

New Windmills

2004

Resource sheets

Mortal Engines

By Philip Reeve

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Mortal Engines **by Philip Reeve**

Synopsis

In this post-apocalyptic world, after the Sixty Minute War destroyed North America, population centres have re-built themselves as traction cities and towns. They travel around the globe, the stronger destroying the weaker. The story is based on London's attempt at global domination by destroying Shan Guo, the last remaining free state of the world. Valentine, a top archaeologist, is responsible for locating MEDUSA, a weapon so powerful that it can destroy whole cities. However, Tom Natsworthy, an apprentice historian; Katherine, Valentine's own daughter; Bevis Pod, an apprentice engineer and Hester Shaw, a young disfigured girl, all strive to prevent London using MEDUSA. The novel moves dramatically to its climax, during which the youngsters save Shan Guo from MEDUSA. Tom and Hester survive, but tragically, Bevis dies and Katherine is accidentally killed by her father.

Prior learning

The subject matter of this novel is unique, so students may find it difficult to prepare themselves before they start reading. However, there are two areas which could be easily researched. First, the novel moves quickly around the globe, and so it would be helpful for students to have some idea of the relative positions of North America, Asia and the United Kingdom. One of the major confrontations takes place in the Himalayas. If you place Himalayas as a search term into Google, then select 'Images' you will find an interesting range of photographs that give a genuine feel of a mountainous region. Secondly, the traction cities in *Mortal Engines* use Municipal Darwinism, the survival of the fittest, to justify their destruction of smaller communities. Municipal Darwinism refers to the natural expectation that larger, stronger communities will destroy weaker communities. However, when Darwin referred to the survival of the fittest, he actually meant the survival of the species best adapted to their environment. This distinction could be explored.

Study areas

The scientific basis of the story is interesting, and suggests some areas of study. The key foci of the novel are friendship, loyalty and revenge. Possible areas of study include:

- **Author's craft:** Trace the structure of the novel by considering one strand of the plot, such as The Stalker, that is weaved in and out of the main action.
(Author's craft: Yr7 R15; Yr8 R10)
- **Persuasive writing:** Write Valentine's speech to persuade the Engineers not to use MEDUSA.
(Persuasive writing: Yr7 Wr15; Yr8 Wr13; Yr9 Wr13)
- **Personal view:** Was Hester Shaw correct to seek revenge for the murder of her parents?
(Personal view: Yr7 Wr19; Yr8 Wr16; Yr9 Wr13)

- **Independent research:** Produce posters about Darwin's theory of evolution, and about the environment of the Himalayas.
(Independent research: **Yr7** R1, Wr10; **Yr8** R2, Wr10; **Yr9** R2, Wr9)
- **Extract information:** Draw a map of some of the journeys taken by these characters in the novel: Tom and Hester; London; Miss Anna Fang.
(Extracting information: **Yr7** R2; **Yr8** R1; **Yr9** R2)
- **Writing to entertain:** Write diary entries for Tom Natsworthy to explore key events in the novel such as his growing respect and affection for Hester Shaw.
(Writing to entertain: **Yr7** W6; **Yr8** W7)
- **Group discussion:** In role, discuss the morality of the traction cities' behaviour. Can a society justify its survival at the cost of another society?
(Group discussion: **Yr7** S&L12; **Yr8** S&L10; **Yr9** S&L10)
- **Collaborative drama:** Dramatise some of the most interesting conversations in the novel:
 - Tom and Hester travelling on the mud
 - Katherine talking to her father about MEDUSA
 - Chrysler Peavey gentrifying his pirates.
 (Group discussion: **Yr7** S&L16; **Yr8** S&L16; **Yr9** S&L14)

Teacher guidance

Resource Sheet 1

This resource sheet helps the students to write a piece of formal information writing, producing a Top Secret Report on MEDUSA. The students are supported in their selection of appropriate details. They are also advised about an appropriate style.

Literacy Framework Objectives

- Year 7:** **W14** Define and deploy words with precision; **S5** Use the active or passive voice appropriately; **S12** Organise ideas coherently; **S13** Revise the conventions of non-fiction; **S17** Use Standard English; **R2** Use appropriate reading strategies; **R6** Adopt active reading strategies; **Wr10** Organise texts appropriately; **Wr11** Select and organise information; **Wr14** Describe an object, person or setting.
- Year 8:** **W12** Recognise the influence of formality on word choice; **S9** Adapt the stylistic conventions of non-fiction; **R4** Review active reading strategies; **R7** Identify implied and explicit meaning; **Wr10** Organise and present information; **Wr11** Explain complex ideas and information clearly; **Wr12** Use formal language.
- Year 9:** **S3** Write with differing degrees of formality; **S7** Analyse and exploit the stylistic conventions of non-fiction; **S9** Write in Standard English; **Wr1** Write for specific purpose and audience; **Wr9** Integrate diverse information into a coherent account; **Wr10** Explain the precise connections between ideas.

Guided Reading Opportunities

This activity requires close reading and appropriate selection of information. In addition, the students are required to write in an appropriately formal style. To help the students focus on the necessary information, the following page references are suggested:

Incidents	Pages
1 Hester's mother and her link with MEDUSA	42
2 Katherine talks to Crome	96
3 Katherine talks to Bevis Pod	131–2
4 The MEDUSA demonstration	155–8
5 Katherine talks to Valentine	214–15

You could support a group of students in this task who have difficulty in either selecting appropriate information, or writing in an appropriately formal style. Together, read page 42. Demonstrate to the students how to select appropriate information. You could then show the students how to present the selected information in an appropriately formal style. Next, ask the students to read pages 155–8 and to select the information that might appear in a Secret File from those pages. If necessary, you could support the students in expressing these details in an appropriately formal style.

Resource Sheet 2

This resource sheet asks students to adopt the character of Hester Shaw, and to write a series of journal entries. Appropriate page references are suggested to help the students to select the relevant information.

Literacy Framework Objectives

- Year 7: S5** Use the active or passive voice appropriately; **S12** Organise ideas coherently; **R2** Use appropriate reading strategies; **R6** Adopt active reading strategies; **R8** Infer and deduce meaning; **Wr5** Structure a story; **Wr6** Portray character through writing.
- Year 8: W12** Recognise the influence of formality on word choice; **S7** Develop different ways of linking paragraphs; **S12** Explore and use different degrees of formality; **R4** Review active reading strategies; **R7** Identify implied and explicit meanings; **Wr7** Creating tone in writing.

Guided Reading Opportunities

This resource sheet requires the students to write journal entries as though they were Hester Shaw. The following page references are offered:

Incident	Pages
1 Hester's background	38–41
2 Speedwell	43–6; 55–9
3 Miss Anna Fang	61–7, 71–4
4 The Stalker	82–4, 101–4
5 The Pirate Suburb	105–6, 116–24, 133–42
6 The Black Island	143–50
7 Hester faces Valentine	253–5, 258–9

You could support a group of students in this task. Read pages 38–41 together and then demonstrate how you would select the appropriate information. Afterwards, show how you would use this information in a personal journal entry. The students should focus on the way Hester Shaw would express her feelings about the events. Next, ask the students to read pages 61–7 themselves and to select appropriate information for the task. You could also ask the students to show you how they would write this information, and offer further support as necessary.

Resource Sheet 3

This resource sheet encourages the students to produce a leaflet to persuade the population of London that living in a settlement, such as Batmunkh Gompa, is an attractive way of life. The students are provided with categories of information that should feature in their leaflet. They are also provided with advice about the language and presentation of the leaflet.

Literacy Framework Objectives

Year 7: **S13** Revise the conventions of non-fiction; **R6** Adopt active reading strategies; **R8** Infer and deduce meaning; **Wr8** Experiment with language; **Wr15** Express a point of view.

Year 8: **S9** Adapt the stylistic conventions of non-fiction; **R4** Review active reading strategies; **R7** Identify implied and explicit meaning; **Wr6** Experiment with figurative language; **Wr7** Creating tone in language; **W13** Present a case persuasively.

Year 9: **S7** Exploit the stylistic conventions of non-fiction; **R1** Review and extend reading strategies; **Wr13** Present a case persuasively.

Guided Reading Opportunities

This task asks the students to select appropriate information, and then to use it in a piece of persuasive writing. Their task is to persuade residents of London that living in Batmunkh Gompa is an attractive option. The following page references are suggested:

Details	Pages
1 The Himalayas	186–7
2 The Shield Wall	188
3 The beauty of Batmunkh Gompa	188–9
4 The vibrant city	193–4

You could support a group of students in this task. Read pages 186–7 together and select information that makes the Himalayas appear attractive. Then, work with the students to describe the area in such a way that it appears to be an attractive place to live. Afterwards, ask the students to repeat this exercise with pages 188–9.

1 Top Secret

Introduction

One of the key mysteries in the opening stages of the novel is MEDUSA. We know that it is something significant, but we also know that the Engineers have been very secretive about it.

Imagine that when Katherine and Bevis Pod explored the Enginearium, they discovered a Top Secret Report. This report explained everything about MEDUSA.

Your task is to write the Top Secret Report about MEDUSA.

Planning

The Top Secret Report should contain the following sections:

- the history of MEDUSA
- the power of MEDUSA
- plans for using MEDUSA.

To compile your report you will need to collect information from a range of sources. Most of the information comes from a series of conversations in the book. Complete the table on page 7 by re-reading the pages and making notes about MEDUSA. Afterwards, you will need to place all of the information that you have collected into the appropriate sections of the report.

Remember:

You are writing an official report so:

- use Standard English
- technical language will help to make the report sound official
- use the third person.

1 Top Secret

Incidents	Pages	Notes
1 Hester's mother and her link with MEDUSA	42	
2 Katherine talks to Crome	96	
3 Katherine talks to Bevis Pod	131–2	
4 The MEDUSA demonstration	155–8	
5 Katherine talks to Valentine	214–15	

2 Hester's diary

Introduction

Hester Shaw is an extremely interesting character. She is brave, focused and intelligent. Imagine that during her tormented life she has kept a diary. In this diary she has kept an account of what she has been doing in her life, but more importantly, she has kept a record of how she felt about the events in her life.

Your task is to recreate some of the entries from Hester's diary.

Planning

Some of the key events in Hester's life have been recorded in the table below and on page 9. Choose one or two of these events and re-read the relevant pages from the novel. Make notes to record what happened in each of the events that you have chosen. Afterwards, make detailed notes about the way you think Hester might have felt about what happened in each of the events.

Remember:

- you are writing Hester's journal as if you were Hester, so write in the first person
- all of the events have already happened so write in the past tense
- your journal entries will be more interesting if you focus on Hester's feelings, rather than retelling the events of the story.

1 Hester's background

Pages 38–41

Notes on events:

Notes on Hester's feelings:

2 Speedwell

Pages 43–6, 55–9

Notes on events:

Notes on Hester's feelings:

2**Hester's diary****3 Miss Anna Fang****Pages 61–7, 71–4**

Notes on events:

Notes on Hester's feelings:

4 The Stalker**Pages 82–4, 101–4**

Notes on events:

Notes on Hester's feelings:

5 The Pirate Suburb**Pages 105–6, 116–24, 133–42**

Notes on events:

Notes on Hester's feelings:

6 The Black Island**Pages 143–50**

Notes on events:

Notes on Hester's feelings:

7 Hester faces Valentine**Pages 253–5, 258–9**

Notes on events:

Notes on Hester's feelings:

3 Batmunkh Gompa

Introduction

The population of London have been persuaded that living on a traction city is much better than living in a settlement. For example, Tom had been taught that settlements were dingy, squalid, backward places. However, the people of Batmunkh Gompa are clearly happy with their settlement.

Imagine that the people of Batmunkh Gompa want to persuade the population of London that living in a settlement is much better than living on a traction city. They plan to produce a leaflet that describes the beauty of life in Batmunkh Gompa. The leaflet would then be dropped from airships onto London.

Your task is to produce the leaflet to promote Batmunkh Gompa.

Planning

Your leaflet needs to persuade people of the benefits of living in Batmunkh Gompa. Although you will include all sorts of details, it is essential that you include details about the:

- beauty
- city
- surrounding area
- security.

References in the novel to Batmunkh Gompa have been recorded in the table on page 11. You will need to re-read these page references and make notes about the four areas listed above.

Remember:

- Only select relevant information.
- Try to make your leaflet as attractive as possible. Think about:
 - different font sizes
 - different colours
 - illustrations
 - headings and sub-headings
 - bullet points.
- Persuasive writing is likely to have the following qualities:
 - it will use the third person
 - examples will be used to illustrate a point
 - adjectives and adverbs will be used for emotive effect
 - connectives such as 'This shows that ...' and 'because' and 'therefore' will be used.

3**Batmunkh Gompa****1 The Himalayas****Pages 186–7****Notes:****2 The Shield Wall****Page 188****Notes:****3 The beauty of Batmunkh Gompa****Pages 188–9****Notes:****4 The vibrant city****Pages 193–4****Notes:**