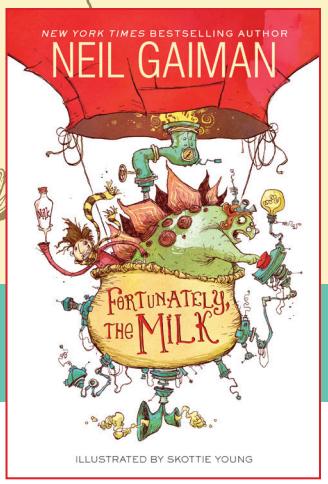
Fortunately, the Milk

BY NEIL GAIMAN
ILLUSTRATED BY SKOTTIE YOUNG



DISCUSSION GUIDE

ABOUT THE BOOK

Going to the store for milk has never been such an adventure. When Dad walks out of the local corner store with milk, he has no idea that he will be abducted by aliens, held captive by pirates, rescued by a time-traveling stegosaurus, and threatened by vampires. When Dad finally returns home, he recounts his incredible adventure for his son and daughter, describing how—still managing to save the milk—he ultimately saved the world. As his children listen with disbelief, they wonder whether their father could be telling the truth about why he was gone so long. Fortunately, along with Dad's astonishing account, they now have milk for their cereal.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. About how long in real time is the father gone? Can you tell? What do the kids do while their father is away?
2. What observations do the kids make while their father is telling them why he was gone so long? What questions do they ask?
3. Among the characters the father meets, which ones want to harm him? Which characters help him return home with his milk?
4. Why do the aliens want to redecorate the planet? Why do they choose the father? What are some of the aliens' ideas?
5. What are Professor Steg's special talents? What personality traits make Professor Steg a likable character? *CCSS: Reading: Literature (Key Ideas and Details) RL.3.3, RL.4.3*
6. How do the illustrations help convey the words in the story? In what ways do the illustrations add meaning to the story? *CCSS: Reading: Literature (Integration of Knowledge and Ideas) RL.3.7, RL.4.7*
7. How does the father use previous events and time travel to his advantage by meeting himself in the past or future? *CCSS: Reading: Literature (Craft and Structure) RL.3.5*
8. How does the reader know when the point of view changes from the son to the daughter and then to the father? How would the point of view be different if the story was told by the reader? *CCSS: Reading: Literature (Craft and Structure) RL.3.6, RL.4.6*
9. How does the phrase "fortunately, the milk" help tie all of the stories together? How does the milk finally help the father return home to his children?
10. Why does the father threaten to touch the two bottles of milk together? What are the aliens afraid will happen?
11. Where does the father get his ideas for the fantastical tale he tells his children? How does he try to prove it was all true?
12. What is on the bottom of the bottle of milk in the final illustration? What does it mean?

All questions correlate to CCSS: Reading: Literature (Key Ideas and Details) RL.3.1, RL.4.1, RL.5.1; Language (Conventions of Standard) English L.3, L.4, L.5; Language (Knowledge of Language) L.3.3, L.4.3, L.5.3; Speaking & Listening (Comprehension and Collaboration) SL.3.1, SL.4.1, SL.5.1

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

1. CREEPY CONNOTATIONS. The author uses descriptive words to help create images of the characters and events. With students working in small groups, ask them to make a chart of descriptive words (they can use the ones listed below or find their own in the story). On the chart, students should write the word, the definition, and the connotation of each word and accompany each entry with a simple sketch or illustration. Then challenge each student to write a short passage as a "story starter," creating a mood and setting using the vocabulary words listed. Have students exchange story starters and write imaginative stories to match the connotative meanings of the words. Some descriptive words to start with: glittery (p. 11), shimmery (p. 12), booming (p. 24), rushing (p. 42), weathered (p. 50), revolting (p. 52), ominous (p. 58), disquieting (p. 58), pallid (p. 59), suspicious (p. 64), glutinous (p. 75), globby (p. 88), imposing (p. 91). *CCSS: Language (Vocabulary Acquisition and Use) L.3.5, L.4.5, L.5.5; Reading: Literature (Craft and Structure) RL.3.4, RL.4.4; Writing (Text Types and Purposes) W.3.3, W.4.3, W.5.3*

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2. TIME TRAVEL REVISITED. After discussing Professor Steg's Really Good Moves Around in Time Machine, divide students into small groups and ask each group to research a famous time machine in literature, movies, or television (examples: *The Time Machine*, *Back to the Future*, *Planet of the Apes*, *The Big Bang Theory*, etc.). Have students draw an illustration and write accompanying text that includes an explanation of how the researched time machine operates, a summary of the consequences of time travel in the text/movie/show, and a group reflection of the author/creator's message regarding time travel. Have the groups post their illustrations and written commentary in the classroom and conduct a gallery walk of the time machines. *CCSS: Writing (Text Types and Purposes) W.3.2, W.4.2, W.5.2; Writing (Research to Build and Present Knowledge) W.3.7, W.4.7, W.5.7*

3. DINOSAURS = GALACTIC POLICE. Ask students to make a list of all the different types of dinosaurs in the Galactic Police. Then ask each student to select one dinosaur to draw, adding articles of clothing or weapons that would help identify the dinosaur as police. Ask students to writes brief descriptions of the dinosaurs, including what they ate, how they protected themselves, what they weighed, and any other facts the students find interesting. Students can display their drawings and written descriptions in the classroom. *CCSS: Writing (Text Types and Purposes) W.3.2, W.4.2, W.5.2; Writing (Research to Build and Present Knowledge) W.3.7, W.4.7, W.5.7*

4. ANOTHER FANTASTICAL TALE. Ask students to write their own fantasy tale of what really happened to the children at home while Dad went out to buy milk. Have students create a storyboard to plan the unbelievable adventure(s) of the children and include the exposition, conflict, climax, and resolution. Students should also incorporate imagery and dialogue into their stories. Upon completion of the stories, have students sit in a reading circle and share their stories with the class. *CCSS: Writing (Text Types and Purposes) W.3.3, W.4.3, W.5.3; Writing (Production and Distribution of Writing) W.3.4, W.4.4, W.5.4*

Courtesy of Brady Hall

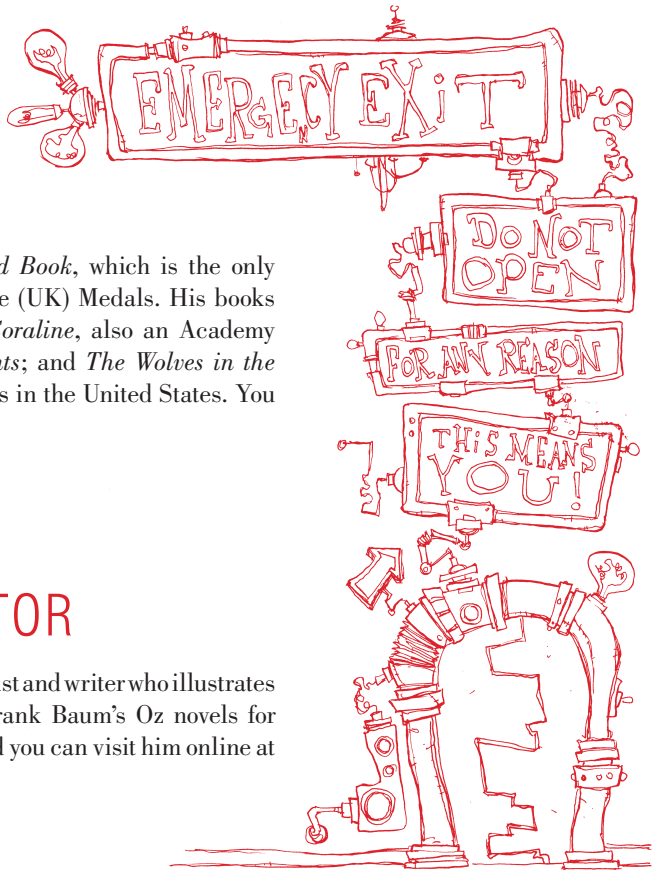
ABOUT THE AUTHOR

NEIL GAIMAN is the author of *The Graveyard Book*, which is the only work to win both the Newbery (US) and Carnegie (UK) Medals. His books for readers of all ages include the bestselling *Coraline*, also an Academy Award–nominated film; *Odd and the Frost Giants*; and *The Wolves in the Walls*. Originally from England, Gaiman now lives in the United States. You can visit him online at **www.mousecircus.com**.

Photo by Skottie Young

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Skottie Young is an Eisner Award–winning cartoonist and writer who illustrates *New York Times* bestselling adaptations of L. Frank Baum's Oz novels for Marvel Entertainment. Skottie lives in Illinois, and you can visit him online at **www.skottieyoung.com**.



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Discussion guide prepared by Susan Geye, Coordinator of Library Services, Everman Independent School District, Everman, Texas.