

RANDOM HOUSE TEACHERS' RESOURCE KIT

The Crossing

Mandy Hager

'Like 1984 for teenagers – direct, passionate and powerful' – Margaret Mahy

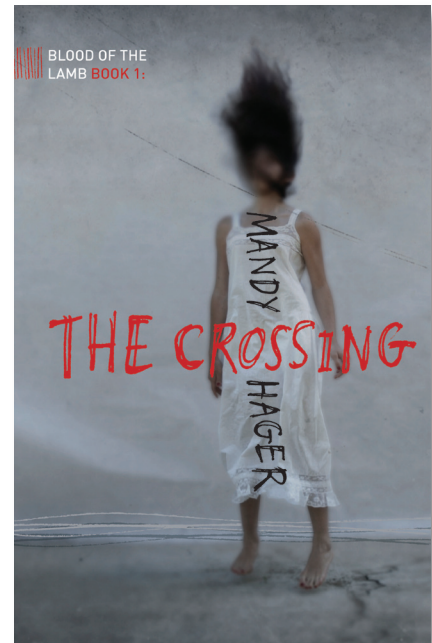
The Crossing is the first book in a stunning new trilogy that follows the fate of Maryam and her unlikely companions – Joseph, Ruth and Lazarus. This is fast, suspenseful drama underpinned by a powerful and moving story about love and loss.

The people of Onēwere, a small island in the Pacific, know that they are special – chosen to survive the deadly event that consumed the Earth. Now, from the rotting cruise ship *Star of the Sea*, the elite control the population – manipulating old texts to set themselves up as living 'gods'. But what the people of Onēwere don't know is this: the leaders will stop at nothing to meet their own blood-thirsty needs.

When Maryam crosses from child to woman, she must leave everything she has ever known and make a crossing of another kind. But life inside the ship is not as she had dreamed, and she is faced with the unthinkable: obey the leaders and very likely die, or turn her back on every belief she once held dear.



Mandy Hager is a Wellington writer and educator. She won the Esther Glen Medal for Fiction in 2008 with her novel *Smashed*.



SPECIFICATIONS:

Imprint: Random House NZ
Classification: NZ YA Fiction
Publication: September 2009
ISBN: 9781869791506
RRP: \$19.99
Format: Paperback
Extent: 304pp
Readership: 15+

RESOURCE KIT CONTAINS:

- Comprehension questions
- Practical tasks
- Research activities
- Essay topics
- Possible Unit & Achievement Standard applications (NZ only)

Teaching notes by Carol Bartlett,
Henderson High School, Auckland

Comprehension questions

Chapter One (pp7–19)

1. Which characters are introduced in this chapter?
2. What do we learn about Maryam's life so far? What do we learn about her future?
3. What tone does Hager achieve in her description of the race? How does she achieve this tone?
4. Describe the setting of the opening of the novel.

Chapter Two (pp20–33)

1. Contrast the feelings of Maryam and Ruth.
2. What are the "Judgements"?
3. Outline what happens to Maryam in this chapter.

Chapter Three (pp34–49)

1. Which characters are introduced in Chapter Three?
2. Describe the *Star of the Sea*. Include in your description its past and present use.
3. Outline what happens to Maryam in this chapter.

Chapter Four (pp50–62)

1. Who was Father Jonah?
2. Describe Father Jonah's funeral and note what it teaches us about the social conditions of Maryam's world.
3. Describe the visual symptoms of the disease that killed Father Jonah and speculate on the cause of this disease.
4. Outline the ceremony that welcomes Maryam to the *Star of the Sea*.

Chapter Five (pp63–76)

1. Describe Hushai and explain how he seems different from other characters.
2. What is anga kerea toddy and what are the effects of drinking this?
3. Who is Mother Lilith and what is her role on the ship?

4. How does Rebekah suggest that Maryam find comfort?

Chapter Six (pp77–91)

1. Describe Maryam's childhood playmate Sarah.
2. What does Maryam notice about the pregnant Miriam and Abigail?
3. Comment on the sentence, "The Lord surely must provide richly for His own." (p82)
4. Maryam concludes that the Apostles will, now she has been tested, "leave her be." (p86) Do you agree? Why or why not?

Chapter Seven (pp92–104)

1. What happens to Maryam when she is returned to the hospital? (End of Chapter Six and beginning of Chapter Seven)
2. Why are the male servers not used as bleeders?
3. What are Rebekah's responses to Maryam's pleas for help? Why does she respond as she does?
4. Describe what happens when Maryam finds Joseph.

Chapter Eight (pp105–118)

1. Who does Maryam find while she is searching for Hushai?
2. What does Sarah tell Maryam about the relationship between the Apostles and the Islanders?
3. What is Joseph's response to Sarah's revelations?
4. Describe Sarah's death and its effect on both Maryam and Joseph.
5. Before she dies, what important information does Sarah give to Maryam?

Chapter Nine (pp119–134)

1. How does Rebekah react to the news of Sarah's death? Why do you think she responds in this way?

2. What does Maryam find in the storeroom?
3. Why does Mother Michal send Maryam to her room?
4. Why is Maryam confused and angered by Mother Elizabeth's response to her story?
5. What important decision does Maryam make at the end of the chapter?

Chapter Ten (pp135–151)

1. Isolated from Ruth's welcome ceremony, what does Maryam do to advance her escape plan?
2. Who is Lazarus?
3. What does Brother Mark tell Maryam about Onewēre?
4. What help does Brother Mark offer Maryam?
5. Hushai relates the history of the Apostles taking control of Onewēre. Make brief notes about this.
6. Explain Hushai's comment, "Even our ancestors were not exempt from craving power; it is a weakness that whispers in the minds of all men." (pp144)
7. Before leaving the ship Maryam visits two people. Who are they and what is said at each meeting?
8. Who follows Maryam when she leaves the ship?

Chapter Eleven (pp152–165)

1. Why do you think that Joseph chooses to go with Maryam?
2. What does Joseph tell Maryam about his life?
3. What difficulties do Maryam and Joseph experience as they travel across the island?
4. Why does Joseph tell Maryam to, "Leave me here"? (p165)

Chapter Twelve (pp168–180)

1. How do the Aneaba villagers greet Maryam?
2. Why do the villagers hurry to help Joseph?
3. Who takes control of the rescue and helps Maryam?
4. Why does Vanesse find the news of Sister

Sarah/Tekeaa's death unbelievable?

5. How does Natau first react to his meeting with Maryam/Nanona?
6. How does Natau then react when he learns she has escaped from the Apostles?

Chapter Thirteen (pp181–194)

1. Which rules does Natau quote in support of his decision to send Maryam back to the Apostles?
2. How does Joseph react to Natau's decision?
3. How do Natau's actions support Hushai's earlier observation (pp143/4) and Vanesse's comment, "There is a hunger in men's minds that feeds on power; no matter how small in reality that power is"? (p186)
4. Why does Maryam offer to give Joseph more blood?
5. How does Mother Deborah act when she meets the group?

Chapter Fourteen (pp195–210)

1. Note the main points of the conversation that Maryam and Mother Deborah have at the beginning of this chapter.
2. What does Joseph ask his mother to show Maryam?
3. What history does Mother Deborah add to Maryam's knowledge?
4. What timeframe is established through Mother Deborah's reference to her great-great grandfather Saul?
5. Why, in Mother Deborah's view, did the Apostles create a new religion?
6. How, according to Mother Deborah, do the Apostles maintain power?
7. What course of action does Mother Deborah suggest that will allow Maryam to escape the island?

Chapter Fifteen (pp211–226)

1. How does Maryam react when Lazarus tries to rape her? Who applauds her actions?
2. Why does Lazarus agree to Mother Deborah's plan to sail Joseph back to the ship?

3. What does Mother Deborah begin to teach Maryam on their journey back to the *Star of the Sea*?

Chapter Sixteen (pp227–242)

1. How does Father Joshua greet the return of his family, and Maryam?
2. Why does Mother Deborah flatter Father Joshua? Does her flattery have the desired effect? Explain.
3. What does Father Joshua do to Maryam and what are his justifications for these actions?
4. How does Ruth help Maryam?
5. Why does Ruth believe that Lucifer is speaking through Maryam's mouth?

Chapter Seventeen (pp243–260)

1. What safeguard is put in place when Maryam gives blood to Joseph the second time?
2. Why, when only a little older than Maryam, was Hushai blinded – and by whom?

3. Why has Hushai, despite his cruel treatment, chosen to spend his life serving the Apostles?
4. In the short time that Maryam was off the ship, three people have died. Who were they and what caused their deaths?
5. What gift does Mother Deborah give to Maryam? How will this help her escape?

Chapter Eighteen (pp261–283)

1. Why is Joseph so angry when he visits Maryam?
2. What two possible futures does Maryam envisage for herself?
3. What arguments does Ruth use to convince Mother Elizabeth not to raise the alarm about their escape?
4. Why do Maryam and Joseph have to take Lazarus with them?
5. Why, after telling them she will not go, does Ruth escape with the others?

Tasks

1. If you enjoyed the novel, write a brief response in which you explain why others should read it. This is for the folder of recommended reading that is available in your school library.
2. If you did not enjoy the novel, write a letter to your teacher explaining why. Include a recommendation that your teacher not use the book in future years.
3. Enter this novel in your reading log.
4. With no more than three other people, create a timeline that shows the main events of the novel.
5. In a group of no more than four, list the novel's characters. You may do this by dividing the chapters between you. Using the list you have compiled, create a character web that shows each character's importance in the novel and their relationships to one another. Produce an A3 version of this for a wall display.
6. Design and produce a new cover that will be used by the publisher when they reprint the novel. Your cover should communicate what type of story the novel tells and also something of its tone. Your cover must also encourage a prospective buyer to pick up the book.
7. Write a review of this novel suitable for publication in a national current affairs magazine or the literary page of a weekend newspaper.

8. Language Analysis

Using the tasks a, b and c, carefully analyse the following passage from Chapter Fourteen (p201).

The cave's fruit bats, disturbed by the presence of interlopers, flapped and scolded as the two swam by. Further in, stalactites rained down from the ceiling in a petrified storm, some so huge they married with the soft muddy bank at the edges of the seawater to form living columns from roof to earth. The gentle swish of water, as the women swam on, echoed around them as the high tide nursed them in its warm embrace. Then, up ahead, it was if a handful of tiny suns beamed down their rays, onto one of the most astonishing sights Maryam had ever seen.

- a) Explain one idea from the passage above that is relevant to the wider novel. In your explanation, consider the social, historical, cultural, physical, political OR personal significance of the idea.
- b) Identify five examples of language features, using appropriate terminology, then analyse the effect of each. Features could include: figures of speech, sound devices, choice of words, irony, symbolism, grammatical usage, punctuation.
- c) Referring to the passage above, identify and then analyse a technique used to shape the text. Techniques could include structure, narrative technique.

Research activities

To gain an understanding and appreciation of *The Crossing*, it is essential to have some knowledge of literary allusion, especially biblical allusion.

Allusions form a colourful extension to the English Language. They provide us with a literary shorthand for describing people, places and events, and are drawn from a variety of sources.

The Oxford Dictionary of Allusions, Oxford University Press, London.

Allusion — an indirect or passing reference to some event, person, place or artistic work, the nature and relevance of which is not explained by the writer but relies on the reader's familiarity with what is thus mentioned. The technique of allusion is an economical means of calling upon the history or the literary tradition that author and reader are assumed to share.

The Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms, Oxford University Press, London.

Choose one of the following:

1. Research the names that Hager gives her characters. Choose at least ten and find out if these names (or versions of them) appear in the Christian Bible. Note what the biblical characters' stories/actions are. In the format suggested by your teacher, compare and contrast the actions and traits of Hager's characters with those of their biblical counterparts.
2. Choose at least two of the important symbols that Hager uses to further the reader's understanding of the themes in *The Crossing*. Find out if their significance is only important within Hager's novel or if they have been used more widely. Trace their origins, comment on them in general terms and specifically relate them to *The Crossing*.

Essay topics

1. Analyse how ONE main character or individual changed to become more (OR less) admirable.
2. Analyse how features of ONE important section made it particularly effective.
3. Analyse how the writer presented a positive OR negative view of humanity and/or society.
4. Analyse how ONE OR MORE symbols were used to present an important idea or ideas.
5. Analyse how at least one setting helped develop an important theme.
6. Analyse how internal and/or external conflict were important to the text. (Note: "internal conflict" means conflict within a character/individual, and "external conflict" means conflict between different characters/individuals or groups.)

Possible Unit Standard applications (NZ only)

Task 3: could be recorded for Unit Standard 12905: *Read an Inclusive Range of Written Texts and Record the Reading Experience.*

Task 6: could be used as one task of two for Unit Standard 12426: *Present static images combining verbal and visual features.*

Task 7: could be used for Unit Standard 8826: *Produce poetic written text in complex forms.*

Task 8: could be used as practice for Unit Standard 12419: *Read poetic written text closely.*

Research: Both research tasks could be adapted to meet the requirements of Achievement Standard 90374: *Deliver a presentation using oral and visual language techniques*, or Achievement Standard 90381: *Investigate a language or literature topic and present information in written form*, or Unit Standard 8824 Version 4: *Research a topic using oral, visual and written sources and evaluate the research process.*

Essay questions (note: these are from previous Level Two NCEA examinations). These could be used as practice for the external Achievement Standard 90377: *Analyse extended written text(s)*, or for assessment of Achievement Standard 90376 Version 2: *Produce crafted and developed formal transactional writing*, or Unit Standard 8825: *Produce transactional written text in complex forms* (as one of the three pieces required for this standard).