

A Standards-Aligned Educator Guide for Grades 3-5

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Meet the Author

Sam Subity loves writing stories that explore the magic and wonder of being a kid and is thrilled to share his writing with readers everywhere—both the young in age and the young at heart. When he's not writing, you might find him hiking the trails of northern California where the endless, winding miles past fog and ocean inspire stories of adventure and mystery.



 SCHOLASTIC

THE LAST SHADOW WARRIOR



About the Book

Twelve-year-old Abby Beckett is proud to come from a long line of elite Viking warriors known as the Aesir. She's spent her entire life training to hunt Grendels, just like her mother did before she died. But there's just one, small problem: No one has seen a Grendel in centuries, and now the Viking Council wants to disband the Aesir...forever.

Abby goes on a dangerous quest to discover the truth—a journey that brings her face-to-face with some unlikely foes, including a Ping-Pong-playing sea monster with a wicked backhand, and a dark Valkyrie with a fondness for bingo. Abby quickly realizes that someone at her school is trying to stop her progress and destroy the Aesir for good. And only she can unravel the sinister plot before it's too

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About This Guide

This guide was designed to help spark your teaching ideas as you plan your students' interaction with *The Last Shadow Warrior*. Inside you'll find:

- **Before Reading** welcomes you and student readers into the reading experience with anticipatory questions and activities that offer background knowledge related to the story.
- Grouped into bite-sized sections, **Guiding Questions for Grades 3-5** provide thought-provoking, text-dependent questions based on the Common Core State Standards.
- The **After Reading Activities** provide opportunities for culminating tasks, deeper inquiry, and further exploration.



Before Reading

Consider these anticipatory questions and activities that offer background knowledge related to the story

1. Make a prediction based on the front and back covers of the book. What do you think the book will be about? When and where do you think the story will take place? What do you think the problem will be in the story?



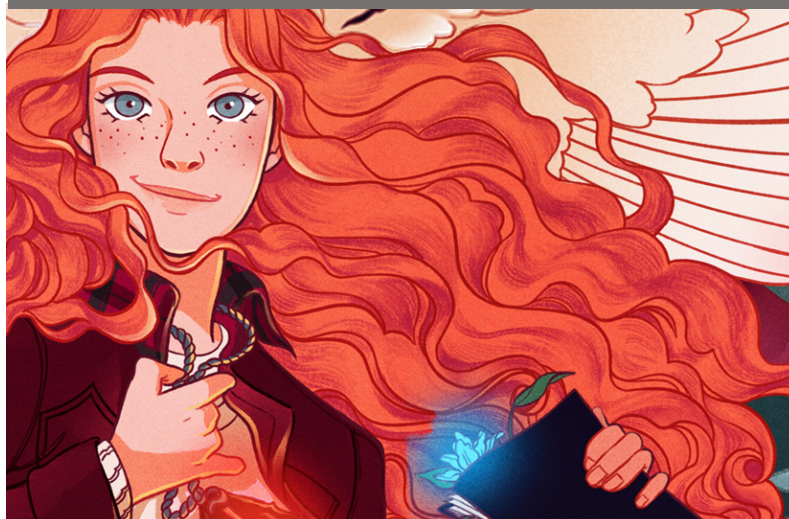
Web Activity

2. This story is about a young, modern-day Viking. Build your background knowledge so that you become a Viking expert. The supplementary “Fact vs. Fiction in *The Last Shadow Warrior*” guide at samsubity.com provides chapter-by-chapter insights into the background research that went into creating the book, including everything from Viking games to who *really* first landed on North America (Hint: It wasn’t Christopher Columbus). Use that guide as a jumping off point to conduct your own online research and investigate key facts that seem interesting to you. Jot down what you learn about Vikings—their lifestyle, battle tactics, and recreational activities. Based on your preliminary research, what do you expect to see in the story?

3. Use these essential questions as overarching thoughts that will guide your thinking about the theme of the story:

- What is the greatest role parents fulfill in their children’s lives?
- How much of what happens in our lives is within our control?
- Do people or experiences have a greater impact on how we handle problems?
- What makes a good friend?

Meet the main character: Abby Beckett



Likes: Hunting Grendels, *The Princess Bride*, Cookie dough ice cream

Dislikes: Mean people, her perpetually unruly hair

During Reading: Guiding Questions for Grades 3-5

The guiding questions found on the next several pages align with the Common Core State Standards for 5th grade, but they can also be applied to 3rd and 4th grades.

1. What have you learned about Abby so far? Does she remind you of anyone you know? If so, in what way? ([CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.1](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.3](#))
2. Explain the connection Abby feels with her mother. ([CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.1](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.3](#))
3. Do you think Abby and her father have a typical father-daughter relationship? What do they say to each other to make you think that? ([CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.1](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.3](#))
4. What does Abby worry about the most? Do you think this is something her father can help her with? Why or why not? ([CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.3](#))
5. Would you describe the strange visit that Abby experiences in Chapter 1 as annoying or threatening? What words does the author use to make you think that? ([CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.1](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.3](#); [CCSS.ELA-](#)

Chapters 1-4

The first four chapters of the story introduce you to Abby. The story is told from a first-person point of view, which means Abby is telling you what happened herself rather than a narrator telling her story. You learn a lot about her and her parents, including the fact that her mom died several years ago. As you read, pay attention to how she feels about her mom and the relationship she has with her dad.

Chapters 5-11

Abby takes you further into her journey. She meets new people in a new place. She begins to see that there is so much to learn before she can unlock the big mystery she must solve. As you travel with Abby through this part of her journey, think about how she interacts with people and handles problems that come up.

1. The next morning, Abby wakes up to a red sky. She remembers her mom telling her this meant “a storm was coming.” Sometimes authors use foreshadowing or give clues about what will happen later in the story. Based on what Abby’s mom says about the red sky, do you think something positive or negative will happen? Make a prediction about what the “storm” might be. ([CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.4](#))
2. Abby meets different people—some nice and some not so nice. Some of the nice people will help Abby. Choose one nice person she meets. What does this person do or say to make you think he or she will help Abby? ([CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.1](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.3](#))
3. As Gwynn gives Abby and Grimsby a tour of Asgard, she shares quite a few historical facts about the Vikings. Add them to your initial research notes as you find them. What is the most interesting or surprising thing you learned about Vikings during the tour of Asgard?
4. What do you think Abby expects to happen when she realizes she is meeting with the Grey Council? What words or phrases in the story give you an idea of what she expects? Did the meeting go as expected? Explain. ([CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.1](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.4](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.6](#))
5. Of all the people Abby meets so far, who do you think might hinder her from reaching her goal? What does this person say or do to make you think he or she is in opposition to Abby? ([CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.1](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.3](#))
6. In Chapters 5-11, Abby’s journey takes her into a strange place with new people. What can be learned about how to work with new people who might be able to help you solve a problem? Write a thematic statement to show this. Cite specific events from these chapters that support your thematic statement. ([CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.1](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.2](#))

Chapters 12-17

Various situations and problems that come up take Abby through different thoughts and emotions. At times she feels confused and doubtful, but she manages to find motivation. As you read these chapters, think about what motivates Abby. What do you think pushes her to achieve the end goal?

1. Think back to Chapter 11. What is Abby's greatest challenge when meeting with the Grey Council? How does this make her feel in the beginning of Chapter 12? ([CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.3](#))
2. One good friend willingly supports another when needed. How does Grimsby support Abby in Chapter 12? Explain how his support strengthens Abby and encourages her to continue on her journey. ([CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.1](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.3](#))
3. How does Grimsby and Gwynn's team effort help Abby overcome the challenge in Chapter 13? ([CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.3](#))
4. Write a thematic statement to show what can be learned from the encounter with Granny V. Cite details from the story to support your thematic statement. ([CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.1](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.2](#))
5. What does Abby think when she finds "The Botanist's Journal"? Do you think having the journal will help or hinder the situation? How might having it affect what will happen in the story? ([CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.5](#))
6. At the end of Chapter 15, Abby uses a metaphor to reflect on just how much her life has changed within a matter of days: *But it seemed like a perfect metaphor for the mess my life had become in just a few short days. And it was sure going to take an epic mop to clean it all up.* (p. 161) What do you think is the "epic mop" that will "clean up" Abby's life? Explain. ([CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.4](#))
7. How does Abby show warrior-like qualities in Chapter 15? ([CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.1](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.3](#))
8. After Abby demands to stop being treated like a kid and be told what is going on, Doc tells her information she did not know. Of the things he tells her, what do you think is most important? How do you think it will help Abby? ([CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.3](#))
9. Chase and Abby engage in a rhyme battle exchange before playing against each other in knattleikr. Simplify each character's rhyme. Write a one-sentence summary of each rhyme. Use details about the character from the story to explain why the other character might say that about him or her. ([CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.1](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.3](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.4](#))
10. Doc stresses how important it is for Abby to participate in knattleikr, which is an actual game that Vikings played. If it is not on your researched list of recreational activities, add it. What skill do you think Abby learns on the field that will help her conquer obstacles off the field? What happens on the field that teaches Abby this skill? How do you think this skill will help her in the future? ([CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.1](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.3](#))

Chapters 18-23

Just when she gets more information and feels more confident about continuing her journey, Abby receives discouraging news. In no way does this deter her. With a fueled determination, Abby continues to courageously face the unknown and move closer to reaching her end goal. As you read the next few chapters, think about what motivates Abby.



1. Abby, Grimsby, and Gwynn venture outside of Vale to find the world tree of knowledge. Do any of them show any sort of hesitation to do this? Explain using details from the text. Is figuring out a clue worth the risk of going somewhere without adult guidance and supervision? Why or why not? ([CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.3](#))
2. The author uses personification to show Iggy's character. Describe Iggy. How is he similar to Abby, Grimsby, or Gwynn? Cite two details from the story to support your thinking. ([CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.1](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.3](#))
3. What is the best piece of advice Iggy gives Abby? How does this advice differ from Abby's current way of thinking? How do you think this advice will influence how Abby thinks in the future? ([CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.3](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.6](#))
4. Contrast Abby in previous chapters to how she behaves in Chapter 19. How has her character changed? What do you think happened in the story to bring about this change? ([CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.1](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.3](#))
5. As Abby fights alongside her mom in the Viking battle, she uses a simile:

“But instead of fear, I only felt anger. Anger rising in me like a searing flame.”

What does the simile say about how her mom's death affects Abby? How does it influence her perspective and motivation? ([CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.3](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.4](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.6](#))

6. In Chapter 21, the author uses a writing technique called a “ticking clock” when Abby receives her dad's diagnosis. Now, Abby is racing against time. How does this make Abby feel? What does she think? ([CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.3](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.6](#))
7. Think about Professor Roth's “Fireside Chat” with Abby. Does Professor Roth seem to be on Abby's side? Why or why not? ([CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.1](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.3](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.6](#))
8. Remember that the story is told from Abby's point of view, so what she thinks or feels affects how the story is told, including the conversation between her and Professor Roth. How would the conversation be different if it were told from Professor Roth's point of view? What two things in the conversation would be said differently if told from Professor Roth's point of view? What would Professor Roth say? How would Abby respond? ([CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.1](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.6](#))

Chapters 24-29

The end of Abby's journey is still filled with clues, puzzles, and problems to solve. Through it all, she grows as a warrior. As you read, think about how Abby changed from the beginning to the end of the story and how other characters contributed to her growth.

1. Abby exercises caution around The Well of Weird. Does she have a good reason to do so? Use details about the well and what happens to explain your thinking. ([CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.1](#))
2. After Grimsby falls into the well, Abby jumps in. Before she jumps in, Gwynn tries to stop her. Do you think Abby should have taken more time to think before jumping in? Why or why not? What could she have done differently to help Grimsby besides jumping into the well? ([CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.3](#))
3. By now, you have probably realized how Abby, Grimsby, and Gwynn pull together as a team to solve problems. Explain how each character's weakness could potentially add to the problem in Chapter 25. How do they work around each person's weakness? ([CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.1](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.3](#))
4. When the Grendel tells Abby that "Vale is full of rats," he uses a metaphor to describe people in the story. Why would the Grendel call other people in the story rats? How is the Grendel a "rat"? What other characters has Abby encountered that you would consider "rats"? ([CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.1](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.4](#))
5. Many fantasy books use an object to help drive the story's plot forward. What particular scenes in the story show how the journal caused certain events to happen? ([CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.1](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.5](#))
6. Throughout her journey, Abby does not want to be treated like a kid. She asks different people to tell her details that were kept from her. At this point, a lot of things are finally revealed. What is one thing she finds out that helps her put all the pieces together? Was it best for her not to know this before now? Why or why not? ([CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.1](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.6](#))
7. How does Abby display growth as a warrior during her final meeting with the Grey Council? ([CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.1](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.3](#))
8. What event in Chapters 24-29 shows Abby's greatest growth? Explain what happens and how Abby's response shows growth. Now, write a thematic statement to show what can be learned from this event. ([CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.1](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.2](#))
9. Doc makes a statement that sounds more like advice than a simple comment. Think about what Doc says: "...we should not be so nearsighted as to fail to look for allies wherever they may be found." (p. 290) How does this apply to Grimsby, Gwynn, or anyone else who helped Abby along the way? How does it apply to the thematic statement you developed? ([CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.1](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.3](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.5](#))

After Reading Activities

Now that Abby's journey is complete (for now...), let's look at some activities to help analyze the book as a whole.

1. Characterization:

- Develop a storyboard that traces Abby's development of warrior characteristics from the beginning to the end of the story. Include specific evidence (including events, and/or how Abby responds) on your timeline as well as corresponding chapter numbers and a brief analysis of how she demonstrates growth for each piece of evidence. Compare/contrast what she was like before. How does she respond differently? ([CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.1](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.3](#))
- Create a character sketch of Abby, her father, Grimsby, or Gwynn. Be sure to include details related to the character's personality, conflict, value system, development, and influence on another character throughout the story. ([CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.1](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.3](#))

2. Point of View:

- What was your favorite scene in the book? What would be different about that scene if it were told from a different character's point of view? Rewrite that part of the story from a different character's point of view. What were the major parts of the scene? How would the character whose perspective you are writing from view those parts differently? How would the character respond? What would the character say? What would he or she do? ([CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.6](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.5.3](#))
- Choose a character who had a major influence on another character throughout the story. Write a letter to the character who was influenced from the point of view of your character. Here are some questions to consider: Did you (as the character) intentionally influence your friend? If so, when in the story? Why? If your influence was unintentional, when did you realize you had an impact on your friend? Was your influence for the better? Why or why not? ([CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.3](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.5.3](#))

3. Theme:

- Create a timeline of major events in the story. Think about an idea that stays with you and also relates to all of those events. Write that idea as a thematic statement that applies to the entire book. ([CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.2](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.3](#))

After Reading Activities

Continued

4. Extension Activities:
 - Compare Abby's journey to that of the protagonist's in another adventure book of your choice. How are their journeys similar? How do their journeys differ? ([CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.9](#))
 - There are several parallels from *The Last Shadow Warrior* to the epic poem, *Beowulf*. Read pages 1-56 of Michael Morpurgo's kid-friendly version of *Beowulf*, which tells the first of the hero Beowulf's adventures. Compare and contrast how the overall structure and themes of the epic poem relate to this story. How is Abby similar to the hero, Beowulf? Map out their journeys; explain how they are similar. What is a common theme between the two stories? ([CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.2](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.9](#))
 - Reflect on the initial research you conducted about Vikings. After reading the novel, what were some facts you added? How does the author blend historical facts about Vikings and Norse mythology with the modern-day setting of *The Last Shadow Warrior* to enhance the story? ([CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.1](#))
 - The cover for *The Last Shadow Warrior* was illustrated by Jael Bendt and designed by Baily Crawford. The cover is the reader's introduction to the story and provides clues to what's inside as well as setting the tone for the book. After reading the book, study the cover again and point out some elements of the story that maybe you missed earlier. ([CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.7](#))
5. Fun for Thought (Not based on the Common Core State Standards, but can be used as interesting ways to stretch the thinking of your student readers).
 - Let's play the modern game of telephone. I will share one line of information with your classmate. Your classmate's job is to tell the information to the next person. Each person will pass the information along until it comes back to me. I will report to you what the last person says. Let's see how the information comes back to me. Now, let's think about how this game relates to storytelling in the past. Long before stories were committed to writing, master storytellers passed down folktales like *Beowulf* orally. At more than 3,000 lines, that's a lot to memorize! How do you think this may have impacted the story over time?
 - Additionally, these storytellers often adjusted their stories to the tastes of their audiences, much like the author of *The Last Shadow Warrior* updated the *Beowulf* story for modern kids. If you were telling the story of *The Last Shadow Warrior* to someone like a younger brother or sister, what might you change or leave out? Explain your choices.

Norse Mythology

Younger readers

- Alexander, H. H. (2018). *A Child's Introduction to Norse Mythology: Odin, Thor, Loki, and Other Viking Gods, Goddesses, Giants, and Monsters*. New York: Hachette Books.
- d'Aulaire, E. P., & d'Aulaire, I. (2005). *D'Aulaires' Book of Norse Myths*. New York: The New York Review of Books.

More advanced readers

- Gaiman, Neil (2017). *Norse Mythology*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company.

Beowulf Translations

Younger readers

- Rumford, James (2007). *Beowulf: A Hero's Tale Retold*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company.

More advanced readers

- Morpurgo, Michael (2006). *Beowulf*. Boston: Candlewick Press.

Vikings

- Romero, Libby (2018). *National Geographic Readers: Vikings (L2)*. Washington, D.C.: National Geographic Partners.
- Higgins, Nadia (2015). *National Geographic Kids Everything Vikings: All the Incredible Facts and Fierce Fun You Can Plunder*. Washington, D.C.: National Geographic Kids.
- Margeson, Susan (2009). *Viking* (DK Eyewitness Books). New York: DK Publishing.

Recommended Further Reading

Find out more about Norse mythology, Vikings, and the Beowulf legends that appear in *The Last Shadow Warrior* with these great books.