

Telling Tales

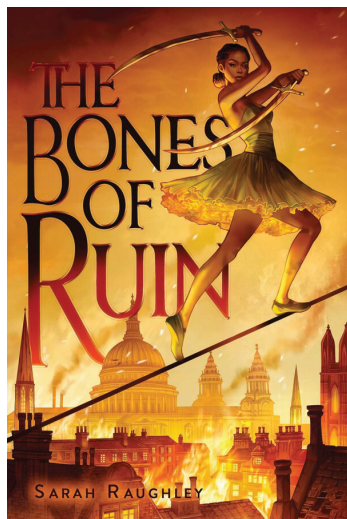
EDUCATOR'S GUIDE

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Our thanks to the following partners who made this program possible.



BONES OF RUIN

BY SARAH RAUGHLEY

Ages: 14-18 | September 2021, Margaret K. McElderry Books (Simon & Schuster) | **ISBN:** 9781534453562

In her video, Sarah explains that she was inspired to write Iris's story, in part, to counter the lack of people of colour in novels and shows she had seen set in the Victorian period. *Bones of Ruin* brings into the spotlight the story of a (supernaturally talented) Black teen, while bringing to life an example of the real diversity of people and experiences that could be found in Victorian England.

Q./Discussion: Diversity and Visibility in Media

This book is a historical fantasy novel featuring a person of colour. Why might it be important to have diverse peoples and voices featured in our media? Are all types of representations of diversity in media equal?

Activity: Assess diversity in popular media.

1. Begin by asking students to brainstorm their favourite of the following: TV comedies, TV dramas, Reality TV, video games, recent movies, books or book series. Working as a class, pare the list down to the top 2 or 3 most recognizable entries in each category.

NOTE: Remind the students that media—books, films, video games, etc.—are representations of reality, and that these realities are constructed. While they may seem to be realistic representations, what gets put in, left out, highlighted, or ignored can shape how we think of the real world as well. This means that what we see in the media can shape our understanding or attitudes toward those who are either portrayed or excluded.

2. As a class, brainstorm some groups that students feel have been under-represented in North American media (e.g., persons of colour, religious affiliation, Indigenous peoples, LGBTQ+, persons with psychological, cognitive, or physical disabilities, etc.). You may want to reinforce that these are broad categorizations for this activity, and that individuals' identities are always complex and intersectional (people have multiple ways in which they identify/understand themselves).

3. Divide the students into groups for each of the categories they brainstormed earlier: TV comedy, TV drama, Reality TV, video games, movies, and books. Using the Diversity Worksheet provided, each group is responsible for analyzing one of the entries in their category, (If there is time, groups can analyze another entry from their list.) Have the students report their findings back to the class.

Discussion/Reflection: After hearing their classmates' reports, have the class discuss the following questions in response:

- Is there a greater range of portrayals in a particular medium? Why do you think that is?
- What was the quality of representation overall? Does it need improvement? Why or why not?
- Are there any groups not represented? Why do you think that might be?
- Do you think, overall, that the diversity of Canadian/North American society is accurately represented in these media? Why or why not?
- What do you think that we, as consumers of media, can do to ensure diversity in our media?

BONUS EXTENSION ACTIVITY

Play students the YouTube video ***Simu Liu – Seek More***. Canadian Simu Liu, star of Marvel's *Chang Shi*, speaks to the issue of diversity in the arts. As a class, discuss some of the following questions:

- What do you think "diversity" means when it comes to representations in books/films, etc?
- What is the impact of depictions of diversity in media portrayals? What do you think is the impact of not seeing diversity depicted?
- Why do you think certain groups have been traditionally well represented and others not?
- Are all representations of under-represented groups/people equal? What differences could there be (e.g., major vs. minor characters, well-rounded characters vs. flat characters or stereotypes) and what might be the different effects?
- Is diversity in content creators (e.g. writers, directors, producers, tradespeople) as important as diversity in the finished product? Why or why not?

Follow-up Activity: You have been hired to create a video that will be sent to executives in the entertainment/literary world to argue for more diversity in their content. Pick an audience for your video (e.g., studio head, film director, casting director, writer/screenwriter, editor-in-chief, etc.). Based on that audience, choose 2 or 3 arguments that you think will help convince them, and consider what style and tone you will use in your video to help ensure that you will win them over.

Teacher Resources: Below find some additional resources/articles on diversity in publishing and other media.

[Diversebooks.org – We Need Diverse Books](#)

[The Star – Who Do We See In Canadian Children's Books](#)

[The Star – Children with Disabilities Aren't Seeing Themselves in The Books They Read](#)

[Variety – Women and People of Color Still Under-represented Behind the Screen](#)

[NPR -Neither #Oscars So White, nor #Oscars So Male – What a Difference a Pandemic Makes](#)

[UCLA – Diversity Improves Among TV Actors, but Executives Still Overwhelmingly Male and White](#)

[CNET – E3 2021 Discusses Diversity on the Video Game Industry's Biggest Stage](#)



DIVERSITY PORTRAYAL WORKSHEET

Lesson Plan Adapted from Media Smarts Miscast and Seldom See

Text: _____

List any characters that you can think of that fit one of the under-represented group categories your class brainstormed (e.g., person of colour, Indigenous, LGBTQ+, person with a psychological, cognitive, or physical disability, etc.) Identify whether they are a **lead character** (the show is about them), a **major character** (plays an important and ongoing role), or a **minor character**, and jot down some reasons why you think they fit in that category. Note any other observations you may have about how the character is represented in the text.

[illegible]



THRIVE

BY KENNETH OPPEL

Ages: 12-14 | 2021, HarperCollins Canada | **ISBN:** 9781443456913

In his video, Kenneth described a terrifying nightmare experienced by his daughter. In her dream, she was caught in a torrential rainstorm that was really a shower of tiny, alien, eggs that were about to hatch.

As Kenneth explained, this one idea became the premise for the entire *Bloom Trilogy*.

Q./Discussion: Elevator Pitch

Kenneth's presentation is a great example of an **elevator pitch**. An elevator pitch is a term used to describe the ability to communicate a big idea quickly, clearly and persuasively. Kenneth was able to summarize his big idea—the *Bloom Trilogy*—in about the time it would take to ride an elevator to the top of a skyscraper.

Why is it important to be able to summarize complicated information or stories?

Can you think of circumstances where you might need to do this?

Activity: What's the Big Idea? Writing a Headline.

1. Begin by asking the students to brainstorm their favourite of the following: TV comedies, TV dramas, Reality TV, video games, recent movies, books or book series. With the class's help, pare down the list to only **ONE** widely recognizable entry in each of the chosen categories.
2. Break the class into small groups and ask them to summarize the premise of each of the entries into one sentence so it reads like a media headline. For example, Kenneth Oppel's big idea might be, "*Three teens from Salt Spring Island outwit an alien invasion that began as a rainstorm.*"
3. Ask the groups to share their headlines, noting the differences among their answers.

Reflection/Extension: Persuasion and Perception

1. After noting the differences among the answers, ask the students to elaborate on their headlines. Did some groups highlight altogether different aspects of the shows/stories/games they were summarizing? What factors influenced their answers?

2. Would the differences among the headlines of the same shows/stories/games leave an audience with a completely different perception of what to expect? Can we persuade an audience to focus on different aspects of a story just by changing the headline?

3. You could repeat this activity by having the students each create a picture based on the headline. Then compare the pictures and discuss the way the same headline resulted in many different pictures.

Follow Up Activity: Create A Sci-Fi Thriller

In his reading, Kenneth described the heroes, the villains and the premise of Thrive. Using the same structure, plan your own epic. This is an outline, so use point form or only a few sentences to answer the questions.

1. Describe the premise in one sentence—what is your big idea or headline?
2. What/who is the threat/monster/villain?
3. Who are your heroes?
4. How do the heroes combat the threat?
5. Do they succeed? Write a hint of what the outcome might be but keep the details to yourself, so you don't spoil the ending.


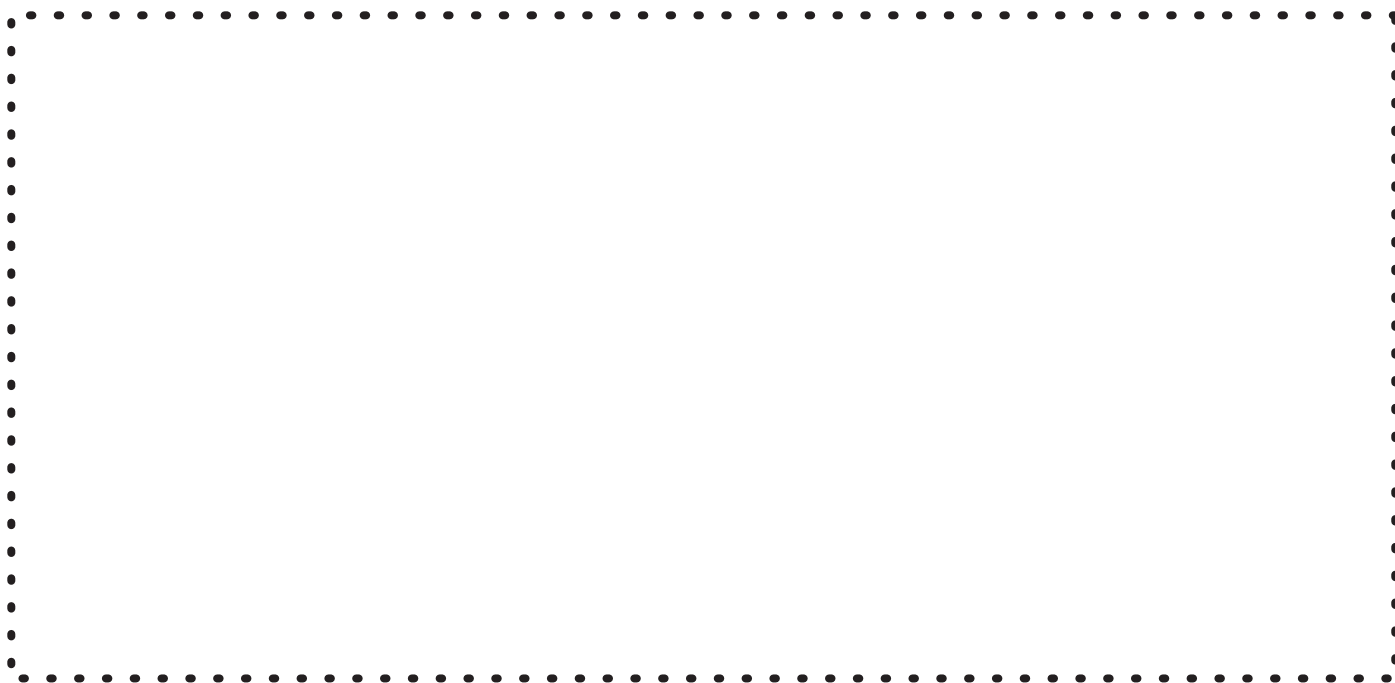
Bonus: Create a visual representation of your threat/monster/villain and your heroes with a drawing, computer animation, or collage. Bring it all together and create a two-minute **elevator pitch** to persuade your classmates to publish/produce your story.



ACTIVITY SHEET



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