

Written by Elizabeth Atkinson

Elizabeth Atkinson's quirky, heartfelt middle grade novels include *From Alice to Zen*; *I, Emma Freke*; *The Sugar Mountain Snow Ball*; and her newest release, *The Island of Beyond*. Raised in Harvard, Massachusetts, Elizabeth received her BA at Hobart & William Smith Colleges, and her MA in Liberal Studies (with a concentration in Creative Writing) at Dartmouth College. She currently divides her time between the north shore of Massachusetts and western Maine. Her favorite part of writing novels for children is visiting with (in person and virtually) schools, libraries, book clubs, and offering fun, interactive writing workshops to middle grade students.

-from her website www.elizabethatkinson.com



Ask Elizabeth!

Who are your heroes/heroines from children's books?

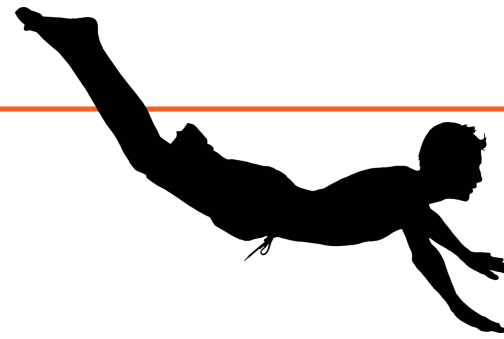
For me, the real heroes/heroines in children's books are the ordinary characters who find contentment within themselves. They manage to overcome the difficulties of life -- whether it's a broken family or abandonment or bullying -- and learn to embrace their potential and self worth all on their own... making them more empathetic and caring toward others. Some of my favorite, "most heroic" characters are found in books by Jack Gantos, Kimberly Willis Holt, and Kate DiCamillo.

Where are your top three places to be?

Maine, Ireland, and anywhere with my husband and children

What are your favorite things about Maine?

I love everything about Maine. However, the natural beauty -- from the western lakes and mountains to the jagged coastline -- is what draws me here. I find great inner peace when I'm in Maine. Even though I don't live here full-time, I think of Maine as my heart home... where I always long to be.



Let's Talk! [CCSS: SL.1]

1. Publisher's Discussion Questions - there are seventeen! <https://www.lernerbooks.com/digitalassets/Assets/Title%20Assets/19016/9781467781169/Discussion%20Guide.pdf>
2. Epigraph by W.B. Yeats: "Come away, O human child! / To the waters and the wild..." What do you consider wild? How might your opinion of 'wild' differ from people who live in different areas, like in the city or in a low-populated country like Iceland? Would you consider Beyond wild? Why, or why not?
3. Henry David Thoreau said, "In wildness is the preservation of the world." What does that mean to you? How would that apply to Beyond? Considering that some people call Solo "wild," do you think this quotation could apply to people? Why, or why not?
4. At the beginning of the story, Martin doesn't want to go to Maine at all. His father thinks it'll be good for him. Martin asks his father, "What's the big deal about nature?...So what if kids don't do all that outdoors stuff anymore?" His father answers, "Because your mind goes soft...Everything turns to mush." Why do you think he says that?
5. What do you think of Great Aunt Lenore's deception regarding her dementia? What other ways could she have tested Martin's father's loyalty?
6. Martin was uncomfortable in his Great Aunt Lenore's house, but he was also uncomfortable outside in the woods. What did Martin do to help himself adjust? Think back to a time when you felt uncomfortable. What did you do?
7. How did Solo help Martin? How have you welcomed someone "new and/or different" into your school or community? What has someone done to welcome you?
8. If you could continue the story, where would it go from here?

The Island of Beyond

Let's Create!

1. Choose a Maine island, research its geography and history, and create a profile of it. How many people live there, if any? What are its beaches like? What are its forests like? Does it have any other geographical features, like caves or marshes? What animals and insects live there, or stop there along their migration route? **(Geography, Science)** https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_islands_of_Maine [CCSS: W7]
2. Make a book trailer using iMovie or Windows Movie Maker. Here's an example: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fo_2AFvc9qA (ELA, Technology) [CCSS:SL.4, CCSS:SL.5]
3. Martin built a village in the woods to help him feel more at home. Build your own village. What will you name it? What will you include in your village to make yourself feel more at home? **(Art)**
4. Postcard Project: Pretend you are Martin and write postcards home to your parents (a.k.a. Martin's parents), starting with a postcard from the day after you arrive on Beyond and finishing with a postcard from the day before you're supposed to go back home. Try to write at least six postcards. What do these postcards demonstrate about Martin's experience over the course of the summer?
5. Photo Project & Game: Do the descriptions in the book remind you of any place in your neighborhood or community? Take pictures of any spots that remind you of scenes in the book. Bring your photos back to class, and compare them with other students' photos. Did any of you take photos of the same spot? Do you recognize spots from other students' photos?
6. Ekphrastic poems are written in response to a piece of art, whether a drawing, painting, photograph, sculpture, etc. Write an ekphrastic poem after reflecting on the book jacket's fiery photo. Additional info and examples: https://www.getty.edu/education/teachers/classroom_resources/curricula/poetry_and_art/downloads/ekphrasis.pdf



The Island of Beyond

Let's Read More! (CCSS: RL.10)

- Other books by Elizabeth Atkinson: *I, Emma Freke*; *The Sugar Mountain Snow Ball*; *From Alice to Zen*
- *The Complete Tales and Poems of Edgar Allen Poe*: explore the writings of the classic horror story master
- *Okay For Now*, by Gary Schmidt: also has a bird(s) theme, strong male protagonist
- *Return to Augie Hubble*, by Lane Smith: another unique setting, and a mystery to be solved
- *A Handful of Stars*, by Cynthia Lord: Maine setting, summer friendships
- *Fish in a Tree*, by Lynda Hunt: literacy and 'normalcy'



Let's Learn More!

1. Ever wonder what a word, phrase, or entire message looks like and sounds like in Morse Code? Use the Morse Code Translator to find out!
<https://morsecode.scphillips.com/translator.html>

2. Aunt Lenore's house on Beyond is a 'classic nineteenth-century Victorian.' Here are some characteristics of Victorian architecture: <http://www.hgtv.com/design/home-styles/victorian-architecture>

Are there any Victorian era homes in your community? What characteristics do they have that identify them as Victorian?

3. How to tell a raven from a crow: <http://www.audubon.org/news/how-tell-raven-crow>

Amazing Raven Intelligence Test: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lrYPm6DD44M>

4. Listen to James Earl Jones (also known as Darth Vader) read Edgar Allen Poe's poem, "The Raven:" <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sXU3RfB7308>

