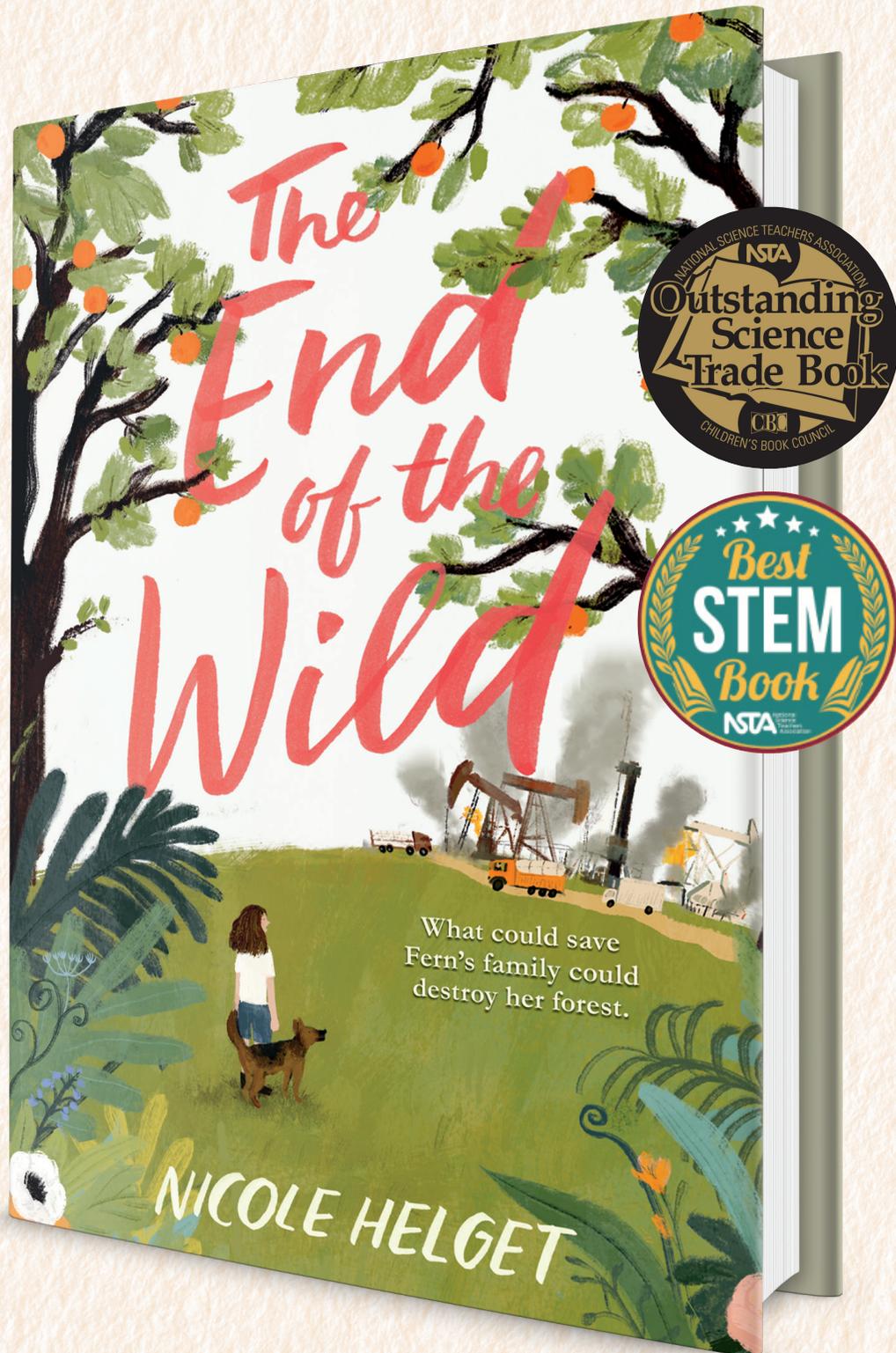


LITTLE, BROWN AND COMPANY BOOKS FOR YOUNG READERS  
educator's guide | ages: 8–12



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## building background

### What I Thought, What I Think

*The End of the Wild* deals with some difficult topics that may or may not be familiar to students. Understanding the realities of poverty, social workers, Child Protective Services (CPS), and other issues addressed in the book will help readers more fully comprehend the story, but it is also important to be aware that there is a need to be especially sensitive to any students who may have personal connections to these topics. It is always helpful for readers to make connections, but if this is a classroom setting, a building background activity that allows for personal reflection is more appropriate than group sharing. One way to do this is by using the “What I Thought, What I Think” protocol. Create a chart with four columns labeled “Word/Concept”, “First Thought”, “What I Learned After Research”, and “What I Think Now”. Ask students to write a word or concept in the first column. Some words or concepts to explore include *CPS*, *social worker*, *rural*, and *fracking*. Then, in the “First Thought” column, students should jot down what the word or concept brings to mind, or what they know about it. Then give students resources to help them learn more about each concept or word. These should be resources that are free from bias and give a general explanation. Students should summarize their learning and write it in the “What I Learned After Research” column. Finally, after reading *The End of the Wild*, students should synthesize their new understanding of each concept and write it in the “What I Think Now” column.

## vocabulary

### Another Way to Say

*The End of the Wild* uses a combination of colloquial vocabulary and academic vocabulary. Help students learn vocabulary by categorizing new words according to whether they are nouns, verbs, or adjectives/adverbs. The nouns may be related to hydraulic fracturing or other unfamiliar topics. Discuss these as a class and ensure students understand them because they are central to the text. Descriptive words (adjectives and adverbs) truly give this story depth and life. In the first chapter, the words *mottled* and *tetchy*

are just two examples of the book’s rich descriptive language. For the descriptive words, have students create “another way to say” sentences to help them understand how to use the new words. For example, “*Tetchy* is another way to say cranky, irritable, or bad-tempered.” They may want to consult a thesaurus to assist them. Encourage students to use the new words in their speaking and writing.

## comprehension connection

### Survival Challenge: Comparing and Contrasting

Connecting to other texts is a comprehension strategy that can help readers gain a deeper understanding of each text or of a general topic. Fern, the main character in *The End of the Wild*, refers to the book *Hatchet* by Gary Paulsen. Fern suggests that she would probably be more successful than Brian (the main character in *Hatchet*) if she had to survive in the wilderness like him. Ask students to compare and contrast the two characters and then give their opinion regarding whether or not they agree that Fern would be better at surviving in the wilderness. Students should use details from both books to support their thinking and prove their claim.

## exploring theme

Understanding theme can be challenging for some students, but as books increase in complexity, theme is an aspect of author’s craft that gives readers a deeper appreciation of a story. Begin by reviewing theme as a class and providing several examples from previously shared texts. Together, identify possible themes and use evidence from the story that supports those themes. Once students have some guided practice identifying theme using a common text (picture books work well), divide students into small groups and ask them to generate their own theme statement about *The End of the Wild*. If students are struggling to develop theme statements, this exercise can be adapted by having the teacher create several theme statements. Next, write the themes on large pieces of chart paper and place them in separate corners of the room. Have students travel in their groups, bringing their books, and add evidence from

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## The End of the Wild

the text to support each theme. After all groups have rotated through all the themes, give one chart to each group and have them critique the evidence offered. As a culminating activity, have students write a thematic essay using the evidence provided.

### Defining Moments Summary Collage

Ask students to choose five important events that were defining moments in *The End of the Wild* and use a combination of pictures, symbols, and phrases or words to summarize these events. Encourage students to include meaningful scenes, as well as memorable quotes. They can create a collage or a video montage to display their summaries. As an alternative, students could choose a character and show their growth throughout the story using the same format.

## writing

### Through Another Set of Eyes: Point of View Exercise

*The End of the Wild* is written from a first-person point of view. This means we see and hear and feel everything from Fern's perspective. As a class, talk about how Fern's point of view helps give readers a deeper understanding of some events, but is limiting in other ways. Make a chart of students' thoughts about which aspects of the story are best told from Fern's perspective and which parts might be more detailed if told from another point of view. Review personal narrative writing with students and then have them rewrite an event from the story from another character's point of view. Encourage them to add details that are consistent with the story and to write in a style that is appropriate for that character. Some suggestions for characters include Mark-Richard, Margot, Alkomso, or even Horace Millner. Then have students share their writing and discuss how different perspectives allow for a deeper understanding.

### Figurative Language: Adding Context-Specific Similes and Metaphors

Figurative language is an aspect of author's craft that can help readers visualize the details of a story. In *The End of the Wild*, the author uses similes and metaphors that are related to the world Fern knows to bring the story alive. Ask students to find figurative language in the book and to share how this language not only helps the reader visualize details, but also gain a deeper understanding of Fern's environment. Some examples include "like the underside of a mushroom" and "swipes like long cat nails." Fern uses what she is familiar with to describe something else and also gain a deeper understanding of Fern. Have students apply what they learned to their own writing. Ask them to choose a piece of narrative writing (or create a new piece) and incorporate figurative language that fits the theme or environment of their piece.

## science/writing

### Dear Town of Colter Board Members: Choosing a Side in the Fracking Debate

In *The End of the Wild*, Fern and Alkomso have differing views on hydraulic fracturing, and these differences are at the heart of the debate over fracking. Give students the opportunity to learn more about fracking and about the different viewpoints of people who oppose and support fracking. Because *The End of the Wild* is set in Michigan, a document available on the state government's website, "Hydraulic Fracturing of Oil and Gas Wells in Michigan," might be a helpful resource. This document contains information that can help build background for anyone reading *The End of the Wild*. Encourage students to seek out other resources, and then each student should write a letter to the town board of Colter, Michigan (the fictional setting of *The End of the Wild*), asking them to either support or ban fracking. The letter should include strong claims with specific evidence to support each claim.

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## social studies

### Discovering Hidden Local Treasures

Fern's science fair project focuses on local resources. She shares examples of edible foods from the woods near her home, and many community residents are surprised to learn that there are edible plants nearby that they never heard about before. Every neighborhood, town, and city has hidden treasures that may be overlooked. Divide students into groups and encourage them to discover some of these hidden gems. Each group should create a brochure, video, or other advertisement showcasing one local attraction or resource. Students may want to bring attention to a historical site, natural wonder, or artisan. Encourage students to be creative as they take a second look at where they live. Completed projects may be shared at a parent or community night, or even with local government agencies focused on tourism.

### Public Service Announcements: Researching Best Practices for Dangerous Situations

In *The End of the Wild*, Fern describes the worst thing you can do when a predator is approaching. When faced with dangerous situations, it is helpful to know what *not* to do and what one *should* do. Encourage students to use their research skills to create a public service announcement, poster, advice column, or other medium that describes what to do and what not to do if ever faced with a potentially dangerous situation. Brainstorm a list of possibilities. These may include wildlife encounters, fire safety, downed electrical wires, tornados, first aid, or any other dangerous situation that requires fast thinking. Encourage students to choose something meaningful to them. Research methods may include reading informational texts, watching media designed to educate the public, or interviewing experts. Share completed projects with the class and with the community.

### Eminent Domain: Close Reading of the Constitution

Eminent domain refers to the power of the government to take private property and convert it into public use. According to the Fifth Amendment of the United States Constitution, the government may use this power only if they provide just compensation to the property owners. Eminent domain has been invoked throughout history to clear the way for major construction projects and government initiatives, and there are many recent examples, too. Help students gain a deeper understanding of eminent domain and how it relates to the Fifth Amendment. Begin with a close reading of the Fifth Amendment of the US Constitution and the definition of eminent domain. Then ask students to research recent or historical events in which eminent domain played a role. Ask students to analyze the benefits to the public compared to the personal loss of private property and the amount of compensation received. Have students debate whether or not the use of eminent domain in each situation was justified. Then connect back to *The End of the Wild* by discussing whether or not the government would have the right to take away Horace Millner's land by invoking eminent domain. What would they consider "just compensation" for his woods?

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## discussion questions

### Chapters 1–3

1. What do we learn about the narrator? Describe her characteristics and then make inferences about her personality using details from the text to support your answer.

Characteristic	Text-based Evidence (page number, sentence, phrase)

2. What does Fern think of Horace Millner? Why do you think she has this opinion?
3. Briefly describe Margot, Mark-Richard, and Alkomso. In what way does Margot seem different from Fern, Mark-Richard, and Alkomso? What would each of them do with the \$250 prize from the STEM contest?
4. What is the setting of the story? Use details from the text to describe the geographic location and the environment.

### Chapters 4–6

1. How does Fern feel about her grandfather? How does she feel about Toivo? Based on what is known of each character so far, how would you describe Fern’s grandfather? How would you describe Toivo? Use text-based evidence to support your thinking.
2. What does Fern learn about the connection between hydraulic fracturing and “her” woods?
3. Why does Fern say she does not like visitors? Who is Miss Tassel? Why is she visiting Toivo?

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## The End of the Wild

4. What happened at Mark-Richard's house? How does Fern react when she hears this? What happens when Fern goes to Mark-Richard's? What role does Ranger play?
5. What additional information about Mark-Richard does Margot share with the class? How do her classmates react? What is your opinion of Margot?
6. Why does Fern say, "It is almost like, for a brief second, Alkomso and Margot are on the same side"? How might this development change Fern and Alkomso's friendship?

### Chapters 7–9

1. What are some of the lessons Fern learned from her mother? How do these lessons still influence Fern today?
2. Why does Ranger have a duck tied around his neck? How does Fern explain the reason to her brothers? In some places this is considered animal cruelty and is against the law. Do you agree or disagree with this as a punishment? Explain.
3. Using details from the story, explain what Toivo means when he says, "One of these days, you're going to have to cut the duck from Millner's neck too."
4. Why is there tension between Toivo and Grandpa? Given what you know about Toivo and Grandpa, which home would you choose for Fern and her brothers? Support your thinking with clear reasons.

### Chapters 10–12

1. How did Fern act toward Alkomso when they first met? How does Fern feel about her actions when she looks back on them? What do you think are some of her biggest regrets about the way she acted? Use specific details to support your claim.
2. Fern notices that the drawings in Alkomso's resources on fracking make everything look neat and orderly. How does this make her feel? Why do you think she reacts this way?

3. Fern says, "It's confusing, knowing Horace Millner and I are on the same side." What is she referring to in this statement? Why is she confused?
4. How does Fern's knowledge of forest plants help Alkomso's little brother? Do you think this is important knowledge? Why or why not?
5. What does Fern discover when she goes to the fracking site? What might this discovery mean?

### Chapters 13–15

1. Describe Fern's relationship with Ranger and how it has evolved since the beginning of the book. Use details from previous chapters to describe their relationship.
2. What happens when Ranger senses danger? What does he do to protect Fern's brothers?
3. When Horace Millner arrives at the scene of the accident, Fern is overwhelmed with guilt. She apologizes to Horace, and then Horace apologizes to her. Fern states, "As Horace Millner walks away carrying that heavy load, he seems to take with him a heavy load of mine." Explain what she means by this statement using details from the text.
4. How do Grandpa, Toivo, and Miss Tassel each act when they arrive at the scene of the accident?
5. Why does Fern give Toivo the silent treatment?
6. What are some of Fern's worries? Which of these do you think would be the most concerning? Explain.

### Chapters 16–18

1. When Fern returns to the classroom after the crash, there are major changes. Describe these changes.
2. What does Margot mean when she says, "Tell everyone how you get rid of people who don't agree with you"? How is this statement related to recent events?
3. How has life changed for Mark-Richard?

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## The End of the Wild

4. Fern states, “It seems like all the kids I know are at the mercy of the whims of grown-ups.” Do you agree with this statement? Use evidence from the text to support your answer.
5. What conclusion can you draw about the way Mr. Millner feels about fracking? How is this related to the reason Mr. Flores and Mr. Millner are together in the woods? Use specific details to support your answer.
6. Based on Miss Tassel’s interview with Toivo, how does Toivo feel about being a father?
7. Toivo says Fern has “mettle” because of the hardships they have faced. What is mettle? Do you think this is a positive character trait? What specific actions from the story show that Fern has mettle?

### Chapters 19–21

1. What does Miss Tassel share about herself? Does this new information change your opinion of Miss Tassel? Explain.
2. As Miss Tassel and Fern discuss fracking, Miss Tassel says, “Adults have to choose between a rock and another rock all the time.” What does she mean by this? How is this related to Toivo’s job and Fern’s desire to save the woods?
3. Fern thinks Miss Tassel is telling her to cut the duck off Toivo. Explain Fern’s thinking.
4. Why is it significant that Toivo brings Fern materials for her school project?
5. What does Fern choose to do for her STEM project? Do you think this is a good project for Fern? Why or why not?

### Chapters 22–25

1. What do Alkomso and Mark-Richard do for their STEM project? How does Mark-Richard address a judge’s question about the dangers of relying on fossil fuels?
2. If you were one of the judges, which project would you choose as the winner? Use specific details to explain your choice.
3. How do Fern’s project and Alkomso’s project represent two sides of the fracking debate? Use specific details to explain your answer.
4. What agreement do Toivo and Grandpa come to regarding custody of Fern and her brothers? What does this show about how Grandpa and Toivo have changed?
5. Do you think this book has a happy ending? Carefully consider all of the events and then support your claim with evidence from the text.

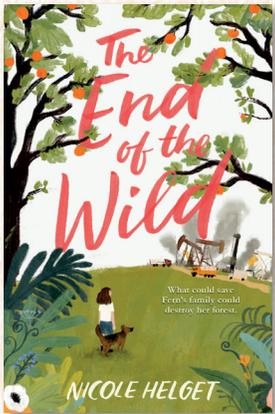
### Culminating Question

1. Choose one character and show how the events in the story contributed to their overall growth. How have they changed from the beginning of the story to the end?

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## about the book

Eleven-year-old Fern's run-down home borders a pristine forest, where her impoverished family hunts and forages for food. It's also her refuge from the crushing responsibility of caring for her wild younger brothers and PTSD-stricken stepfather. But when a fracking company rolls into town, Fern realizes that her special grove could be ripped away, and no one else seems to care.



HC 978-0-316-24511-1  
Also available as an ebook

Her stepfather thinks a job with the frackers could help pull the family out of poverty. Her wealthy grandfather—who wants to take custody of Fern and her brothers—likes the business it brings to his manufacturing company. Facing adversity from all sides, can one young girl make a difference in the fate of her family and their way of life?

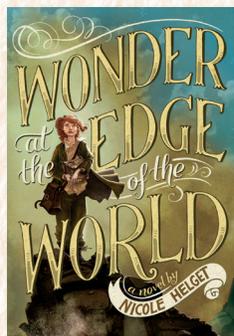
**2018 Charlotte Huck Award Honor  
for Outstanding Fiction for Children**

**2017 Kirkus Best of the Year  
in Middle Grade Fiction**

## praise for the book

- ★ "An uncommonly fine account of perseverance and understanding in the face of adversity." —*Booklist*
- ★ "Middle-grade readers will find much to think about in this beautifully written story." —*Kirkus*
- ★ "Helget confronts substantial subjects like poverty, environmentalism, and mental illness, injecting humor and hope to provide balance. Without lecturing, she encourages readers to be thoughtful and curious." —*Publishers Weekly*

## if you liked *The End of the Wild*, check out:



- ★ "With Hallelujah at the helm, Wonder is full-blown adventure tinged with mysticism, intelligence, and the spirit of discovery." —*Booklist*

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audio & ebook

## about the author



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Nicole Helget is the acclaimed author of the middle grade novels *Wonder at the Edge of the World* and *The End of the Wild*, as well as three books for adults, *The Turtle Catcher*, *The Summer of Ordinary Ways*, and *Stillwater*. She has also coauthored a middle grade novel, *Horse Camp*, and she invites you to visit her online at [nicolehelget.blogspot.com](http://nicolehelget.blogspot.com) and @NicoleHelget. She lives in St. Peter, Minnesota.