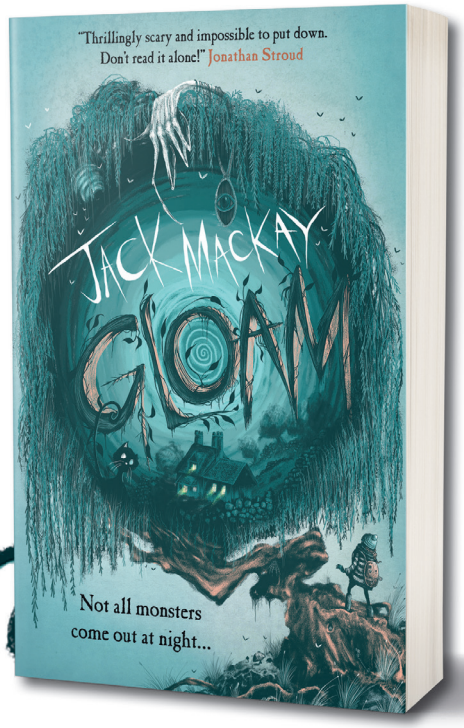
Cover illustration by Ben Joel Price

GLOAM

Ages 9+ Discussion Notes and Activities

This resource pack offers a selection of discussion prompts, activities, and creative tasks designed to support the teaching of *Gloam* in the classroom, school library, or book group setting.

It is suitable for UKS2 and KS3 and supports cross-curricular links with English, Art and PSHE.



Read this book for the following themes:

✓ **Gothic Horror –**
eerie houses, isolation and the uncanny

✓ **Atmospheric Settings –**
gloomy windswept landscapes that build tension

✓ **Mystery and the Unseen –**
unanswered questions and hidden truths

✓ **Memory and the Past –**
how history lingers in people and places

✓ **Family and Grief –**
navigating change, loss and connection

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Part 1
Pre-Reading Ideas

Book Cover Clues – prompts for students

- **What draws your attention to the front cover illustrated by Ben Joel Price?**
  Consider colours, composition, or any unusual details.

- **Which elements of the cover design stand out most, and why do you think that is?**
  Think about colour, contrast, size and placement.

- **How would you describe Ben Joel Price's artistic style?**
  Can you link it to any other books or artists you know?

- **Are there any visual clues on the cover that hint at events or themes in the story?**
  How might these details shape your expectations as a reader?

- **What genre do you think the book belongs to based on the cover?**
  What aspects of the design helped you decide — mystery, horror, fantasy, something else?

- **Does the cover suggest anything about the setting of the story?**
  What can you tell from the objects, symbols and general atmosphere created by the design?

- **What is the effect of the spiral inside the letter 'O' in the title *Gloam*?**
  Why might the illustrator have added that detail? What could it symbolise or suggest about the story?

- **The tagline reads: "Not all monsters come out at night…" – what do you think this implies?**
  What kind of monsters might the book explore?

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Vocabularly and Tone Explorer

Below are some key words you'll encounter in the first chapter of *Gloam*.

1. Look up or use context to work out the meaning of each word.
2. Think about what kind of mood or tone the word helps to create.
3. Use any evidence from the text to support your ideas.

Word/Phrase	What does it mean?	What tone or feeling does it create?
bleakest		
loomed		
grey		
undulating		
windswept		
forlorn		
empty		
strangled		
somnolent		
inscrutable		

Extension Challenge:

- Choose 3 of these words and write your own gloomy description of a setting inspired by *Gloam*.
- Try to use them in full sentences that create a dark or mysterious atmosphere.

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Setting prompts

The setting of *Gloam* is almost like a character in itself; both the island and Grandmother's house play central roles in the story.

Task: Create your own Haunted House

When you think of a haunted house, what does it look like? Create a sketch or annotated map of it, showing different layers or floors.

Include:

- Labeled staircases
- Mysterious rooms (an attic, a library, a locked cupboard…)
- Spooky objects (fireplaces, pictures, old photographs)

Choose one area from your map and write a short paragraph describing it. Use your senses to bring it to life: What does it look like? What can you hear? Is it cold, dusty, silent, or strange? Does it feel safe, or dangerous?

Use the sentence starters to help you:

- The house stood in silence, but something about it felt...
- Shadows gathered in the corners of the room, where...
- The air was thick with...
- Each step along the hallway echoed like...
- In the fading light, the staircase seemed to...
- Fog curled around the island like...
- The door creaked open to reveal...
- Even in daylight, the room felt...
- The silence wasn't empty – it was...
- Something about the room didn't feel right, as if...
- The wind whispered through the walls like...

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Part 2
Themes

Themes are the main ideas or messages that lie beneath the surface of a story. There are many themes in *Gloam*. Use this 'theme sheet' to record ideas as you read. How is each theme explored in the story? Which are the most important? Why? Try to add at least two themes of your own.

Theme	Notes
Fear	
Mystery	
The Unseen	
Isolation	
Memory	
The Past	
Family	
Grief	

Extension Challenge:

- Choose a theme and create a moodboard to visually represent it.

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Part 3
Reading Questions

- How does the author describe the island and the family's new home? What words or phrases create a sense of mystery or unease?
- How does Gwen feel about moving to Gloam Island? What clues show her emotions?
- What role does the landscape play in shaping the mood of the story?
- What hints are there that something supernatural or unusual might be happening on the island?
- What symbols or motifs are tied to the setting (e.g. the Well, the Rickety Den, the Tree, the Cellar)?
- Would the story feel different if it was set somewhere else? How?
- Describe the relationship between Gwen and her siblings. How do they cope with the move and the changes in their family?
- How does the recent death of Gwen's mother shape the family dynamics?
- What can we learn about the grandmother from the house and the objects left behind?
- Which objects are important in the story? Keep an 'object diary' as you read.
- What are your first impressions of Esme Laverne the babysitter?
- How would you describe Esme? What does she want?
- What is Gwen's relationship with Esme compared to the other siblings?

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- What is the symbolism of Esme's golden eyes? Can you think of any other examples of symbolism in the story?
- In what ways does the story suggest that something dark or dangerous might be hiding behind something that seems harmless or charming?
- Do you think Gwen is fighting physical monsters in the story or her own emotions?
- What role does memory play in the story? How do the past and present seem to interact?
- How does the book explore the theme of isolation?
- Find examples of descriptive language that create suspense or fear. How do these descriptions affect your reading experience?
- Which is your favourite illustration by Ben Joel Price in the story? Why?
- How do the illustrations enhance your reading experience?
- Did the novel end as you hoped it would? Why or why not?
- What family bonds have been strengthened by the end of the story?
- "It is impossible to be brave if you are not already afraid." What does Gwen learn about fear and bravery in the story?
- What is the significance of Gwen crying at the end of the story?
- When you reflect on reading *Gloam*, how do you feel? What main messages or inspiration do you take away from your reading experience?
- If you could ask the author Jack Mackay five questions about writing this novel, what would they be?

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