

Classroom Ideas

A Single Stone

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\$17.99/\$24.00 CAN • Age 10 and up

Also available as an e-book and in audio

Summary

Every girl dreams of being part of the line — the chosen seven who tunnel deep into the mountain to find the harvest. No work is more important. Jena is the leader of the line — strong, respected, reliable. And — as all girls must be — she is small; her years of training have seen to that. It is not always easy, but it is the way of things. And so a girl must wrap her limbs, lie still, deny herself a second bowl of stew. Or a first. But what happens when one tiny discovery makes Jena question everything she has ever known? What happens when moving a single stone changes everything?

About the Author

Meg McKinlay is the award-winning author of *Below*. She divides her time between teaching and writing, a balance that swings wildly between chaos and calm. She lives near the ocean in Fremantle, Australia.



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Discussion Questions and Activities

Based on the cover, what do you think this story is about? How do you think it will begin/end? Revisit your answers after reading the book. How close were your predictions to the actual novel? Design your own cover for the book with new imagery that will persuade people to read the book.

What is the purpose of this novel (e.g., to entertain, to inform, or to persuade)? How can you tell? Write a paragraph about the novel using only informative language that is unbiased. Write another paragraph using persuasive language to convince the reader to share your opinion of the novel. What are the themes in this novel? Identify and list the themes as a class or in small groups. Individually write a statement of belief about each theme.

A novel will describe the setting and action in words, allowing the reader to visualize using their imagination. A comic strip or graphic novel uses illustrations to show the reader the setting, action, and characters' emotions. Create a comic strip of a key scene from the novel.

Discuss the cultural importance of daughters in the world of *A Single Stone*. Compare this to the cultural importance of daughters and sons in modern and past times (for example, look at the 1950s and the 1900s).

"The Gash was not the only place their ancestors had wronged the mountain, but it was where the rock fought back. Where it finally said enough. It opened its throat and swallowed their world, and them with it."

Compare this quote to arguments for climate change in our world. Do you think the author was intentionally making a statement about climate change? If so, what arguments do you think the author is trying to make about how we use our natural resources?

The author employs a dual narrative of Jena and Lia's worlds. Why do you think she uses this technique? Compare the two worlds, making note of their customs, superstitions, and values and how their environments have shaped these beliefs. Based on this comparison, how much do you think environment and upbringing shape a person? How different do you think Jena would be if she were raised in Lia's world?

After reading chapter 13, discuss how the author creates a feeling of tension and claustrophobia while the girls are navigating the inside of the mountain. Make a note of literary techniques that are used for this purpose.

In chapters 13 and 14, Jena faces two very tough leadership challenges, the first being Kari getting stuck in the rock and the second being Min falling from the mountain to her death. How does Jena respond? Does she blame herself? Was there anything else Jena could have done to avoid these situations?

Make a list of the colloquialisms and slang that people in Jena's world use that are different from our own. This different language could be caused by the society's developing in isolation from others. Compare this to colloquialisms that are used in your local area, your country, and other countries now and in past times. Discuss how language changes over time depending on environmental factors and trends.

Girls who form part of the line are revered in this society. Why do you think that is? What do you think the transition would be like from being part of the line to entering normal society? Write several diary entries from Kari's point of view from when she is still part of the line to when she discovers that she is too big and enters normal society. How does Kari and Jena's relationship change from when they're in the line together to after Kari has left it? What do you think caused this change?

Discuss the parallels between the world of *A Single Stone*, where girls are traditionally bound or altered to conform to a specific body type, and our own world, where people experience strong expectations to look a certain way and take extreme measures to achieve a desired body type. Do you think it is acceptable for parents, guardians, or those in power to make these kinds of changes to an infant if the changes serve a purpose (such as being part of the line)? What if these changes were for cosmetic reasons?

What is the meaning of the title *A Single Stone*? Does it have more than one meaning? Does it mean different things to different characters?

Write a book report on *A Single Stone*, using evidence from the text to support your evaluation. Make a recommendation about who would be interested in this book and draw connections to similar or related books.



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