

# Creature Catchers

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**genre:** FANTASY, ADVENTURE, HISTORICAL FICTION

**themes:** MYTHICAL CREATURES  
SIBLING RIVALRY

**suitable for:** GRADES 6–8

This fantasy novel follows the adventures of the young siblings and rivals Candace and Kenneth as they accompany their Uncle Nigel to the Scottish moors to search for pixies, trolls, and will o' the wisps. When things do not go as planned, the children must first use their wits to get themselves out of danger, and then learn to co-operate in order to save Uncle Nigel from a desperate situation.

## The following activity ideas ...

... are only a start. There are many possibilities for helping students construct meaning from text.

## Before

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### STARTING THE BOOK

*Activities to build the context and introduce the topic of the book, and to establish prior knowledge and interest.*

1. To provide students with background information, you could organize them into groups and have each group research two or three of the mythical creatures mentioned in the novel. These creatures include
  - unicorn
  - pixie
  - hippogriff
  - cockatrix
  - lycanthrope
  - troll
  - centaur
  - phoenix
  - nixie
  - minotaur
  - pegasus
  - will o' the wisp

If the students' research includes the Internet, you may wish to bookmark appropriate websites to facilitate their research.

## READING THE BOOK

*Activities to check on comprehension, stimulate interest, involve readers in reflection as they read, and encourage consideration of other readers' reactions.*

### CHAPTERS 1–3

1. Ask students to compare and contrast the characters of Uncle Nigel and the father of Kenneth and Candace.
2. Invite students to make predictions about what will happen next. Encourage them to consider questions such as the following:
  - Will Candace get to meet a pixie? If so, will her plan to befriend one be successful?
  - Will Kenneth be able to find and trap a troll? Will it be as easy as he thinks?
  - What kinds of things might happen to Uncle Nigel as he tries to capture a will o' the wisp?

### CHAPTERS 4–8

3. Introduce students to the term “sibling rivalry” and encourage them to make connections to experiences they’ve had with a sibling of their own, or behaviors they’ve observed in siblings outside their own family. Then have them consider the following questions:
  - Do you think the author portrays the relationship between Kenneth and Candace in a realistic way?
  - Why might the author have chosen to make Kenneth and Candace rivals? What does this add to the novel?
4. Ask students to offer definitions of “suspense.” Then have them suggest which moments in the novel so far they have found suspenseful. Through discussion, guide students to see how the author uses character and setting, as well as plot, to create suspense.

### CHAPTERS 9–11

5. The novel does not include a scene showing what happens when Uncle Nigel returns Candace and Kenneth to their parents. Invite students to write about what might have happened. Alternatively, they could work in groups to prepare a dramatization of the scene to present to the class.

6. Have students work with a partner to discuss what lessons they think Kenneth and Candace have each learned by the end of the novel. After the discussion, each student could write a diary entry from the point of view of one of these characters, describing the lessons learned.

## After

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### READING THE BOOK

*Activities to inspire continued reflection and response to the text, bring conclusion to the experience of reading this particular text, and stimulate further extensions.*

1. The students could work together to create a booklet or PowerPoint presentation called “A Guide to Cryptozoological Creatures.” Encourage students to choose roles based on their interests and abilities, such as:
  - researching creatures
  - creating illustrations
  - writing text
  - using computer skills to create the final product
2. Uncle Nigel believes that zoos are important because they protect species from extinction, which allows humans to study them. Candace’s mother says that zoos “serve the needs of humans, not the creatures they incarcerate.” Through discussion, students could debate and explore the issue of keeping real creatures in zoos. Encourage students to consider whether the author clearly presents her own point of view in the novel.
3. Some students might enjoy writing a story about an encounter with a mythical creature from the list in the first activity in the “Before Reading the Book” section. As in the novel, the creature might turn out to have characteristics that are quite different from those presented in the research information. Alternatively, students could work in pairs or small groups to present a dramatization of the encounter.