WALKER BOOKS CLASSROOM

DISCUSSION GUIDE

Written by Philip Bunting

Free education resources written
to the Australian curriculum.

WALKER BOOKS

About the Book

THE OTHER SIDE
AUTHOR: PHILIP BUNTING
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Join Grimster – aka the Grim Reaper – on a whistle-stop tour of afterlife beliefs.

From Ancient Egypt to the Aztecs, the Vikings to the Ainu, people around the world have always wondered what happens when our time on Earth is up. Some imagine heavenly rewards. Some picture gloomy underworlds. Some believe in reincarnation, ghosts, spirit worlds, alien paradises or giant cosmic mysteries far beyond human understanding.

Funny, thoughtful and gently philosophical, The Other Side explores big questions about life, death, belief and wonder – while reminding readers that, whatever we believe about what comes next, we are all here together … right now.

About the Author

PHILIP BUNTING **is an author and illustrator whose books encourage playful curiosity about the world. His work often uses humour, simplicity and visual wit to explore big ideas for young readers. Philip's books have been published around the world and include titles about nature, science, animals, feelings, families and the wonderfully strange business of being alive.**

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Discussion points:

1. The book describes life as a "holiday" on Earth. Why do you think the author uses this idea? How does it change the way you think about being alive?

2. Grimster says there are two ground rules: life is limited, and the Other Side is a mystery. Why might these two ideas be important? How do they make the book feel funny, serious or thoughtful?

3. Many afterlife beliefs are connected to how people behave while they are alive. Can you find examples in the book where kindness, courage, honesty or good deeds matter? Why do you think people connect life choices with what happens after death?

4. Some beliefs in the book are comforting, while others are strange, funny or frightening. How can stories help people understand difficult or mysterious things?

5. Beliefs about death are often connected to culture, family, religion and tradition. Why is it important to talk about different beliefs respectfully, even if they are not the same as our own?

6. The book says we are "all in this together". What does that phrase mean to you? In what ways are all humans connected?

7. What do many of these beliefs have in common? Even though the details are different, what similar hopes, worries or questions do people seem to share?

8. Grimster is the Grim Reaper, but he is not especially scary. How do the words and pictures make Grimster feel funny, friendly or surprising? How would the book feel different if Grimster were frightening?

9. The book uses humour to talk about a serious topic. Find a moment that made you laugh. Why can humour be a useful way to discuss big or difficult ideas?

10. The book ends by reminding us that this moment will pass and will never come again. What do you think this means? How might this idea change the way we treat ourselves, other people or the world around us?

11. Beliefs about death are often connected to culture, family, religion and tradition. Why is it important to talk about different beliefs respectfully, even if they are not the same as our own?

12. The book says we are "all in this together". What does that phrase mean to you? In what ways are all humans connected, even when we believe different things?

Activities

1. Create a "post-holiday adventure guide"

Create a travel-style poster or brochure for one of the afterlife destinations in the book. Include the name of the destination, where or which culture/ belief system it comes from, three things a visitor might see there, one warning or travel tip, and a short slogan, such as “Visit Valhalla: feasting, fighting and no bedtime!”

2. Make a "You Are Here" moment map

Draw yourself in the middle of the page. Around yourself, add people who matter to you, places you love, things you enjoy doing, things you are curious about and small ways you can make your corner of the world brighter. Afterwards, write one sentence beginning with: “In this moment, I am grateful for…”

3. Design a New Department of Afterlife Affairs Poster

Design your own poster for Grimster’s department. Your poster could advertise:

Life: For a Limited Time Only!
The Other Side: Mystery Guaranteed
Be Kind While You’re Here
No Swapsies, No Returns
Enjoy Your Holiday on Earth!

4. A Letter from Grimster

Write a short letter from Grimster to someone just beginning their “holiday” on Earth. Your letter should include a friendly welcome, one funny warning, one reminder that life is limited and one piece of advice for making the most of the trip.

5. Draw the Afterlife

Draw your own version of “The Other Side”. It can be serious, silly, peaceful, mysterious or completely impossible. Label at least five details in your drawing and explain what each one means. Remember: this is not about choosing the “right” answer. It is about imagining, wondering and thinking creatively about one of life’s biggest mysteries.