



“eSIDE: A Journey Through Cyber-space”
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Teacher Notes

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Six weeks after the Good-Luck-Conch is stolen from the Conch Cafe, Sam and Melody take the magician tGF into the shed in Melody’s back garden where they can’t be overheard. ‘I’m sure Hecate Badminton paid one of her underlings to thief that Conch,’ he tells them. ‘She’s a black witch... the most wicked of all witches. That means she’ll do anything to own as much good-luck as that shell contains.’

Melody pushes her glasses up her nose. ‘You sure Hecate’s responsible?’

‘Quite,’ he says tersely. ‘Stolen late at night. She only walks abroad after dark.’

Sam gulps. Even though this summer is extra hot and steamy, Hecate is never seen without her white coat with its snowy foxtail collar, thick white stockings, and shiny white hi-heels. If that isn’t scary enough, what makes Sam shudder is Hecate’s pale-as-death face, crocodile wrinkled skin, eyes so grey they seem almost colourless, blood-red lips and dead-white hair where never a lock moves, not even in the highest wind. Even more frightening is her forked snake-tongue that flickers in and out as she speaks....

Brief Outline:

Sam and her single mother Kate live in the rear of the Conch Café, close to Sam's best friend Melody and her dog, Billy. The building is owned by greedy witch Hecate Badminton who will do anything to own the café's Good-Luck-Conch. After Hecate steals the shell and the café burns down, the girls have a series of remarkable adventures inside 'eSide'. Because digital graphics can create unique scenarios, the girls must travel through dangerous dystopias to overcome some of their worst fears before they can recover their conch and return home.

DETAILED OUTLINE

BOOK 1. Conch Cafe.

The Good-Luck-Conch has always sat on the Conch Café's counter and brought good luck to whoever touched it. Six months earlier, when Sam and her mother settled in the small town of Squeaky, everything seemed perfect. Even Hecate Badminton – believed by all to be a witch-seemed tolerable until she demanded Kate give her the giant Good-Luck-Conch. When Kate refused, the Good-Luck-Conch disappeared. The magician tGF's special magic helped the Conch Café run smoothly, but he couldn't stop the cafe's waiter scalding his arm, the customers experiencing bad luck, and the café burning down. Thus late one night, with only a magic *Monitor* to protect them, best friends Sam and Melody decided to break into Hecate Badminton's house to try and retrieve their good luck shell. Caught by Hecate's computer and her snow-leopard-cat Rani, the girls end up in eSide.

BOOK 2: Seal-People /Dog-People

In eSide, the girls find themselves in Seal-land, a place where humans have been turned into animals, the world a frozen waste, and everything looks two-dimensional. Seal-Man feeds the girls and helps them survive the intense cold. After the girls perform a 'goodly deed' by rescuing the baby seals from killer sharks, Crab-Woman agrees they are chosen to overcome Hecate. She teaches them songs that will help find the Good-Luck-Conch. Sent on to the Dog-People, the girls find they are in league with Hecate. The girls only escape the Dog-People by using their magic *Monitor* once again.

Book 3 ANIMA CITY

Anima City is a terrifying future run by the tyrannical ruler Percival who maintains his power through Hecate's witchcraft. Here, and very much against their will, all animals have become human. Though befriended by Liane, the girls are discovered and sent to Camp Labyrinth to fight the terrifying Mal. When they refuse, instead tell Mal jokes, he becomes their friend and they share a wonderful meal. By the time they leave the Labyrinth, the tyrannical leader Percival has been overthrown and the girls are free to continue their search.

Book 4. THE COUNTRY OF TROPICAL

Sailing on a calm sea – or a lake? The girls meet various sea creatures. All resemble the Conch Café's regular customers. Unfortunately, Whale-Woman takes offence, flips over their boat and the girls must they use their capes as sails to take them to The Country of Tropical. Here, one legged Dan and his 'always truthful' Parrot sail up Wrong Way River that leads to Magic Mountain where the terrifying Spider-Woman and her children are guarding the Good-Luck-Conch.

Book 5. MAGIC MOUNTAIN

Dan and the Truth Parrot lead the girls half way Magic Mountain, then leave them to handle the rest of the journey alone. They must cross a dangerous swinging bridge to complete the journey to Spider-Woman's cave and Sam and Billy come far too close to falling when the bridge collapses. Close to Spider-woman's cave they are trapped by her spiderlings and brought before this terrifying monster. Though they answer her riddles correctly, she does her best to entrap them. Just in time they use the *Monitor* to get back to the Ice Palace where they find tGF and Manny turned into iceblocks. After being unfrozen, tGF takes them back to Spider-Woman's cave where he defeats Spider-Woman and Sam finds the precious Good-Luck-Conch. Back in the ice palace Hecate is finally overcome and turned into marble. Back home the girls' mothers can't believe they've been away for more than a few hours.

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In FANTASY, the trend is that

1. The story starts with the premise: ‘in a familiar situation, what if something extraordinary happens’? In this case the Conch Cafe’s customers all experience ‘bad-luck’ after Hecate insists that the Good-Luck-Conch be given to her.
2. The story describes someone or something that is probably not possible. eg. Several people have magical powers:
 - a. The evil witch Hecate Badminton
 - b. The Great Franco, known as tGF.
 - c. Spider-Woman and her spiderlings who live on the summit of Magic Mountain.
3. The story has some kind of consistent internal logic
In eSide the internal logic is that the Good-Luck-Conch has certain properties that ensures ‘good luck’ to all its regular customers and staff if it remains in the Conch Cafe, but if it is removed, bad luck will follow.
4. The story can contain unusual but sustained characters with whom the reader can identify: tGF. Hecate. Seal-Man. Mal.
5. The story contains believable everyday characters.eg: Best friends Sam and Melody are typical twelve year old girls. The cafe’s more eccentric customers are also plausible. When they appear on eSide as animals, their quirky behaviour doesn’t change.

DISCUSSION AND ACTIVITIES:

1. What kind of cafe is the Conch Cafe? Why does it carry that name? What is the cafe’s original history?
2. Hecate is quite evil. What hints might in her appearance suggest this? What are some of the stories about the wicked spells she casts as told by the Conch Cafe’s customers?
3. Describe the cafe’s more eccentric customers.
4. The Good-Luck-Conch has an interesting history that the girls very gradually uncover. Can you summarise it in your own words?
5. Describe tGF’s unusual appearance. You could try drawing him. How does he use his magic inside the cafe? What would you ask him to do in your own house/room/school?
6. Why does Sam decide to break into Hecate’s house? What happens to her and Melody once they are in there?
7. Imagine you have turned up in Seal-Land and Dog-Land. Describe weather and occupants.

8. The girls' adventures continue as they search for the lost Good-Luck-Conch. Anima is a terrifying city of the future. What are some ways Percival uses to continue his malevolent and despotic rule? Describe the Labyrinth and the fearsome Mal. How do the girls convince Mal to become their friend?
9. As the girls sail to the Country of Tropical they meet some unusual sea animals. Can you describe them and how they relate to the cafe's customers?
10. Dan and Parrot are unusual. In what way? What stories do they tell? How do they convince the girls that that are on the right track to finding The Good-Luck-Conch? How do they help? How do they hinder?
11. Magic Mountain is a scary place. In your own words describe some of the dangers the girls encounter.
12. tGF and Manny help out in the end. How?
13. *The raft finds a swift flowing current heading north. Dan says, 'This is Wrong-Way River.'*
Sam asks, 'How come it's called that?'
'Rivers always move from mountain to sea and grow wider and slower. This one does exactly the opposite.'
Melody sits back, incredulous. 'You mean, it starts at the sea and flows towards the mountains?'
 Perhaps students can think of other ways gravity might be upset?
14. Why not write a sixth part... such as Hecate being such pure evil she can't be destroyed. What happens when she returns to the small village of Squeaky and has another go at stealing the Good-Luck-Conch?
15. This story is not as simple as it might appear on first reading. There are several themes: comments on the possible effects of a global warming and what life might be like under a tyrannical regime. The class might like to give their views on these important topics.
16. There are allusions in eSIDE to other novels: eg. students might be directed to George Orwell's 'Animal Farm' where the pigs also have total control. Well known novels about tropical islands include 'Treasure Island'. 'Swiss Family Robinson'. 'Nim's Island'. Wicked witches occur in many folk tales eg Snow White. Can you think of any others?

MORE ACTIVITIES:

1. Make a story-board or collage to convey 'THE- GOOD LUCK-CONCH' or some other unexpected situation.
2. Mock up an interview with tGF with you as the interviewer. Ask a friend to be the interviewer.
3. Then change roles.
4. Illustrate five different covers for these stories.
5. Find and/or draw a conch. Research these shells. They are many different varieties.

WRITING EXERCISES:

1. Design your own good luck symbol. What does it look like? What personality would you like it to have?
2. Write a story called : tGF CAME TO OUR SCHOOL....
3. Sketch a cover for your story.
4. You are trapped in one of the countries that appear in eSide. What do you like about it? What do you dislike? What do you decide to change? How do you go about doing this?

DEBATE:

1. Very few cafes are successful.
2. It is dangerous to try and fight witches.
3. Not all witches are evil.
4. Magicians and witches are merely folklore. They don't exist in real life.

WHAT INSPIRED THIS STORY?

Until I wrote eSide, all my 'fantasies' were written as short stories. 'The Great Google' is the first story in the collection: MY HORRIBLE COUSINS AND OTHER STORIES. I liked this story enough to turn it into a longer version. Because so much fantasy is set in 'Medieval and Other Times' I wanted to write a fantasy that involved familiar twenty-first century objects: cafes, computers, mobile phones, heaters, monitors. Because 'eSide' is episodic, it seemed a good idea to break it into five sections ending with a 'cliff hanger' - something that makes you want to read on. I always had a weakness for a tGF who would 'magic' away all the boring stuff like housework and homework. Every fantasy has a wicked person that must be

overcome. I was also aware that lots of people believe in 'good luck charms' so it was fun to create one that actually did bring people good-luck.