

MALAMANDER

First in the Legends of Eerie-on-Sea Series

by THOMAS TAYLOR illustrated by TOM BOOTH

About the Book

It's winter in the town of Eerie-on-Sea, where the mist is thick and the salt spray is rattling the windows of the Grand Nautilus Hotel. Inside, young Herbert Lemon, Lost-and-Founder for the hotel, has an unexpected visitor. It seems that Violet Parma, a fearless girl around his age, lost her parents at the hotel when she was a baby, and she's sure that the nervous Herbert is the only person who can help her find them. The trouble is, Violet is being pursued at that moment by a strange hook-handed man. And the town legend of the Malamander—a part-fish, part-human monster whose egg is said to make dreams come true—is rearing its scaly head. As various townspeople, some good-hearted, some nefarious, reveal themselves to be monster hunters on the sly, can Herbert and Violet elude them and discover what happened to Violet's kin? This lighthearted, fantastical mystery, featuring black-and-white spot illustrations, kicks off a series for you and your class to be enthralled by!

About This Guide

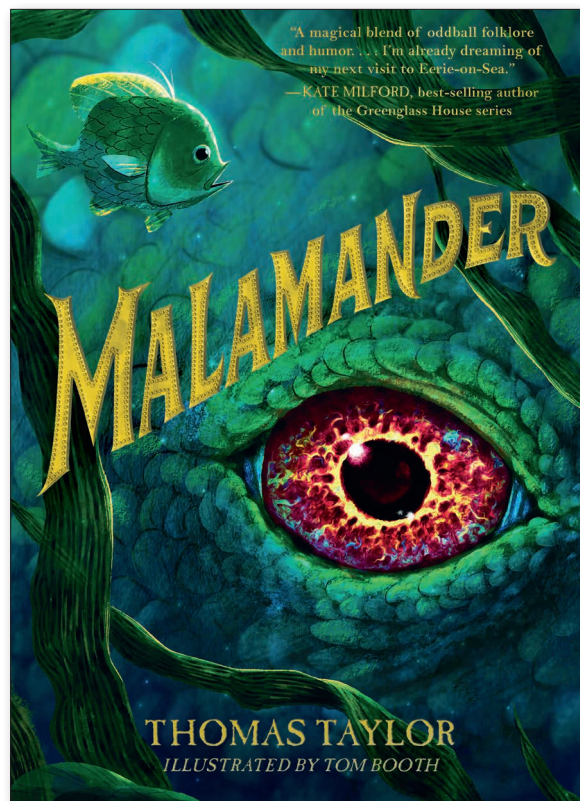
These notes include reading comprehension questions to support and elevate understanding of the text and to improve reading inference, retrieval, and predictive skills, as well as suggestions for classroom activities to enhance your enjoyment of the book. The discussion questions and activities have been excerpted from the Teachers' Notes written by J. Baldwin of SHAPES for Schools. The materials were developed for educators in the UK. They have been revised from the original.

About Thomas Taylor

Thomas Taylor is an award-winning author-illustrator for children. He illustrated the cover for the very first British edition of *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* and has since gone on to write and illustrate several picture books and young novels, most recently the graphic novel *Scarlett Hart: Monster Hunter* by Marcus Sedgwick. He lives on the south coast of England.

About Tom Booth

Art director by day and author-illustrator by night, Tom Booth is a maker of acclaimed children's books, including *Don't Blink!*, *This Is Christmas*, and *Who Wins?* He made his earliest marks—sometimes on his parents' antique kitchen table—growing up in Pennsylvania. Now living in Brooklyn, New York, he is currently at work on several children's books on a table all his own.



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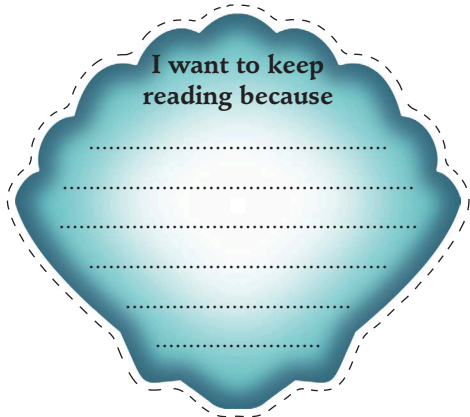
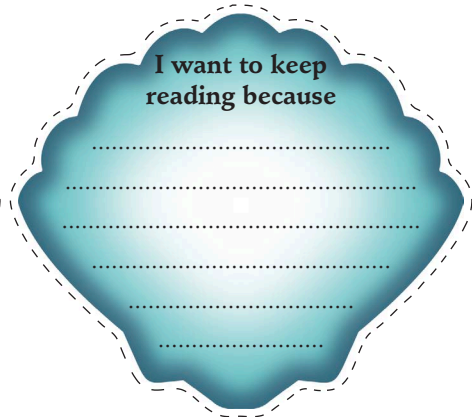
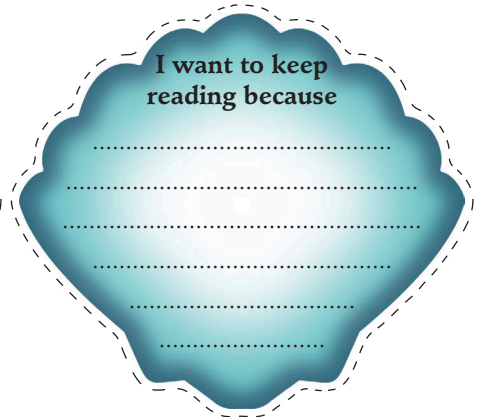
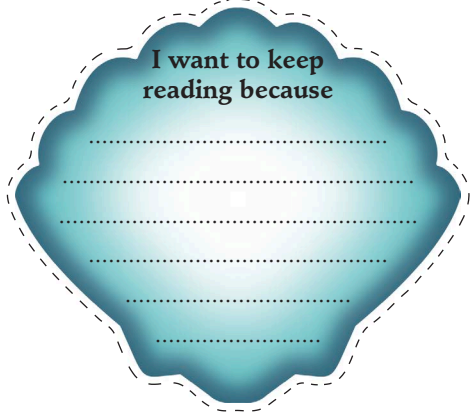
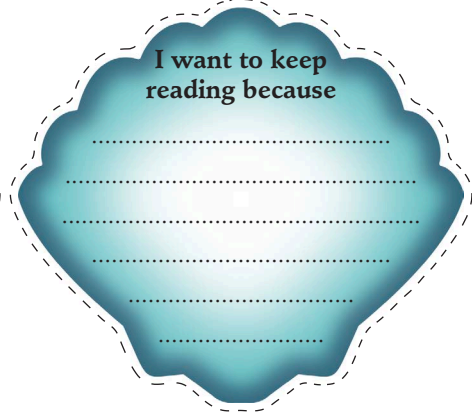
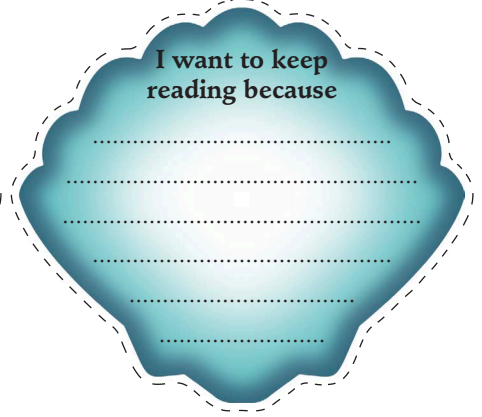
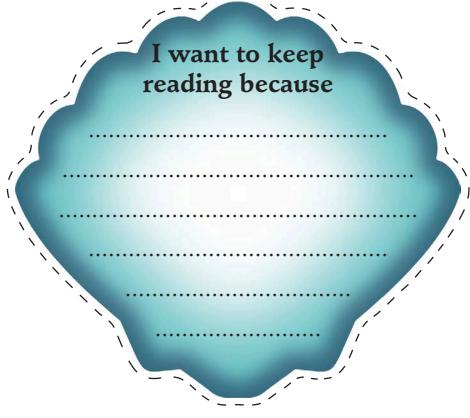
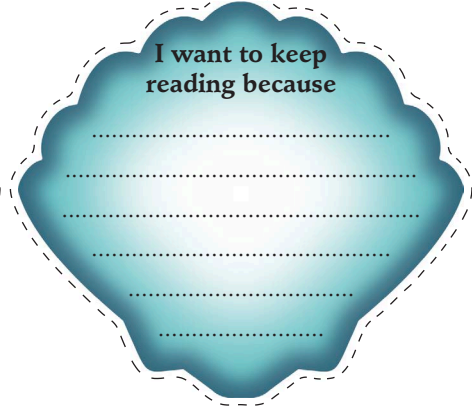
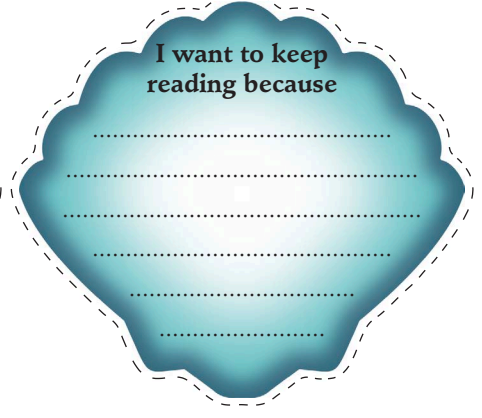
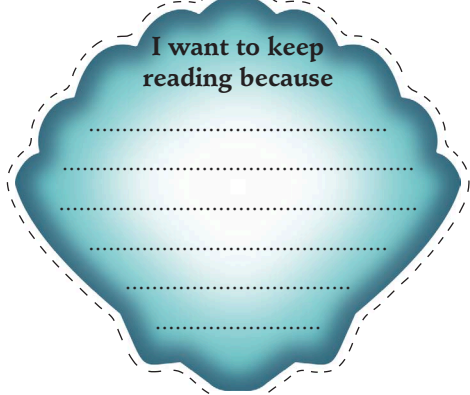
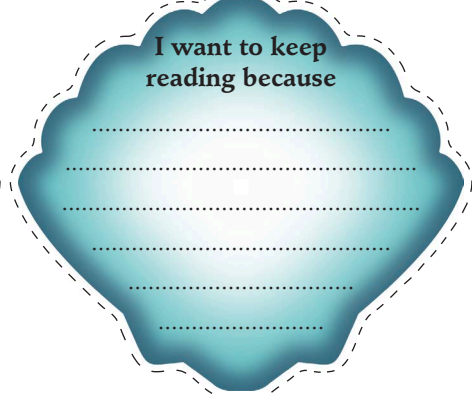
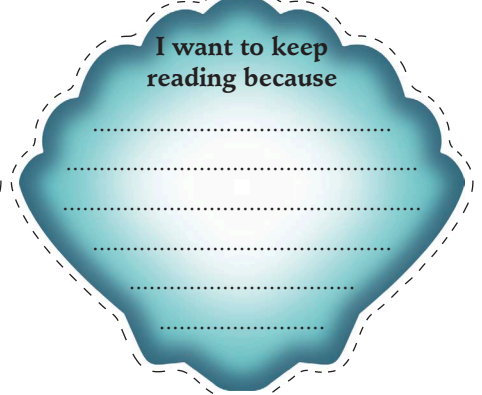
Reading by Lamplight

Before you begin reading *Malamander*, tape the lantern below to a sturdy backing, like cardstock or cardboard, and cut it out. Have your students sit in a big circle, and dim the lights to create an Eerie-on-Sea kind of atmosphere. Pass the book and the paper lantern (or better still, a real flashlight) around the circle and have each student take a turn reading a section from the first chapter.



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As the class reads, ask them to think about how the words make them feel. Are they frightened? Curious? Intrigued? What do they find particularly eerie about the opening of the story? Then ask who in the class wants to keep reading. Why? Pass out the shell badges below and have each student fill in their answer.

 <p>I want to keep reading because</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p>	 <p>I want to keep reading because</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p>	 <p>I want to keep reading because</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p>
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Lost-and-Foundery

Read aloud (or have your students read) from chapter 5, “Lost Luggage,” from page 32 (“There are spies in the hotel?” Violet’s eyes light up.) to page 34: (Violet shakes her head.).

Discussion Questions

1. What sorts of things can be lost and found? How do you think this theme might relate to the legend of the malamander?
2. What has Violet lost? What is she trying to find?
3. How does Herbie feel? How do you know? Pick out key words and phrases.
4. Why do you think Herbie fiddles with his cap before telling Violet what the red lines mean?
5. What does Violet find out about her parents’ luggage? Do you think she has “found” anything in this extract?

Lost-and-Foundery Activity

Subjects: Literacy, Art, Design and Technology, Speaking and Listening

Ask your students, “What is identity? How do you show your identity? How does the theme of the Lost-and-Foundery relate to the idea of identity in *Malamander*?” Have them focus on Violet’s story, in particular.


Using the reproducible on the next page, have each student create a piece of luggage that reflects their identity. Then they should decide what objects would be inside their luggage. Pair up students to discuss what they learned about their own identity in completing this exercise. See if anyone is willing to present their luggage to the class, or hang the students’ work on a bulletin board of lost luggage labeled “Herbie’s Lost-and-Foundery at the Grand Nautilus Hotel.”



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Draw a piece of luggage that reflects your identity. Consider the following things: What sort of luggage will you select: a backpack, a suitcase, a duffel bag, or something else? What colors will you use and why? Will your luggage be old and shabby, or will it be brand-new? Will it have any additional features, like a lock, a name tag, stickers, or other decorations, to reflect your personality?



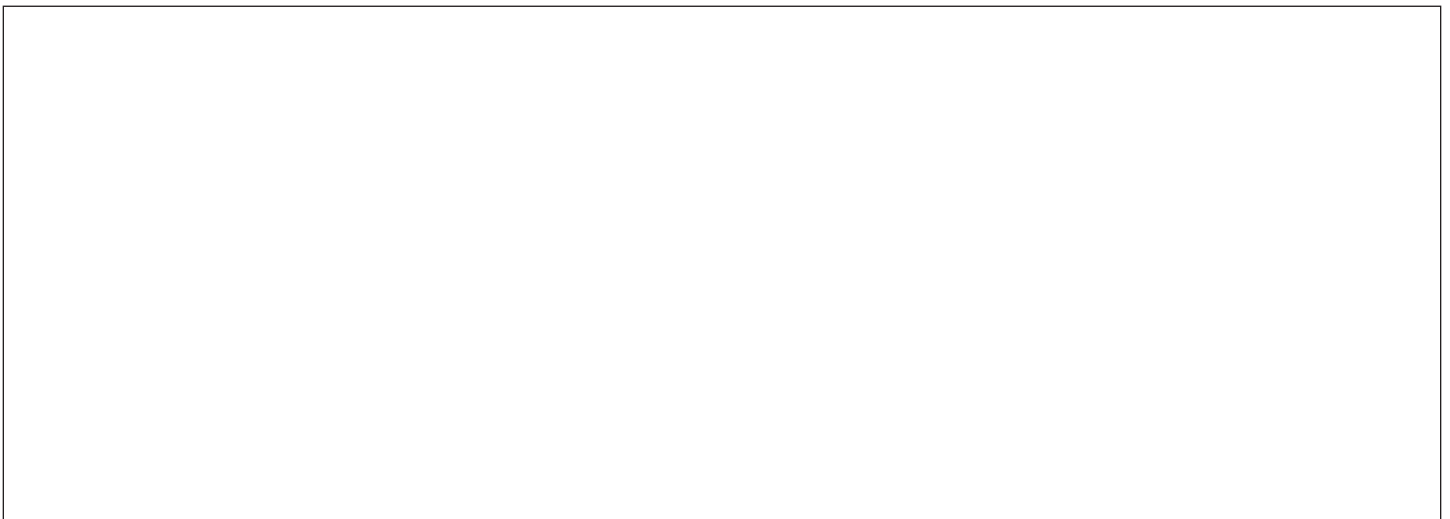
What items that represent who you are would be in your luggage? Make a list of things under the headings below. Try to choose only one or two things per heading. When you have completed your list, draw each item.

Objects

Clothing

Books

Other items



Beachcombing Treasures

Read aloud (or have your students read) from chapter 9, “Coprolites and Cuttlefish,” from page 61 (*We crunch on through the shingle, picking our way over the seaweed piles and sticks of driftwood.*) to page 62 (*“I’m probably the first person to pick it up since the Lower Cretaceous. Imagine that!”*).

Discussion Questions

1. What do you think a professional beachcomber is, based on the information in this section of the book?
2. What is Mrs. Fossil’s Flotsamporium? What sorts of things might you find there?
3. Why does Mrs. Fossil wink at Violet?
4. Mrs. Fossil removes coprolite from her bucket to show Herbie and Violet. What is coprolite?
5. How can you tell that Mrs. Fossil is interested in history in the extract?

Beachcombing Treasures Activities

Subjects: Literacy, Science, Geography, Speaking and Listening

As a class, make a list of the things that Mrs. Fossil has in her bucket. Discuss what each object tells us about the beach habitat of Eerie-On-Sea. Using chart paper or the board, draw two columns headed *Good* and *Bad*, and make lists of the good and bad things one might find on a beach (e.g., shells and litter). Then have students write about the negative impacts humans have on beaches today and why it is so important to protect them.

In pairs, have students research the following habitats: beach, rain forest, city, and desert. How are these habitats different, and why? What kinds of things might you find in each?

Determine the beach nearest to your classroom. Ask your students to conduct research to find out how you would get there, how long it would take, and what the beach is like. Then create a map of the route they decided to take.

Have students think about Mrs. Fossil’s bucket and create a collage of things that one might find visiting the beach in Eerie-on-Sea. Provide materials such as paper, markers, pencils, and possibly some sand. Encourage students to think of interesting ways to create unique beach-bucket collages. How will they show the different textures of the things that they find? Then ask each student to write a sensory description of their collage and read it to the class.

Write a Class Beach Pledge together, listing ways you will protect the beach and make sure that the only things inside Mrs. Fossil’s bucket are nature’s jewels and not things that have been dropped by humans.

The Power of the Sea

Read aloud (or have your students read) chapter 11, “The Sighting,” from page 76 (“Yeah,” I say, fishing my *Lost-and Founder’s cap* out of a pool of seawater and wringing it out.) to page 78 (Then we are both running up the beach, not looking back—running and running until we reach the top of the steps in the seawall, and we can see the town and the cheery lights and the door of the *Grand Nautilus Hotel*.).

Discussion Questions

1. How do you get the sense that the beach is dangerous for Herbie and Violet? Pick out key words and phrases.
2. Why is the name of the town, Eerie-on-Sea, effective in the context of the story? What are its connotations?
3. How does the author use imagery of light and dark to set the scene?
4. The author uses a variation of short and long sentences in this extract. Why do you think he does this?
5. What do you think a “throaty, clicking, burbling” noise might sound like? Can you re-create it?
6. How does the extract convey the power of nature?

The Power of the Sea Activities

Subjects: Literacy, Poetry, Art and Design, Drama, Music

In pairs, have students discuss visiting the beach. Have they ever visited a beach? If so, when was the last time? Where did they go? What was their best experience or favorite memory of the seaside? What was their worst? What do they know about the sea? How can it be considered frightening?

As a class, discuss what the ocean and the beach mean to people. Create a list of words that come to mind when thinking about them. Using words from the list, have students write and illustrate poems to show what the seaside means to each of them. The poems can be as happy or as eerie as they would like, and students don’t need to use every word on the list. Encourage them to think about what they have read in *Malamander* for inspiration. In pairs, have students read their poems aloud and try to use their voice, facial expressions, and body language to create additional meaning. After some practice, have each student present their performance for the class.

For further enrichment, see if your students can incorporate musical instruments into their performances. Have them consider how one can use different instruments to create mood and atmosphere. Then try adding music to the extract from the book. Use different sounds to show the rising tension on the beach as Herbie and Violet look through the mist, wondering what they can *really* see. . . .

The Legends of Eerie-on-Sea

Read aloud (or have your students read) from chapter 14, “What the Beachcomber Knows,” from page 95 (“So, do you really think you’ve been attacked by the malamander, Mrs. F?”) to page 97 (“I really don’t know what I saw, my dears. And that’s the truth of it.”).

Discussion Questions

1. What can you infer about Mrs. Fossil from her name? What kind of character do you think she is? What might she be interested in?
2. Why does Eerie-on-Sea get a lot of tourists in the summer, according to Mrs. F?
3. What is the Loch Ness Monster? How is the legend of the malamander similar to that of the Loch Ness Monster?
4. How does Mrs. F describe the malamander? Do you think she is frightened of it? Why?
5. How old is the story of the malamander?
6. What happened to all of the heroes in the legends, according to Mrs. F?
7. How does the author, Thomas Taylor, create a dreamlike quality in his writing? Why do you think he does this?

The Legends of Eerie-on-Sea Activity

Subjects: Literacy, Design and Technology

Malamander revolves around the myths and legends of Eerie-on-Sea. What are the old stories of your own local area? Have your students conduct research on the local community, industry, and culture. Ask if they can discover any local myths and legends to present to the class. Does your community have its very own malamander lurking in nearby waters?

Mrs. F says there are lots of stories in Eerie-on-Sea of people throughout history trying to take the malamander’s magical egg. In pairs, have students discuss ideas for one of these stories, using local stories as inspiration if possible. Then each student can fill out a planning sheet with the following information for their own legend of Eerie-on-Sea:

Title:	Difficult or dangerous journey:
Setting:	Reason for journey:
Name of hero:	Obstacles for hero to overcome:
Monster/enemy:	Why the hero failed:

Using the planning sheets, students can write their own legend of Eerie-on-Sea. When the stories are finished, they can roll up their story and place it inside a clean plastic bottle. Then have them create a label especially for the finder of their bottle. It might include some clues as to the contents of the story inside, or maybe even a map. Then hang the bottles around the classroom using string. Let the students read all the different stories inside the bottles, then discuss which legends are their favorites and which heroes most intrigued them.