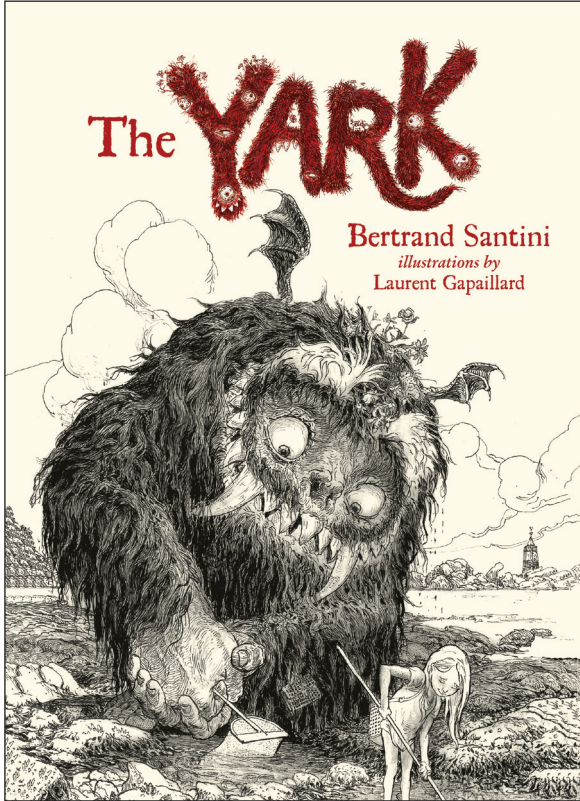


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Teaching Notes



The Yark

By Bertrand Santini

Illus. Laurent Gapaillard

Synopsis

The Yark loves children...with the love of a gourmand!

This hairy monster dreams of child buffets—ham of boy, orphan gratin, schoolchild purée, breaded babies, girl rillettes. But he has a problem: his delicate stomach can only tolerate nice children; liars give him heartburn, savages spoil his teeth. There are not enough good, edible children around to keep him from starvation. Then the Yark does find delicious, sweet Madeleine. Will he gobble her up? Or will she survive long enough to change his life?

The Author

Bertrand Santini is scriptwriter and author of a number of popular children's books

The Illustrator

Laurent Gapaillard is a graphic designer, who studied at ESAG Penninghen and has collaborated on feature films, animated television series and video games.

Themes

This wonderful story resists stereotypes about monsters, and explores themes of food, freedom, and friendship. *The Yark* challenges our ideas about who we can be friends with, the foods we can enjoy, and the freedoms we grant ourselves. Some awareness of stereotypes and how we often judge or preconceive people – and animals!

Activities

Level One – Text (Before and While Reading)

1. Before you read the book, look at the cover (front and back) of the book. What can you tell about the story from the title, font, illustrations, and blurb? Think about the colours and style of illustrations and what they might tell you about what sort of story this is.
2. Either on your own or in pairs find the definition of the following words that appear in the story and then use them in a new sentence:
 - Racist bias (p. 2)
 - Hue (p.2)
 - Deplorable (p. 8)
 - Edible (p. 9)
 - Capricious (p. 10)
 - Hades (p. 16)
 - Aroma (p. 20) and Olfactory (p. 40)
 - Morsel (p. 31)
3. As you read the story, think about how your expectations of monsters are changed. How is the Yark different from other monsters? Or similar?
4. Vipers venom (p. 6) is an example of alliteration (the repetition of consonant sounds in two or more neighbouring words or syllables). Look for other examples of alliteration as you read the story.

Level Two – Responding to the Text and Reading Between the Lines (While Reading)

1. How does the first illustration in the book (before the title page) make you feel? Why do you think this illustration has been placed here before the story (proper) begins? Write down 5-10 words or impressions you have from or things you notice in this picture.
2. There is a quote from English philosopher John Locke (1632-1704) at the beginning of the book. What do you think he means? Can you rewrite the quote in your own words? Look at the quote again when you have finished the story and see if you understand it differently.
3. “Nature, which has no moral code, is indifferent to matters of good and evil” (p. 8). What do you understand this to mean? Do you agree? You could have a class debate to argue different points of view.

4. On page 9 there is the sentence: “Masquerading as a grandmother was enough to lure them within the swipe of a claw.” What famous fairy tale is the author referring to in which a monster or animal pretends to be someone else?
5. Look closely at the picture of Madeleine’s room (p. 41). What details do you notice? Anything strange/different for a child’s room?

Level Three – Creating Based on the Text

1. Names often give us an idea of someone’s character (how they look and behave). In pairs, discuss the name Yark and how effective it is as a monster name. Next, come up with a list of five alternative names for monsters you create and draw an illustration for each.
2. Create a map that shows the places the Yark travels to: Provence, London, Morocco, North Pole (to see Santa Claus), Vietnam (Southeast Asia), Spain, Bulgaria, India, United States.
3. Find a recipe for Madeleines and then create your own version with illustrations. Be sure to make and taste test the Madeleines!
4. By the end of the story, “the Yark is no longer led by his nose” (p. 67). However, smell plays an important part in how we experience and enjoy food. Create your own blind food tasting for family, friends, or classmates.

Level Four – Beyond the Text

1. This is monster story. In groups of 3-4 discuss other monster stories you know. How do the monsters behave? Are they always scary? Ugly? What patterns or differences are there in how the monsters are portrayed?
2. In pairs, discuss what foods give you a sore stomach. Do you know why? What can you do to make yourself feel better?
3. Write a paragraph describing your own ideas of perfect friendship.
4. “Humanity has hardly evolved since the Iron Age” (p. 53). Find five facts about the Iron Age and share with your class.



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