

**The Water Castle**  
By Megan Frazer Blakemore  
Walker Books For Young Readers  
ISBN: 9780802728395, \$16.99

## **Teacher and Librarian Guide**

*About The Water Castle:*

Ephraim Appledore-Smith is an ordinary boy, and up until his father's stroke he lived an ordinary life. But all that changes when his family moves to the Water Castle-their ancestral home in the small town of Crystal Springs.

Mallory Green's family has always been the caretakers of the Water Castle-and the guardians of its secrets. She has been raised to protect the legendary Fountain of Youth, hidden on the estate grounds. But ever since her mom left, she's stopped believing in magic.

Will Wylie's family has been at war with the Appledores for generations, all because of the Water Castle's powerful secrets. But Will has rejected legend and magic, putting all his faith in science.

When Ephraim learns of the Fountain, he's sure finding it can cure his dad. With Mallory and Will's help, the trio embarks on a mission that brings them deep into their families' shared history, through every secret room in the Water Castle, and on a quest that will blur the lines of magic and science, creativity and discovery, leaving readers left to wonder: Do you believe in the unbelievable?

**Thank you for your interest in reading and teaching *The Water Castle* with your students. This packet contains activities and ideas for you to use in your classroom or library.**

Contents:

1. *The Water Castle* and the Common Core: Find out how *The Water Castle* and the activities in this packet support the Common Core State Standards.
2. Checking For Understanding: Use these chapter-based questions and activities to stimulate and guide conversation as you read the book. These questions ask students to dig into the text and find evidence to support their answers.
3. Discussion Questions: These questions are for when the book is complete and could be used in classrooms, book groups, and Literature Circles.
4. Activities: These worksheets may be printed out and distributed to your students. Please feel free to adapt them to meet your needs!

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## *The Water Castle* and The Common Core

The Common Core State Standards\* (<http://www.corestandards.org/>) ask students to read a range of texts that are both rigorous and complex. Using the standards as a guide, as well as the activities in this packet, *The Water Castle* with its focus on history, science, and complex questions, is an appropriate text to use in the Common Core Classroom.

### **The Common Core Anchor Standards for Reading:**

<b>Standard</b>	<b>Applications for <i>The Water Castle</i></b>
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.1	Checking for Understanding questions ask students to read closely and to cite textual evidence.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.2	Discussion questions encourage students to determine central ideas/themes.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.3	Discussion questions, specifically question 5, asks students to explain how individuals develop over the course of the book.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.4	“Dr. Appledore’s Wild Worlds!” activity requires students to determine the meanings of words from the text.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.5	Discussion question 6 asks students to analyze and evaluate the structure of the novel, which includes both past and present stories.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.6	Checking for Understand questions and Discussion Question 7 address the use of multiple perspectives in the novel.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.7	The chapter illustrations by Jim Kay serve to highlight key moments of the text. Teachers and librarians may discuss with students what is learned by studying the illustrations.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.8	Although this is a work of fiction, a scientific case is made for the Fountain of Youth. Checking for Understanding questions ask students to delineate this theory.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.9	Students should be encouraged to read related texts (see “Further Reading” or books with similar themes, such as <i>Tuck Everlasting</i> by Natalie Babbitt and compare the approaches of the authors.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.10	<i>The Water Castle</i> is a complex literary text.

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**The Common Core Anchor Standards for Writing:**

<b>Standard</b>	<b>Applications for <i>The Water Castle</i></b>
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.W.3	In the activity “Local History Story,” students are asked to write narratives involving both real and imagined experiences. There is a focus on choosing the best details from the student’s investigation of local history.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.W.4	“Local History Story” invites students to consider organization and style as they complete their writing.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.W.5	The “Local History Story” and “What Next?” activities guide students through the process of planning, revising, editing, and re-writing.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.W.6	Students are invited to submit their work on the author’s website. Go to <a href="http://www.meganfrazerblakemore.com">www.meganfrazerblakemore.com</a> and click on “For Kids” for more information.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.W.7	“Local History Story” and “Magic to Science” both ask students to complete short research projects.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.W.8	In the course of completing “Local History Story” and “Magic to Science”, students must gather information from multiple sources.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.W.10	The writing activities in this packet can be part of a program that encourages routine writing.

**History/Social Studies and Science/Technical Subjects:**

The Common Core standards make it clear that literacy is not the responsibility of the English teachers, nor does it only belong in the English classroom. With its focus on both history and science, *The Water Castle* also is a good text for literacy across the disciplines.

## **Checking for Understanding: Chapter Questions and Activities**

### **Chapters 1 to 2: Setting**

Draw a picture of the Water Castle. What words, phrases, and sentences did you use to guide your drawing?

### **Chapters 3 through 9: Expectations**

What were some of Ephraim's expectations about his new school?

In what ways did reality match his expectations? In what way was it different?

### **Chapters 10 through 14: Strange Doings**

What are some unusual things you have noticed about the house? About the school?

What other unusual or unbelievable events happen in these chapters?

### **Chapters 15 through 18: Same Story, Different Versions**

Just as there are different versions of who discovered the Pole, there are different versions of the story of the Water Castle and the family histories of the Appledores, Darlings, and Wylies. Compare the different versions. What is the same? What is different?

### **Chapter 19 through 21: Events Spur Action**

What makes Ephraim and Mallory decide to act? What does each want?

What does Mallory do?

### **Chapter 22 through 24: Predictions**

What do you think they will find behind the door?

What does Mallory's mother admit about Dr. Appledore's Crystal Water? Do you think this makes her claims about the Fountain of Youth weaker or stronger?

### **Chapters 25 through 28: The Lab, The Stairs**

What did they find in the laboratory and the stairs?

Draw a picture of how you imagine the laboratory looks. What words or phrases influenced your drawing?

### **Chapters 29 through 32: Decisions & Consequences**

How does Ephraim make the decision to give the water to his father? What steps does he take?

What conclusions does Ephraim draw when the water is ineffective? What does he think it reveals about himself?

How does Mallory explain the water? What evidence does she cite? What steps did she take to get to that conclusion?

### **Chapters 37 through 39: The End**

What does Will's father think about Ephraim's family? How does Will respond?

What does Ephraim think about Mallory's theory? What does Will think?

## Discussion Questions

*Use these questions to start a conversation about The Water Castle once all readers in the book group or literature circle have completed the book.*

1. In the section dated December 22, 1908 Nora and Harry discuss what they would say if they were the first to discover the North Pole. If you were the discoverer, what would you say? Why?
2. Do you think Ephraim and his friends really found the water or did his father just get better with the doctor's help? What is your evidence?
3. If you found the Fountain of Youth, would you drink from it? If you did drink from it, would you be more like Harry, content to sit still and watch the changes as they came, or more like Nora, using the time to explore as much of the world as possible?
4. If you found the Fountain of Youth, would you keep it a secret?
5. Each character begins the idea with a set idea about the Fountain of Youth, and storytelling in general. How do these ideas change over the course of the book? How else do the characters change?
6. Why do you think the author chose to include the story of Nora, Harry, and Orlando set during the time of the Peary-Henson expedition to the North Pole? How does this structure of going back and forth in time impact the story?
7. The novel is told in the third person, but is primarily from Ephraim's point of view. We also are able to see Will and Mallory's perspectives. How do the perspectives differ? When they offer opposing views on the same events, how do you determine what "really" happened?

Name:

Date:

### Dr. Appledore's Wild Words!

In The Water Castle, Dr. Appledore has a way of talking that confuses Nora – and just about everyone else. Below are some words that Dr. Appledore and others in the story use that you may not know. Try to guess the definition based on the sentence. Then check the definition in the dictionary.

1. **Servitude:** Dad gone to vow **servitude**. (p. 19)

Your guess:

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Dictionary definition:

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2. **Tutelage:** Of course you will continue your studies under my **tutelage**. (p. 22)

Your guess:

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Dictionary definition:

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3. **Pemmican:** I would like, even, perhaps, to taste the **pemmican**. (p. 112)

Your guess:

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Dictionary definition:

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4. **Fallacies:** You're a lucky girl, to have been born into such a wonderful age.

**Fallacies** will fall by the wayside. (p. 117)

Your guess:

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Dictionary definition:

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5. **Charlatan:** They might have been foolish, but they weren't lying. Harold

Appledore, he was nothing more than a **charlatan**. (p. 152)

Your guess:

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Dictionary definition:

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6. **Implausible:** That she could be the same girl as in the picture seemed implausible, but much of Crystal Springs seemed to be implausible. (p. 157)

Your guess:

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Dictionary definition:

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7. **Theodolite:** It's a **theodolite**. Just like the one Peary uses. (p. 169)

Your guess:

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Dictionary definition:

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8. **Fortitude:** "He worked so hard and for so many decades. Yet science does not always reward **fortitude**." (p. 260)

Your guess:

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Dictionary definition:

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9. **Futile:** Once he was out of bed, he realized how futile the idea of sleep was, so he left his room. (p. 272)

Your guess:

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Dictionary definition:

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10. **Benign:** There were more benign elements in the equation, too.

Your guess:

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Dictionary definition:

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Name:

Date:

### **From Magic to Science**

In The Water Castle Orlando Appledore believed that all things can be explained by scientific means. Specifically, he believed that the Fountain of Youth could be discovered and explained using science.

Through out history many phenomena once thought magical or mythical were eventually explained by science.

Below is a list of natural phenomena that were originally explained by myth or magic. Choose one to investigate. Research both the myth and the science and write a summary of what you find out.

- Rainbows
- The Moon
- The change from day to night and back to day again (sunrise and sunset).
- The seasons
- Thunder storms

Discuss: Why do you think people create stories to explain natural phenomena?

Name:

Date:

## Local History Story

*Do you think you could write a story like The Water Castle? Sure you can!  
Follow these steps to write your own story or poem based on the history in your area.*

**Read** the author's note about how local history influenced her writing. Next, visit a local landmark either in person or online.

**Take notes** about the FACTS of the place. On a separate piece of paper or in your writer's journal write down what you read, see, hear, learn, feel, smell, even taste!

**Free-Write** using your local landmark as a setting, write a story set in the place at a certain time in history. When writing your rough draft, you don't need to worry about all of the specific details, or even whether or not the story makes sense. Just get your ideas down on paper! As you write, think about the best format for your narrative. Some ideas to consider: poetry, short story, script, monologue, dialogue, letters.

**Revise:** Go back to your list of observations and facts. Incorporate as many as you can into your story. If you aren't sure about a historical fact, do some research.

**Share:** Share your story with classmates or friends. Ask them to tell you what they liked about it, but also if they had any questions. A good way for friends to give each other feedback is "I wonder . . ." statements.

**Revise again!**

Name:

Date:

### What Next?

The end of *The Water Castle* is purposefully left open to interpretation. Do you wonder what really happened? Now is your chance to write the next chapter!

**Choose:** Choose a character from the book.

**Free-Write:** Imagine what happened to the character after the book ends. If he drank the water, is he now living forever? How does that work? If she didn't, does she want to? When writing your rough draft, the most important thing is to get your ideas down on paper!

**Revise:** Read over your story. What makes sense? What doesn't? Are there some parts that are clunky or awkward? How can you fix them? Do you need to add details or are there parts that should be cut back?

**Share:** Share your story with classmates or friends. Ask them to tell you what they liked about it, but also if they had any questions. A good way for friends to give each other feedback is "I wonder . . ." statements.

**Revise again!**

## Further Reading and Investigating

### **Books:**

*Matthew A. Henson's Historic Arctic Journey* by Matthew Henson (Lyons Press, 2009): Henson's account of the journey.

*Onward: A Photobiography of African-American Polar Explorer Matthew Henson* by Dolores Johnson (National Geographic Children's Books, 2005)

### **Books referenced in *The Water Castle*:**

*Tuck Everlasting* by Natalie Babbit

*Anne of Green Gables* by Lucy Maud Montgomery

*Frankenstein* by Mary Shelley

### **Web:**

The Peary-MacMillan Arctic Museum at Bowdoin College:  
<http://www.bowdoin.edu/arctic-museum/>

Electricity information and activities from Exploratorium:  
<http://www.exploratorium.edu/tv/archive.php?cmd=keyword&keywordtext=electricity>

Thomas Edison National Park:  
<http://www.nps.gov/edis/index.htm>

### **Video:**

"This History of Nikola Tesla – A Short Story" by Jeremiah Warren:  
<http://youtu.be/iEJNJ0rFSe8>