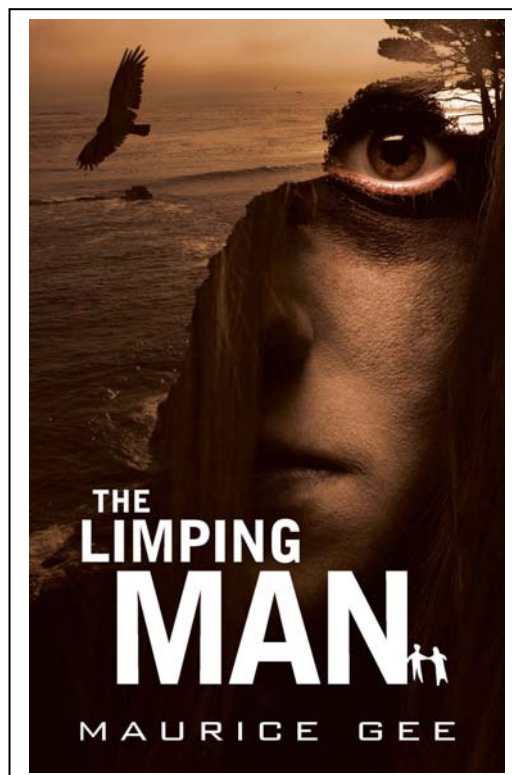


# The Limping Man

Maurice Gee

## For the teacher

The world in *The Limping Man* is very different from the one we know. It is almost medieval. Hana, an outcast, watches her Mam burned at the stake by a man who is intent on ruling the world by mind control. Horrified, she flees to the Country. On her way, she makes friends with Hawk. She also meets Lo, Hubert and Blossom – characters from *Gool* and *Salt*. After Ben, Lo's son, joins the group, they discover that the Limping Man is about to spread his evil far and wide. They set off for the City to stop him but the trip is dangerous. They can trust no one. And at the back of their minds they are trying to work out what the Limping Man's evil force really is.



## Characters

- Hana
- Danatok
- Ben
- Lo
- Hawk
- Queenie
- Blossom and Hubert
- The Limping Man

## Before you read

Imagine what it would be like living without what we might call essentials – medicines, electricity, transport, family support, a fair justice system, organisations that help people who can't help themselves?

After discussion and expanding this list, choose one and describe how life would be different without it.

Now rank the 'essentials' list in order of importance. At the top of the list is the one 'essential' that you or your group believe is most important. Compare your list with others. Are they the same? Why or why not? Discuss why the 'essentials' lists are different.



## Chapter 1

### Understanding the text

1. 'Shrewd eyes and careful hands' P7. What might Mam be good at?
2. Frogweed is a plant found in streams and ponds. What is different about frogweed in this story?
3. What do you think a crawl is? Why did Mam have one in her shelter?
4. Hana is distraught when she loses her mother but she is also concerned about her own survival. While grieving she still makes plans. What are they?
5. On page 13, Mam gives a description of a witch. Does this fit your idea of a witch? Explain.
6. Discuss how the Limping Man might have got his limp.
7. The Limping Man is quite ordinary but he has an extraordinary power. What do you think it is? How does Hana describe it?
8. What is the Limping Man trying to prove by burning Mam and the others?
9. Is this a story of the past or the future? Give reasons.

### Activity

#### Setting

1. *At the beginning of the chapter there are many references to the shelter. Draw a bird's-eye-view plan of the space. Show the important features. e.g. sack-covered doorway . . .*
2. *This chapter gives you a feeling of time and place. Fires, rags, pots, wells, witches . . . Record other examples that show the setting.*

## Chapter 2

### Understanding the text

1. Burrows are mentioned in the first two chapters. What does this suggest about how some of the people lived? Who might these people be and why do they live underground?
2. Why do the words Country and Sea have capital letters?
3. Do you think Hana has been to the Country and Sea before? How do you know?
4. What are the physical differences between Danatok and Hana? What might Danatok use his different features for?
5. Ceebeedee could be interpreted as CBD. Find out what this abbreviation means. Do you think the modern meaning is relevant to the story? Give reasons.
6. Danatok discovers that Hana has a special skill. What is it?
7. According to Danatok, what is the Limping Man's big plan?
8. Why does Hana agree to go to Stone Creek with Danatok's message? Why doesn't she just stay hidden?
9. Hana knows she cannot trust anyone or anything. Can she trust Hawk? Give reasons.



## Activity

### Plot

From P31-35, Danatok tells Hana how he lost his 'voice'. Using bullet points, list the key stages of his story. e.g.

1. Xantee kills the gool.
2. Danatok travels to Stone Creek to live with his people.
3. Tealeaf calls him back to Ceebeedee to find out who and what the Limping Man is.
4. ...

## Chapter 3

### Understanding the text

1. How did Ben lose his hand?
2. Why did he refuse to 'speak' to Pearl and Hari?
3. Ben's father is Lo. How are they different? Find adjectives and verbs that describe Lo, e.g. When he moves, he *scuttles*.
4. On page 49, Ben says, 'I'm two things now, but less than my father.' What does he mean?
5. On page 51, the Limping Man's intentions are made clear. Is Ben's plan to get rid of him, a good one? Why do you think he or the others don't make more imaginative plans? What are they wary of?
6. When the characters 'speak' they can tune out other listeners. How might they do this?

## Activity

### Connections

1. *In this chapter, many characters from the author's two previous books – Salt and Gool - are introduced. Begin family trees to show the connections between all the characters. Add to the trees as you read on.*
2. *'Speaking' could be useful and also a nuisance. If you were able to 'speak', when might the skill be helpful and when could it be a problem?*

## Chapter 4

### Understanding the text

1. The people with no name are mysterious. Ben wants to know all about them. Why is Lo reluctant to tell him anything?
2. What are the similarities between Hana and Ben?
3. 'A laugh that sounded like stones rattling in a tin.' Try to describe the laughs of people you know, e.g. . . . like a softly snorting pig . . . like tyres whispering on a wet road . . .



4. On page 63, Hana mentions her Mam. This gives an indication of her motivation to return to the Burrows. What might that be?
5. On pages 64-65, Hana shows a strong urge to be friends with Hawk. Why do some people prefer animals as friends rather than humans?
6. What is a bounty hunter? How do they collect payment for catching runaways?

### ***Activity***

#### ***Show and Tell***

1. *We learn things many ways. Choose an activity – tying a knot, making origami, playing chess, etc. Give simple written or oral instructions for someone to do the activity. Watch them but don't comment and don't give any help. Repeat the activity but this time show the person how to do everything the quickest and easiest way. Discuss what was more useful - show or tell? Why?*
2. *On page 67 there is a description of the two limping men. Make two lists that show their differences.*

## **Chapter 5**

### **Understanding the text**

1. Blood Burrow is mentioned on page 72. It was close to where Hana and Mam lived. How do you think it got its name?
2. On page 73, when Ben met Hana, he noticed her unusual eyes. What are her eyes similar to?
3. Why is Hana so protective of Hawk?
4. Why did Ben bury the thumbs of the runaways but not the bodies of the men who attacked them?
5. On page 79 the word cleansing is mentioned. What does it mean?

### ***Activity***

#### ***Research***

1. *Genocide is another name for cleansing. In history there are many examples of countries that were 'cleansed' of certain people. They include Germany, Rwanda, South Africa, Kosovo. Use a search engine to find out and write a simple report on the events of one 'cleansing' or genocide event.*



## Chapter 6

### Understanding the text

1. On page 84, why do Hana and Ben not want to see Blossom?
2. Hana feels safe with Lo, Ben, Blossom and Hubert, but why doesn't she want to be with them or like them?
3. On pages 91-92 more of the Limping Man's plan is revealed. Explain why, even though Blossom, Hubert and Lo have special skills, they are they afraid?

### Activity

#### Meaning

Explain what you think these characters meant when they said:

Page 88 - Hana : "Everything gets taken away."

Page 91 – Hubert : "It's like a stone in his head. There's nothing else there."

Page 94 – Lo : "We can never be apart."

## Chapter 7

### Understanding the text

1. Hana and Ben have different strengths. What can Hana do that helps Ben and what can Ben do that helps Hana?
2. Discuss what the Limping Man's secret might be. How does he control the people?
3. Ben's escape, when he hides in the swamp, sounds horrible but to him it is natural because that's how he lives. If you were Ben, discuss what part of his escape would be the most difficult. e.g. eels nibbling at his wound, seeing Queenie's dead eyes, coming up for air through Queenie's hair, fighting off the eels . . .

### Activity

#### Plot and Similies

1. In this chapter Queenie tells Hana and Ben about the Limping Man. Make a plot list that explains who the Limping Man is and what he's done. e.g.
  1. His name is Vosper.
  2. Queenie is his mother.
  3. His father gave him a kick and broke his ankle . . .
2. Many similes are used throughout the story.

"He'd never seen an uglier face. It was broken-toothed and folded like bread dough."

"Bent his ankle like a tin spoon."

Find other examples of similes in the story or make up your own and illustrate it., e.g. draw a face that looks like folded bread.



## Chapter 8

### Understanding the text

1. Hana doesn't like to 'speak' but sometimes she should use the skill to make things easier for herself. Find a happening in the story so far where she should have 'spoken'.
2. Belong is mentioned in this chapter as well as others. What do you think the city looked like? Who lived there? What happened to it?
3. Why do you think Ben now calls the Limping Man, 'Vosper'?
4. On page 120, the voice is mentioned. What do you think the voice is? And what is the *other* voice that the Limping Man hears?
5. Why is the evil 'force' greater than the good 'force'?

### Activity

#### *Opinion piece*

*Describe the argument between Hana and Ben in more detail. Ben wants to help Blossom and Hubert but Hana doesn't. If you are female take Ben's point of view. If you are male take Hana's point of view. Make sure your reasoning is true to the character.*

## Chapter 9

### Understanding the text

1. The mood of the evil 'force' is dark. Find examples of how the author shows that mood. e.g. jagged trees, damp...
2. In the text, how does the author show when Hana and Ben are 'speaking' and when they are talking?
3. When Hana discovers the toads in the Limping Man's palace she is more confused but she knows she is seeing some connection to the Limping Man's secret. Discuss how he might get his evil power.

### Activity

#### *Inferencing*

1. *No ages are mentioned for any of the characters. Estimate the ages of Hana, Ben, Lo, Blossom and Hubert and Danatok. Give reasons for your estimates.*
2. *Why did Hana and Ben believe they were going to die?*
3. *Why does the Limping Man think it is Queenie's voice he can 'hear'?*
4. *Is the Limping Man's stick important or not? Why?*



## Chapter 10

### Understanding the text

1. Do you think Ben would've attacked the Limping Man if Hana was still with him? Why?
2. Give reasons why the Limping Man has different punishments for males and females – burning females and drowning males.
3. Blossom, Hubert, Danatok and Ben are captured. There is only Hana left. If she is to beat the Limping Man she will need help. Who will help her and how?

### Activity

#### Important ideas

*While waiting for the Limping Man, Ben has time to think. Use the following headings and from the text, record one important idea that he considers. Hunger. Hana. The palace. The knife. Fire. The trumpet. The Limping Man.*

## Chapter 11

### Understanding the text

1. Hawk has arrived and Hana feels new hope. How do you think Hawk will help Hana and her friends? What about Lo? What will his role be?
2. Discuss whether the silver rope is real or not.

### Activity

#### Connections

*Hana feels helpless. She describes this as, 'so full of courage that had no use.' All sorts of situations can make us feel like that too. Think and share a time when you felt powerless but angry, indignant or hurt, e.g. being accused of something you had no part in but couldn't do anything about it. In a group, act out the scene. Make sure the mood and emotion of each character is evident.*



## Chapter 12

### Understanding the text

1. Hana has returned to her dwelling. From the time she left Danatok she has known that the Limping Man must be destroyed. But it is only in the shelter that she realises how difficult the task is. She has Hawk and Lo to help her but she acts alone. Give reasons why the three didn't work as a team. Why didn't they 'speak'?
2. The pictures made of coloured stones are of another time. From what time? What would we call the pictures?

### Activity

#### Characteristics

*Hana is courageous, a risk-taker, caring, just, adaptive, principled, knowledgeable and logical. Describe a part of the story where she displays one or more of these attributes.*

## Chapters 13 and 14

### Understanding the text

1. Everyone fails to stop the Limping Man except Hawk. Who might Hawk really be? Give reasons.
2. When good versus bad, good always wins. Discuss this statement and decide if it is true for today's world.
3. Explain how the Limping Man got his power.
4. This is the third book in this adventure series. Suggest a plot for a fourth adventure for the characters.
5. What do you think happens to Hana and Ben?

### Activity

#### Tracking

*The climax or point of highest tension of The Limping Man happens in Chapter 13. But there are many other points in the story where the tension is also high. Choose one where you thought the character or characters were going to solve a problem but didn't manage to. Record the situation in two parts – **rise of tension/fall of tension**.*

*e.g. **Rise of tension** – Ben swims through the manky swamp with a cooked pigeon for Queenie. He believes she will give him the Limping Man's secret in exchange for the food.*

***Fall of tension** – The guards discover Queenie has been visited and lay a trap. Ben escapes them by swimming around the swamp underwater. He also discovers Queenie's dead body.*

