



## 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.

[WWW.ELIZABETHATKINSON.COM](http://WWW.ELIZABETHATKINSON.COM)

# The Island of Beyond

## ASK ELIZABETH!

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

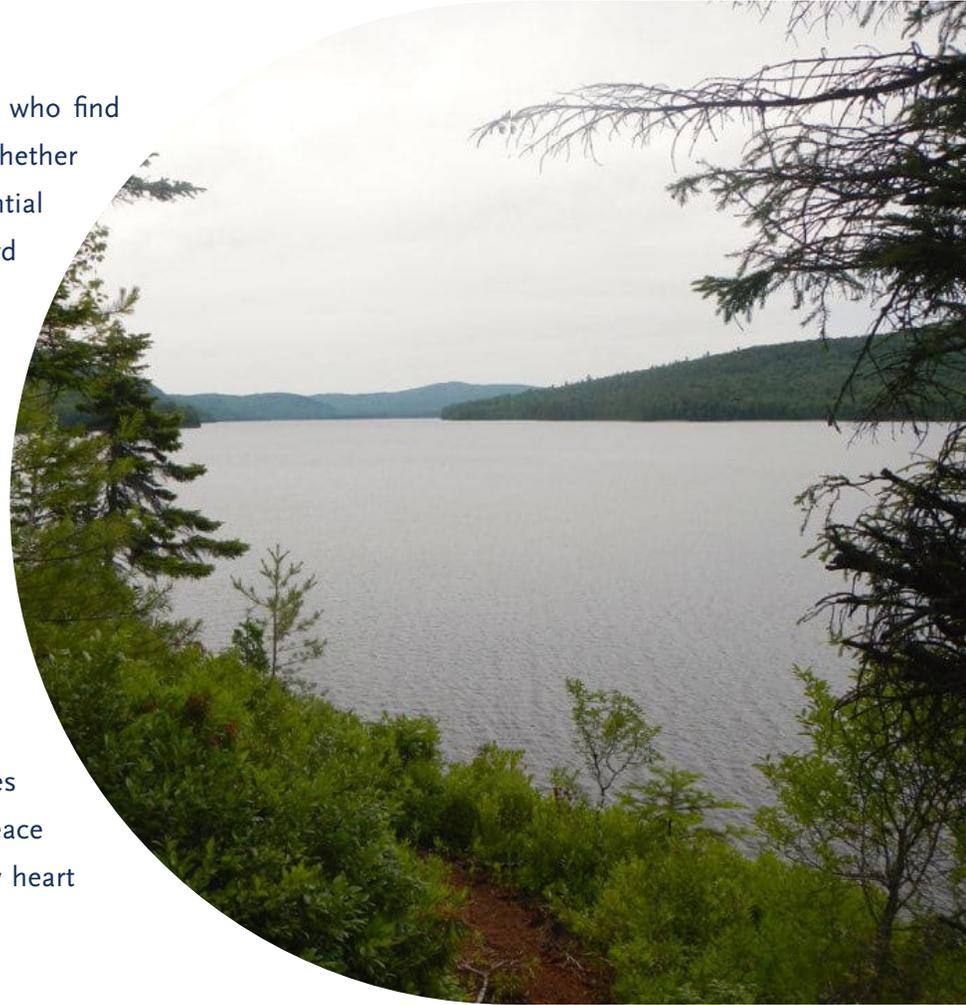
For me, the real heroes/heroines in children's books are the ordinary characters who find contentment within themselves. They manage to overcome the difficulties of life -- whether it's a broken family or abandonment or bullying -- and learn to embrace their potential and self worth all on their own... 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.



# The Island of Beyond

## LET'S TALK [CCSS: SL.1]

1. Publisher's Discussion Questions - there are seventeen! <https://islandreadersandwriters.org/the-island-of-beyond-discussion-guide-1/>
2. On Beyond, Martin has to face times of solitude sometimes by his own choosing (determined not to leave his room), and sometimes by circumstance (times when Solo took off). Do you think having time by oneself is important? Why or why not?
3. Why is Aunt Lenore pretending to have dementia? Do you think this is a good way to test Martin's father? Can you think of a better way to test someone's loyalty? What about all the others she is tricking? How would you feel if you were fooled in this way?
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. 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?
6. Imagine that Martin and Solo rowed the boat to the mainland and went to town for a day. What would they do, see and who might they meet there? Begin to form a short story.
7. Martin's mother seemingly plays a small role in this story. Why do you think that is? Think about what would happen if she visited the island. Would the story be different?
8. Solo gives everyone nicknames including himself. Do you have a nickname or know of anyone that does? Does your name give you a sense of identity or belonging? Do you think the characters in "The Island of Beyond" live up to their names?

# 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](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_islands_of_Maine) [CCSS: W7]
2. 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? After building a toy village, add people and name them by their occupation, i.e. Smith, Taylor, Cobbler. (Art/Tech)
3. 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. Create a photo collage 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?
4. Postcard Project: Pretend you are Martin and write postcards home to your parents or a friend 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? (CCSS:W4)
5. Take it further: Find the Morse code alphabet in the back of the book. Using this as a resource write a postcard to a friend in code. (CCSS:W4)



# 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 Hobble*, 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! Make up puzzles using Morse Code and have another student try to solve them! <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? Draw a picture of one and/or imagine a story about who might live there.
3. How to tell a raven from a crow: <https://www.allaboutbirds.org/similar-species-crows-and-ravens/>
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=sXU3RfB73o8>
5. This book has many references to E.A. Poe's poem "The Raven."

## ONLINE RESOURCES

<https://www.varsitytutors.com/englishteacher/raven-lesson-plans>

