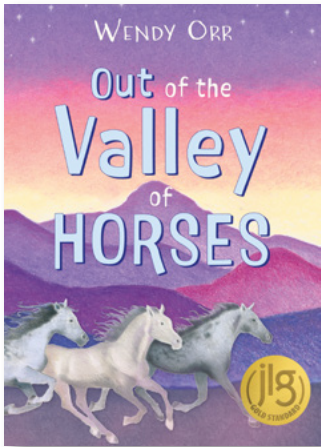


This Teacher's Guide was written by award-winning author and middle-school teacher, **Colleen Nelson**. Colleen Nelson earned her Bachelor of Education from the University of Manitoba. She is the author of the award-winning middle-grade novels *Harvey Holds His Own*, *The Undercover Booklist*, and *The Umbrella House*.



Story Summary

The valley of horses has been a safe haven for Honey and her family for seven peaceful years, but this seemingly perfect valley has also become their prison. Trapped by a mysterious magic, and fearing for her father's life, Honey is determined to find a way out of the valley of horses.

The valley of horses is the only true place Honey remembers since her family stumbled upon it in their converted ice cream truck while escaping from the rest of the world, and the illnesses that was spreading there. Honey's parents, her brother Rumi, and her NanNan become self-sufficient, living off the land and sharing the valley with mystical horses who seem to have a wisdom of their own. But there is a magic in the valley that prevents Honey and her family from ever leaving. When Honey suspects her father has become ill, Honey knows she must find a way to escape the valley to find help from a world she only knows about through stories.

Wendy Orr, author of the award-winning *Nim's Island* and *Dragonfly Song*, creates a magical land filled with awe and mystery. Showcasing the endurance of family, and the beauty of restoration and self-sufficiency, Orr crafts a heartfelt adventure and enchanting world to fall into. Wendy's many books for children have been published in 27 countries and won awards around the world. She now lives in Melbourne, Australia.

Juvenile Fiction Ages 8–12 | ISBN: 978-1-77278-311-7 | Pages: 224

Reading Level

Fountas & Pinnell : U

BISAC Codes

JUV002130 - JUVENILE FICTION / Animals / Horses

JUV001010 - JUVENILE FICTION / Action & Adventure / Survival Stories

JUV013030 - JUVENILE FICTION / Family / Multigenerational

JUV037000 - JUVENILE FICTION / Fantasy & Magic

JUV015020 - JUVENILE FICTION / Health & Daily Living / Diseases, Illnesses & Injuries

This teacher's guide can be used for a whole class read aloud, book club, or for an individual book study. You could also use it in conjunction with Wendy Orr's other novels (*Cuckoo's Flight*, *Swallow's Dance*, and *Dragonfly Song*) as an author study.

Pre-Reading

1. Wendy Orr explains in her acknowledgements that the book was inspired by the Covid-19 pandemic. What are your memories of this time? What impact do you think it had on young people where you live?
2. What does the term 'paradise' mean? What's your idea of a paradise? Draw a picture and compare your ideas with your classmates.
3. Use the following **key words** to write three to five sentences about what the book might be about. Try to use at least three, but less than six key words per sentence. You can use the key words more than once and your goal is to use all ten key words.

Key Words: *Illness, horses, escape, safety, family, river, mountain, paradise, seven years*

During Reading

Chapters 1-6 (p. 9-84)

1. The text messages and emails are mysterious. What predictions can you make about who is sending them and why? (pages: 17, 26, 43, 51, 67, 84)
2. A lot goes wrong on moving day in chapter 3 (p. 27-43). Make a list of all the worrisome things that happen.
3. On page 50, Honey says a ride on "Moongold would have smoothed out the not-quite-right wrinkles" of the day. What smooths out your not-quite-right wrinkles?
4. Be a detective! Start noticing clues that you might use to figure out which country or continent the story is set. Record the names of plants and animals mentioned and research where Honey and her family live.
5. What are some of the ways the family has adapted to a life away from the wide world? How do they reuse the items they brought?
6. The Story Time tradition brings the family together every night. Does your family have any similar traditions?



Chapters 7-11 (p. 85-142)

1. What similarities do you notice between Great-great-grandfather's story and Honey's family's? In what ways might his letter foreshadow what's to come? (p. 93-97)
2. On pages 122-123, Wendy Orr writes, "A terrible fear speared through Honey; cold spread through her body as if she'd tumbled down that waterfall and swallowed buckets of its cold water." These lines use imagery to convey how Honey feels. Write your own sentence using imagery to share an emotion like fear, surprise, or anger.
3. Honey realizes something on page 131: "What if the child was the only one who could do it?" The quote shows Honey's determination. What are some of Honey's other characteristics? Can you find an example that proves your opinion?
4. Before reading chapter 11 (p. 137), make a prediction about what you think will happen.
5. The author ends chapter 11 on a cliffhanger, an exciting moment that makes you want to keep reading. "It was starting to look as if maybe she really was the only person alive in this whole wide world." (p. 141) Why does the author do this? What impact does it have on the reader?

Chapters 12-17 (p. 143-222)

1. In chapter 12 (p. 143-154), the author switches between Honey and Rumi's point of view. Why does Wendy Orr do this?
2. Honey learns Nana was right about the lawless humans in chapter 13 (p. 157-177). Why is this an important lesson for her to learn?
3. On page 171, Abbie calls Honey "wild child." After seven years in the bush, imagine what she looks like and what she's wearing. Draw a picture.
4. Strong writing like Wendy Orr's builds tension for all the storylines until they connect at the same time, the most exciting moment of the story—the climax. As you read chapter 13, consider the storylines for Honey, Kate, Rumi, Papa, Nana, and Mom. What 'most exciting moment' is on the horizon for each of them?
5. In chapter 14 (p. 179-202), Honey has a hard time understanding that someone could 'own' a horse. Why does Honey feel this way? Do you agree with Honey? Why?
6. Chapter 14 ends in another cliffhanger. What is your prediction for chapter 15 (p. 203)?



After Reading

1. Trust is a major theme throughout the book. Make a mindmap with the word 'TRUST' in the center. Consider all the ways this theme is shown in the book.
2. Is it fair to say Honey and Rumi saved their family? Just Honey? Or did the horses do it? Who is the hero in this story? Explain your answer in a short paragraph.
3. What will be the hardest adjustment for the family after living in the Valley of Horses for seven years? Write a letter to Honey or Rumi with advice on what they need to know.
4. Write five, open-ended interview questions for Honey or Rumi. Trade with a classmate and write the answers to your partner's questions. Be sure that your questions are 'open-ended' and can't be answered with yes or no answers.

Passage Study

Students will need to have a copy of the following passages to glue in their notebook and annotate. *These passages are included at the end of this guide for printing.* Read the passage aloud with the students and, using a highlighter and pen, model how to annotate using guiding questions such as:

- What do you notice about this passage?
- What jumps out at you?
- What words or phrases please you?
- What does the author mean when she says...



I focus each passage study on a particular writer's craft move.*

Passage Study #1 Using Imagery to Set the Scene

The moon rose early, while the last of the red and gold sunset was still streaking the sky. It glowed huge, low, and round, beaming silvery light into the valley. Long dark shadows flickered across the ground while the rainforest loomed dense and impenetrable above them. (p. 22)

Teacher might say: I feel eerie reading this, like something's not right. What words has Wendy chosen to make me feel this way? Should we feel comfortable reading this passage?

Passage Study #2 Foreshadowing

Love flooded Honey's heart till it leaked out in tears. This was her home. Every familiar part of it was perfect and beautiful, from the creek to the garden to the family tree and their van to the rainforest mountain shielding them all.

"How could I ever want to leave?" she asked Moongold.

The horse snorted in answer but Honey had no idea what he meant.

"The world looked beautiful from the mountaintop," she told him, "but that's because it was so far away and I hadn't seen it before. This is where I belong." (p. 79)

Teacher might say: I wonder if this is hinting at what's to come? That's what foreshadowing means. Why would the author do this to the reader?

Passage Study #3 Strong Verbs

Rumi raced as hard as he could towards the clearing, but he wasn't strong enough to push against the wind. A ferocious gust swept his feet out from under him and skidded him back towards the bush.

Then, racing in long in front of it, as if the wind were one of the enchanted heard and had scooped him up from the van steps, came Papa. He threw himself on top of Rumi and rolled them both backwards as the whirling wind ripped the tree in front of them right out of the ground. The roots lifted, rippling the earth and rolling Papa and Rumi farther back on to the valley's green grass. (p. 166)

Teacher might say: Verbs are action words. Let's circle all the words that jump out at us. Would the sentence sound the same if the author replaced 'scooped' with 'picked'? Or 'rippling' with 'breaking'? Why do words matter?

*If you'd like to learn more about writer's craft moves and how to use passage studies in class, check out Penny Kittle's *Micro Mentor Texts: Using Short Passages From Great Books to Teach Writer's Craft* (Scholastic Professional, 2022).

This guide was created with support
from Ontario Creates



Passage Study

For passage study, students will need to have a copy of the following lines to glue in their notebook and annotate.

Passage 1: page 22

The moon rose early, while the last of the red and gold sunset was still streaking the sky. It glowed huge, low, and round, beaming silvery light into the valley. Long dark shadows flickered across the ground while the rainforest loomed dense and impenetrable above them.

Passage 2: page 79

Love flooded Honey's heart till it leaked out in tears. This was her home. Every familiar part of it was perfect and beautiful, from the creek to the garden to the family tree and their van to the rainforest mountain shielding them all.

"How could I ever want to leave?" she asked Moongold.

The horse snorted in answer but Honey had no idea what he meant.

"The world looked beautiful from the mountaintop," she told him, "but that's because it was so far away and I hadn't seen it before. This is where I belong."

Passage 3: page 166

Rumi raced as hard as he could towards the clearing, but he wasn't strong enough to push against the wind. A ferocious gust swept his feet out from under him and skidded him back towards the bush.

Then, racing in long in front of it, as if the wind were one of the enchanted heard and had scooped him up from the van steps, came Papa. He threw himself on top of Rumi and rolled them both backwards as the whirling wind ripped the tree in front of them right out of the ground. The roots lifted, rippling the earth and rolling Papa and Rumi farther back on to the valley's green grass.