

FRINDLESWYLDE

Natalia O'Hara

Illustrated by Lauren O'Hara

Walker Books

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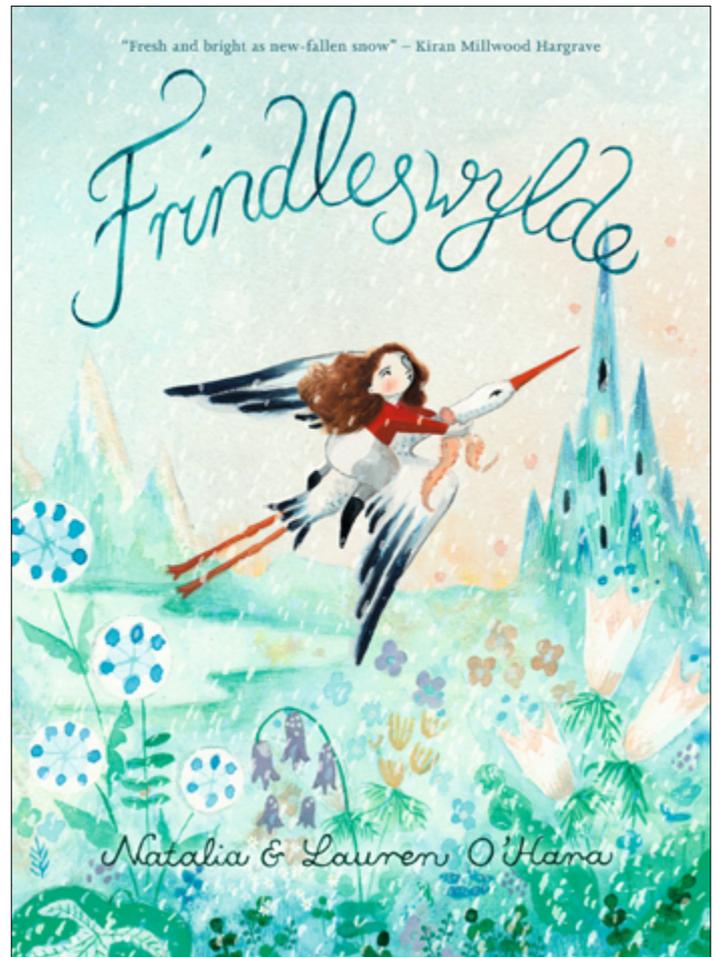
Themes

- Winter magic
- Tricksters
- Growing up
- Feelings and emotions
- Seasons and the passing of time
- Fairy and folk tales

Summary Cora and her grandmother live in a house in the woods. The rule is clear: when the first snow falls, never let the light out, never let winter in. Winter, in this tale steeped in magic, folklore and literary references, takes the form of a selfish, lazy, cunning boy: Frindleswylde. When the rule is broken, Cora must rescue Granny and the light from the frozen underworld that Frindleswylde calls his kingdom. And to do that, she needs to accomplish three impossible tasks ...

Judges' Comments This charming tale centres on Cora, who must follow the mysterious Frindleswylde into the enchanted kingdom of frozen summer to retrieve the light for her granny's lamp. This beautiful and original story contains echoes of Hans Christian Andersen as well as Russian folk tales and features whimsical illustrations reminiscent of the work of Ivy Wallace. The quality of the hand-drawn illustrations – something increasingly rare in contemporary books – is outstanding and the strength of the illustrator is apparent throughout.

About the Author and the Illustrator Natalia and Lauren O'Hara are two sisters who make children's books together. Natalia – who writes – studied English at Oxford and Cambridge, before working as a journalist, travel writer and script editor in London, Prague and Geneva. Lauren – who illustrates – studied fine art and illustration at Kingston. Later she designed sets and window displays in London, before becoming an illustrator and moving to Dublin. Their books include *Hortense and the Shadow* (2017), *The Bandit Queen* (2018) and *Frindleswylde* (2021). Lauren also illustrated *Madame Badobedah* (2019) by Sophie Dahl, which was shortlisted for the KPMG Children's Books Ireland Awards 2020.



QUESTIONS

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

1. Look at the cover. What is going on in the cover illustration? Whose story do you think this is?
2. What kind of story do you expect from the cover? A true story? A made-up adventure? A magic story? ... What makes you say that?
3. What do you notice about the colours on the front and back covers? Do they tell you anything about the story you are about to read?
4. Look at the title. What do you think it means? Do you recognise any words in 'Frindleswylde'?
5. Read the blurb on the back cover. What do you know about 'Frindleswylde' now? What kind of person or creature do you expect? Draw a picture!

AS YOU READ

The coming of Frindleswylde (front endpapers–page 8)

1. Look at the endpapers (the double page between the cover and the title page). What do you think they show? What do you notice about the colour, compared to the cover? Can you spot this pattern elsewhere in the book?
2. Why does Granny pick up the ice child? Is it a good idea?
3. 'I am *everything* [...] and also nothing, which is far better.' What do you think Frindleswylde means when he says this?
4. How does Cora end up going after Frindleswylde? Was it her decision? What about when she jumps into the hole in the pond?
5. What is Frindleswylde's plan?
6. What exactly has happened to Granny? What does Cora know about it?

The three Impossible Tasks (pages 9–18)

1. What is the first Impossible Task?
2. When Cora freezes the pond over, who else can you spot in the picture? Does Cora notice? Keep an eye out for this with the next tasks.
3. What is the second Impossible Task? Did you expect Cora's solution?
4. What is the third Impossible Task? Does Cora think of Granny for this task?

The Queen of Winter (pages 19–26)

1. Why does Cora think a nutshell is a funny present?
2. What was, in fact, Frindleswylde's plan? Was it clever? Did you see it coming?
3. Does the picture of Cora as the Queen of Winter (on page 20) remind you of another image in the book?
4. What is the Queen of Winter's life like? Would you enjoy it yourself? What kind of 'work' does she do?
5. What causes the queen's memory to return?
6. Why doesn't Frindleswylde want to give the nutshell back? Is he just mean or is there another reason?
7. What does the nutshell do?
8. 'Cora remembered home.' What is so special about this sentence?
9. 'But the statue was hard, silent and white.' What do you notice about *this* sentence?

'The secrets in things' (pages 27–end)

1. How does Cora save Granny?
2. What happens to the world around them?
3. What is Frindleswylde's reaction?
4. What are the signs that spring has come? What does Frindleswylde do then?
5. How has Cora changed by the end of the story?
6. Why does she leave her window open in winter?
7. Does Frindleswylde ever come back?

AFTER YOU HAVE READ

1. **A baddie?** How would you describe Frindleswylde? Would you like him as a neighbour or a friend? Is he all bad? Do we ever see things from his point of view? Why do you think he never makes contact again with Cora, but remains nearby at the end?
2. **Frindleswylde's kingdom.** Where is it? How are the laws of nature different there than in Cora's (and our) world? The book's words and pictures are full of the signs of winter, from the weather to the animals, plants, colours, sensations and so on that you might encounter in the heart of the season. Can you list them? Is winter the same where you live?
3. **Three Tasks.** What do you notice about each Impossible Task? And about each of Cora's solutions? How are they different from one another? How are they similar? How does each task transform Cora's world? How do they transform Cora herself (physically and emotionally)? Compare the portrait of Frindleswylde on page 6 with the portrait of Cora after the tasks on page 20. What do you notice?
4. **The 'secrets in things'.** What does Cora mean by this (page 27)? What examples can you find of those 'secrets' and those 'changes' in the book? And outside the book? Why is knowing this secret powerful?
5. **Colour coding.** Keep track of the colours throughout the book. What are the main colours used by Lauren O'Hara in each double page? Do they remain the same throughout? What is the effect? What colours are associated with Frindleswylde? With Granny? With Cora? Do they ever change?
6. **Connections.** Did this story remind you of any others? Did the pictures remind you of other stories, books or movies? How many can you come up with as a group? As a whole class? Did you enjoy noticing those connections? Did it matter if you didn't notice some of them or if you didn't know about them?

Read pages 3–4 for some examples. This effect (the opposition between expectations and reality) is a form of 'dramatic irony'. Can you find other examples of it in *Frindleswylde*?

4. **'Inside this nut is everything bad.'** What does Frindleswylde mean by that? Compare it to Cora's realisation that 'Everything changes, then changes again'. Which character do you feel closer to on this? Why?
5. **Classical echoes.** This story is full of echoes of tales from centuries past, from Hans Christian Andersen's 'The Snow Queen' to C.S. Lewis's White Witch in the Chronicles of Narnia, via Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and folk tales from Russia and elsewhere. Can you find any more? Look up the origin of the name Cora. What connects the O'Hara sisters' Cora to the 'original' millennia-old one?
6. **Personifications of winter.** What is Frindleswylde's 'job' as the personification of winter? What tools and techniques does he use? What is his aim ultimately? Can he ever succeed? Research other personifications of winter and compare them with the O'Hara sisters' creation. Are there any positives associated with the season or with its representative in other traditions or tales?

QUESTIONS FOR OLDER READERS

1. **Title.** Was it Frindleswylde's story in the end? What do you think of the author's choice of title? Can you think of other options? Which is your favourite?
2. **An unlikely heroine.** Track Cora's journey as heroine of her story. Does she initially appear as heroine material? How much of what happens to her is caused by circumstances or by someone else? When does she begin to make her own decisions? How does it work out for her? How has her status changed by the end of the book?
3. **All the best laid plans ...** In this story, all the characters' plans and intentions are thwarted at one point or another. How is this especially true of Granny?

ACTIVITIES

- **Ready for anything.** Imagine you have to go after Frindleswylde too. It's the middle of the night and you are in your pyjamas. What do you do? What do you need? Make a list of the clothes, tools, food and so on you might need on an adventure to Frindleswylde's kingdom. Either write up a list, draw yourself with all your kit or pack your bag!
- **Freeze frame.** A freeze frame (or frozen picture) is a drama game where the actors act out a scene without moving or speaking. In groups, create a frozen picture of Cora accomplishing each Impossible Task. Which exact moment of the scene will you choose? Remember, you can't move or talk! Think about where to place yourself, what shape to make with your body, your facial expression and any props you might need. Can the rest of the class guess which task you picked?
- **A fourth Impossible Task.** Frindleswylde gives Cora three Impossible Tasks. Fairy tales love the number three! Goldilocks and the three bears, the three little pigs, the three wishes granted by the genie ... Can you think of any more? Now, try and come up with a fourth task for Cora. What could it be? What makes it impossible? Write it on a piece of paper and swap it with a friend. Try to find a solution for each new task and compare them. Did anyone in the class set a task that was truly impossible?
- **Frosted story box.** Recreate the characters and décor of the Frindleswylde story with what you have to hand. Try using minifigures, bricks, paper puppets, playdough, odds and ends from your pencil case or kitchen drawer ... It must all fit on a plastic box lid! Blu Tack your elements to the inside of the lid, pop the lid on the box and place the lot in the freezer for a few minutes or until it fogs up. Here's your frosted story! Can you tell it to someone before it thaws out?
- **Shine your own light.** On black paper or card, draw the outline of a house in white pencil, crayon or chalk. Draw all the windows with their shutters closed, then carefully cut out the shutters on three sides, making sure they are still connected to the house by one side. Open the shutters, then stick the black house on yellow or orange paper or card, so that the colour only shows in the windows. In each window, draw something or someone that brings you joy or hope, like Cora and Granny's lantern.
- **Let it snow!** Find out more about snow on the UK's Met Office website: [10 facts about snow - Met Office](https://www.metoffice.gov.uk/weather/learn-about/snow); watch soap bubbles freezing in slow motion in Adrian Ybarra's YouTube video: https://youtu.be/Wqk_CKSxlyU; and try making fake snow! This YouTube video of Maqaroon testing fake snow recipes will help you create your own winter wonderland: <https://youtu.be/jvjss8QIMX0>

ACTIVITIES FOR OLDER READERS

- **Moving debate.** To feel (and live and change and maybe hurt) or not to feel (and stay the same and alone and maybe safe) is one of the things that Frindleswylde and Cora are in opposition over. Who do you side with on this question? Place a sign saying 'Cora' at one end of the room and another saying 'Frindleswylde' at the other. Invite each participant to choose their position on the Frindleswylde/Cora line for each of the following statements: 'Feelings are bad', 'Change is scary', 'People never change'. Ask them to explain why they are standing where they're standing, and after hearing a few opinions, ask if anyone wants to change position.
- **Frindleswylde's autograph.** What is Frindleswylde's way of saying he was there at the end of the book? What would be a good symbol for you? Think about the things you do, the things you love, the kind of person you are. What could represent all of it? A picture of an object? A very simple self-portrait? Your initials in a special script? Experiment with making your own mark!
- **The summer edit.** What if Frindleswylde's kingdom was summer and his superpower related to heat? What would he look like? What kinds of landscapes would you see in his kingdom? What would it feel like there? What colour palette would you use to picture it? Give it a go.

FURTHER RESOURCES

- Check out Lauren O'Hara's *Madame Badobedah*, written by Sophie Dahl, and try the activities in the KPMG Children's Books Ireland Awards 2020 pack: [KPMG-CBI-Junior-Juries-Resource-Pack-2020.pdf](https://www.kpmg.com/ireland/childrens-books-ireland-awards-2020-pack)
- Read this 2017 interview on Let's Talk Picture Books where Lauren and Natalia O'Hara talk about working together on their first book, *Hortense and the Shadow*: <http://www.letstalkpicturebooks.com/2017/11/lets-talk-illustrators-48-natalia-ohara.html>
- Explore more fairy tales, myths and legends in this Children's Books Ireland curated list for readers aged 0–14: [Folklore, Myth, Legend | Children's Books Ireland](https://www.childrensbooksireland.com/2020/02/folklore-myth-legend-childrens-books-ireland/)