

A Standards-Aligned Educator Guide for Grades 6-8

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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 6-8** 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?



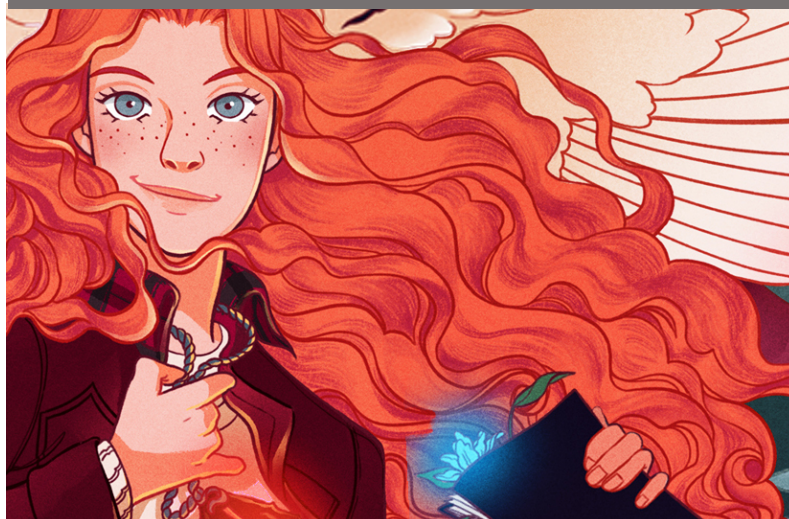
Web Activity

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 6-8

The guiding questions found on the next several pages align with the Common Core State Standards for 6th grade, but they can also be applied to 7th and 8th grades.

1. How would you describe Abby? Which of Abby's thoughts or words best show this? ([CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.1](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.3](#))
2. How would you describe the relationship between Abby and her parents? How do you think her mom's death impacts her present relationship with her dad? ([CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.3](#))
3. What seems to be Abby's primary conflict? How does this conflict influence Abby's thoughts, decisions, and actions? ([CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.3](#))
4. Do you agree with her dad's decision to not tell her exactly what is going on? Why or why not? How do you think not knowing all of the details affects Abby's ability to tell the story? ([CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.6](#))
5. Chapter 2 is titled "An Ordinary Girl." Would you say that Abby is mostly like or unlike an "ordinary" preteen? Explain your thinking. ([CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.1](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.3](#))
6. In Chapter 4, Abby's dad tells her, "You did it. You got us here. That's my girl. My girl..." Explain the significance of these lines. ([CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.1](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.3](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.4](#))
7. Write a thematic statement for Chapters 1-4. Cite specific events from these chapters that support your thematic statement. ([CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.1](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.2](#))

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

The few next chapters take you further into Abby's journey. She adjusts to a new place and encounters different people who hold clues to the mystery that she must unlock. As you follow her further into her voyage, think about Abby's response to people she meets and issues that arise.

1. After a rough night of travel, Abby wakes up to a red sky in the morning. Abby's mom once told 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 said about the red sky, do you think something positive or negative will happen? What could this mean for Abby? ([CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.4](#))
2. How is Abby's first day at Vale similar to a typical school day for any student? How might friendships with people like Grimsby, Gwynn, and Doc help her? How might encounters with people like Chase, Professor Roth, or the Grey Council affect her journey? ([CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.3](#))
3. What is the most interesting or surprising thing you learned about Vikings during the tour of Asgard? Add them to your initial research notes as you find them. Does anything stand out as information Abby needs to know? If so, how do you think the information could help her? ([CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.1](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.3](#))
4. The Grey Council is an authority, one that her dad respects and listens to. How does Abby's meeting with the Grey Council contrast her dad's dealings with it? Is there a good reason for this? Why or why not? ([CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.1](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.3](#))
5. During the Grey Council meeting, Unferth goes to great lengths and even cites lines from *Beowulf* (on page 109 of the story) to discredit the experience Abby thinks she had with a Grendel. Abby does not feel she successfully responds or counters Unferth's argument. Since the story is told from Abby's point of view, it is limited. Help Abby. Cite three specific pieces of evidence from the story along with three follow-up questions (one for each piece of evidence) that Abby could have posed to Unferth and the Grey Council to better defend her case. ([CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.1](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.6](#))
6. Out of the people Abby meets so far, who do you think will have the greatest impact on her journey? Explain. ([CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.3](#))
7. Write a thematic statement for Chapters 5-11. Cite specific events from these chapters that support your thematic statement. ([CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.1](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.2](#))

Chapters 12-17

Abby's journey continues to intensify. She moves from confusion and hesitation to certainty and motivation. As you read the next few chapters, think about what might be her greatest reason to pursue the end goal. Do you think that motivation is more internal or external?

1. Describe how Abby feels in the beginning of Chapter 12. How might meeting with the Grey Council be motivation for her? ([CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.3](#))
2. Cite a specific event in this part of the story that shows how Grimsby's or Gwynn's friendship helps Abby. How do his or her actions remind you of someone in your life? ([CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.1](#))
3. Does Grimsby or Gwynn play a greater role in helping Abby to overcome her challenge in Chapter 13? Explain using details about both characters. ([CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.1](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.3](#))
4. Write a thematic statement based on events in Chapters 12 and 13. How does Granny V's phrase "on the path" (p. 120) relate to your thematic statement? ([CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.2](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.4](#))
5. "The Botanist's Journal" leaves Abby wondering who left it for her. Based on Abby's challenge ahead, who do you think might have left the journal on reserve for her and why? How does this unknown support the thematic statement you previously developed? ([CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.3](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.5](#))
6. In Chapter 15, Abby thinks about the svefnthorn and says it is, "almost like it has a secret double identity." Besides Abby and Gwynn, what other people or objects so far in the story have double identities? How does this contribute to the overall mood or atmosphere of the story? ([CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.4](#))
7. What do the lines below show about Abby? ([CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.3](#))

"As much as it pained me to help the one guy who seemed determined to make my life at Vale miserable, I knew we had to do something to save Chase." (p. 153)
8. After Abby demands to stop being treated like a kid and be told what is going on, Doc shares privileged information with her. Do you think Doc made the right decision? Why or why not? ([CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.1](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.3](#))
9. Chase and Abby engage in a rhyme battle exchange before playing against each other. How do they view each other as competitors? What type of atmosphere does this exchange set for the knattleikr competition? Use evidence from Chase and Abby's rhymes to support your thinking. ([CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.4](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.6](#))
10. Doc stresses how important it is for Abby to participate in knattleikr. Knattleikr is a real Viking sport. If it is not on your researched list of recreational activities, add it. Based on Abby's participation in the game, what skills are required for the game? How might Abby's participation in knattleikr prepare her for the fight ahead? ([CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.3](#))

Chapters 18-23

Now that Abby has a better idea of what is going on, she knows what is at stake. Moreover, she receives news during the next few chapters that compels her to take more action. She is more determined now than ever. She accepts the unknown challenge ahead and moves forward with gathering more clues and solving unexpected issues. As you read, think about how the actions of other characters help shape Abby's skills.

1. Despite being disappointed by her performance in knattleikr, Abby allows Grimsby and Gwynn to talk her into looking for the world tree of knowledge. What does her willingness to venture outside of Vale into an unknown place with fairly new friends show about her relationship with Grimsby and Gwynn? If you were Abby, would you do this? Why or why not? ([CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.3](#))
2. The author uses personification to showcase Iggy's character. Why do you think the author makes Iggy a playful but wise character? What does Iggy's personality add to the story? ([CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.3](#))
3. What is the best piece of advice Iggy gives Abby? How do you think this advice shapes Abby's outlook? How might it help Abby on her quest? ([CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.3](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.6](#))
4. What major difference do you notice in Abby's character in Chapter 19? What do you think brought about this change? ([CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.3](#))
5. The exhilarating energy of Chapter 20 sweeps the reader into an unexpected battle where Abby fights alongside her mom, "The Viking Queen." Do you think the author included this chapter for the sake of Abby or the reader? Was the intent to further develop Abby's skills as a warrior or broaden the reader's perspective about Viking battle? Explain. ([CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.3](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.6](#))
6. In Chapter 21, the author uses a writing technique called a "ticking clock" when Abby receives her dad's diagnosis. How does this contribute to the overall stakes and tension of the story from this point forward? How is Abby's situation similar to another one with a "ticking clock" in a different book or movie? ([CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.3](#))
7. Think about Professor Roth's "Fireside Chat" with Abby. Do you think Professor Roth talks to Abby because Professor Roth cares and wants to provide sound advice, or do you think she has a different intent? What does Professor Roth say to make you think that? Should Abby follow Professor Roth's advice? Why or why not? ([CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.3](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.4](#))
8. Write a thematic statement for Chapters 18-23. Cite specific events from these chapters that support your thematic statement. ([CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.1](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.2](#))

Chapters 24-29

Abby approaches the end of her journey but not without the challenge of more threatening obstacles. Action continues right up to the very end. As you read the ending, think about Abby's warrior-like development from the beginning to the end of the story and how others contributed to it.

1. Abby anticipates danger beneath the Well of Weird: "I studied the mirrorlike surface of the dark water, wondering what dangers lay beneath it." What are some weird characteristics of the well? Do they pose any danger? ([CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.1](#))
2. Despite her apprehension about the well, Abby jumps in after Grimsby falls into the well. Gwynn follows Abby. Would you have made the same decision to jump into a potentially dangerous place? Why or why not? ([CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.3](#))
3. Chapter 25 shows noticeable strengths and weaknesses in each character. Discuss how one character compensates for the weakness of another. How does this help Abby, Grimsby, and Gwynn succeed as a team? ([CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.1](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.3](#))
4. When Abby comes face to face with the Grendel, he uses multiple tactics to lure and persuade her. One thing he says is "Vale is full of rats." How does connotation associated with the word "rats" make this a potentially effective tactic for the Grendel? Why do you think it failed? ([CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.1](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.4](#))
5. Many fantasy books use an object to help drive the story's plot forward. How does the mysterious journal act as such an object? ([CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.3](#))
6. 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 can people your age apply Doc's advice? ([CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.1](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.3](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.4](#))
7. Throughout her journey, Abby requests to know all of the details. A lot of things are finally revealed to her. What do you think is the most unbelievable thing Abby finds out? Why do you think it was important for her not to know it before this point of the story? If Abby had known it earlier in the story, how might her point of view have been affected? ([CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.3](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.6](#))
8. How does her final meeting with the Grey Council bring out the best in Abby? ([CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.1](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.3](#))
9. Write a thematic statement for Chapters 24-29. Cite specific events from these chapters that support your thematic statement. ([CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.1](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.2](#))

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.6.1](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.3](#))
- 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.6.1](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.3](#))

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.6.6](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.6.3](#))
- 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.6.3](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.6.3](#))

3. Theme:

- Create a timeline of major events in the story. Think about an idea that stays with you and also relates to those events. Write that idea as a thematic statement that applies to several sections of the story. ([CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.2](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.3](#))

After Reading Activities

Continued

4. Extension Activities

- 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.6.2](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.9](#))
- 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.6.1](#))
- 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. Cite specific details or events in the story that confirm your thinking. ([CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.1](#))

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.