



THE ICE CHILDREN

M. G. LEONARD

ILLUSTRATED BY PENNY NEVILLE-LEE

NOTES FOR TEACHERS

KS2 / AGES 8+

EXPLORE THEMES OF:

- ✓ Family and Friendship
- ✓ The natural world
- ✓ Climate change
- ✓ Winter
- ✓ Taking action and creating change
- ✓ Books and stories

SUBJECT CHECKLIST

- ✓ English and drama
- ✓ Science
- ✓ Art and design
- ✓ Geography

The activities included here are suitable for the classroom or library sessions.

ABOUT THE BOOK

M. G. Leonard's story of a brave girl and her reindeer friend, who try to save her brother, is the perfect winter treat. *The Ice Children* is an exciting, modern, magical mystery adventure by the author of *Beetle Boy*, *Adventures on Trains* and the *Twitchers* series.

At the stroke of midnight on the dawn of December, five-year-old Finn Albedo is found frozen on a pedestal of ice. His heart is beating, he is smiling, but no one can wake him.

Finn's big sister, Bianca, suspects that the tall mysterious stranger who first discovered Finn

knows more than they will admit? Bianca's quest to discover the truth and rescue her little brother hurls her into a fantastical winter wonderland, full of beauty, danger and irresistible spirit animals, where all is not as it seems . . .



PRE-READING ACTIVITIES

BOOK COVER DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What is the first thing you notice when you look at the front cover?
- What genre do you think the book might fit within? Why?
- How many different animals can you see?
- Where do you think the book might be set? What makes you think this?
- Can you make any predictions about what might happen in the book based on the front cover?

VOCABULARY

In the table below are some words you will encounter while reading the story.
Can you find out what they mean?

WORD	DEFINITION
Iceberg	
Frostbite	
Snowdrift	
Tundra	
Aurora Borealis	
Solstice	



READING GROUP DISCUSSION PROMPTS

1. Bianca finds a poem written on Finn's ice pedestal on page 8. Read this poem aloud. What do you think it means? Does it give any clues about what happened to Finn?
2. What is your impression of Pitter, Patter, Quilo and Jack? Can you describe what they each look like? What might their names tell us about them?
3. Do you notice anything interesting about the way Pitter and Patter talk? (Why not see if you can have a conversation with a partner in the style of Pitter and Patter?!)
4. On page 90, Pitter says, 'If you read, you know a book is a door.' What do you think this means? Do you agree? What 'doors' have you walked through when reading?
5. On page 98, Bianca has a really strong desire to pick up the silver book. It seems to draw her towards it 'like a magnet'. Have you ever felt a strong desire to pick up a book and read it (or continue reading it)?
6. How would you describe Bianca's character? Would you like to be friends with Bianca?
7. When Bianca arrives in Winterton on page 108, she makes a 'snow angel'. Have you ever made a snow angel? What other memories of winter do you have? List the 5 things you like best about winter!
8. Do you think Jack Frost is a villain in the story? Why or why not? What motivates him?
9. What animals have you encountered in the story? If you had a winter animal companion, what would it be?
10. On page 202, Bianca says, 'A story has the power to change the world'. Do you agree? How might a story change the world?
11. Are there any similarities between the book *The Ice Children*, and the book *The Vanishing World*?
12. In the acknowledgements at the end of the book, M.G. Leonard says, 'I am one of the Ice Children'. Are you one of the Ice Children? What does this mean to you?



READ PAGES 101–103!

Snow was falling heavily, erasing the hard lines of the city, and Bianca found herself heading towards the park. There was a police officer at the main gate. She lowered her head and hurried past, making her way to the boating lake.

'Casper,' Bianca said, standing before her frozen friend. 'I don't know what to do. I have a silver book' she waved the bag at him 'but no one believes that it froze you.' Irritated by the hint of a smile on the left side of his mouth, she snapped at him. 'I don't know what you're looking so pleased about. Everyone is going out of their minds with worry.' She huffed. 'I thought you were the cleverest person I knew, until you got yourself frozen. Who am I supposed to talk to now? No one will listen to me!'

Fluffy flakes caught on her eyelashes, and she blinked them away. Casper was still wearing his maddening smile, and it occurred to Bianca that Sophie had been beaming, and her brother looked serene. They were all happy to be frozen!

Her heart throbbed as she felt the sparkling book in the bag yearn for her to hold it, like a kitten wanting a cuddle. What if being frozen wasn't bad? What if being frozen made you happy?

'I'm going to read it!' she said, willing Casper to defy her. But Casper didn't move.

'Fine, then. I will!'

When Bianca got home, the house was empty. The afternoon was slipping away, school was finished now, and darkness was falling. She guessed her parents were in the park, with Finn, and felt disappointed that they'd believed her note and not realized she'd skipped school.

She went into the kitchen, putting the bag on the table with the book still inside it. She kept glancing at it, surprised by how much she wanted to hug it to her. Should she read the book? If she read it, she might learn what had happened to Finn. She watched the clock tick and tock, waiting. One of her parents would surely be back soon. She would show them the book. Then they would realize that she was right.

Time passed. The book called to her, again and again, until Bianca thought her heart would burst if she didn't pick it up.



FOCUS 1: BIANCA'S DECISION

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. The author describes the snow as 'erasing the hard lines of the city'. What does this description tell you? How does this help you picture the scene?
2. How do you think Bianca feels when she is talking to Casper? Why do you think she feels like this?
3. If Casper could talk, what do you think he might say to Bianca?
4. What effect does the book have on Bianca?
5. What do you think will happen if Bianca reads the book? What do you think will happen if she doesn't read the book?
6. Do you think Bianca's parents will believe her if she shows them the book?

ACTIVITY! CONSCIENCE ALLEY

Bianca is very tempted to read the book. Do you think she should?

With your class, form two rows facing each other. Everyone on one side is going to think of all the reasons that Bianca **should** read up the book. Everyone on the other side is going to think of all the reasons she **shouldn't** read the book.

Take some time thinking of as many reasons as you can.

Next, choose one person to be Bianca.

This person will walk slowly down the 'conscience alley' formed between the two rows. When they get level with you, say your reasons out loud. Take turns to be Bianca and experience what it feels like to walk down the conscience alley and hear all the different reasons for and against reading the silver book.

Finally, write a short inner monologue from Bianca's point of view describing your thoughts and feelings.

Read on and see what decision Bianca makes!



READ PAGES 178–180!

*'Answer me!' Bianca shouted. 'What do you want with our hearts?'
'Are you blind, Bianca?' Jack's voice became a melancholy whisper.
'Do you not see what is happening around you?' Leaning down, Jack forced her to look into his unreadable eyes. 'Winter is dying, Bianca. Our time gets shorter every year. You humans have made the world a place in which we cannot survive.'*

'No, I...' Bianca gasped in breathless protest.

*'The first to go will be the queen, bringer of snow, but I will soon follow. Then it will be farewell to Pitter's hail and Patter's sleet. Quilo will become summer's minion, no longer blowing cold, but hot.' A tilt of the head.
'I know you understand. We're the same, you and I. You're here to save your brother, Finn. I am saving my sister, Ishild.'*

Jack's words blasted into Bianca's core, and her mind reeled at the revelation that she'd been spying on and fleeing from Frost, Hail, Sleet and the North Wind.

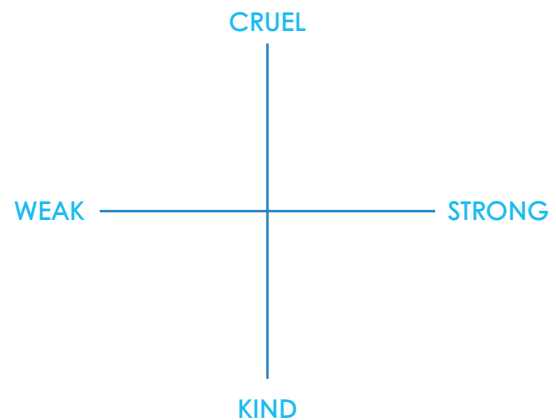
That is the story The Vanishing World tells,' Jack explained. You and every other child in Winterton read it and recognized the truth. That is why you offered up your heart to the Snow Queen. You gave your heart to make it snow.'



FOCUS 2: VANISHING WORLD

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What do you think Jack means when he says, 'You humans have made the world a place in which we cannot survive'?
2. Do you know what global warming is and what causes it?
3. What impact did The Vanishing World have on the children who read it?
4. Do you think Bianca and Jack have anything in common? How are they different?
5. Where would you place Jack, Bianca, Finn and Ishild on this character grid (above)? Discuss your thoughts with a partner. Have your impressions of the characters changed at all since the start of the book?



6. Put yourself in Jack Frost's position and re-tell the story so far from your point of view. Why did you give the books to the children? What are your hopes? What are your fears? How do you feel?

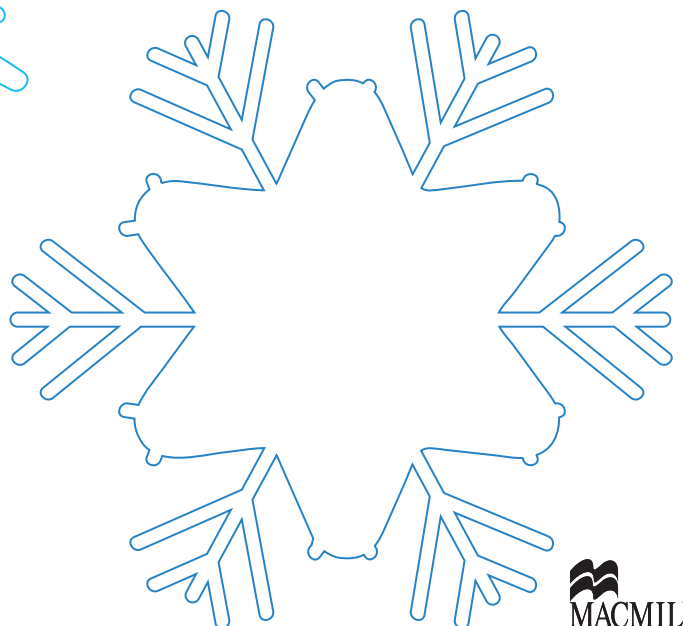
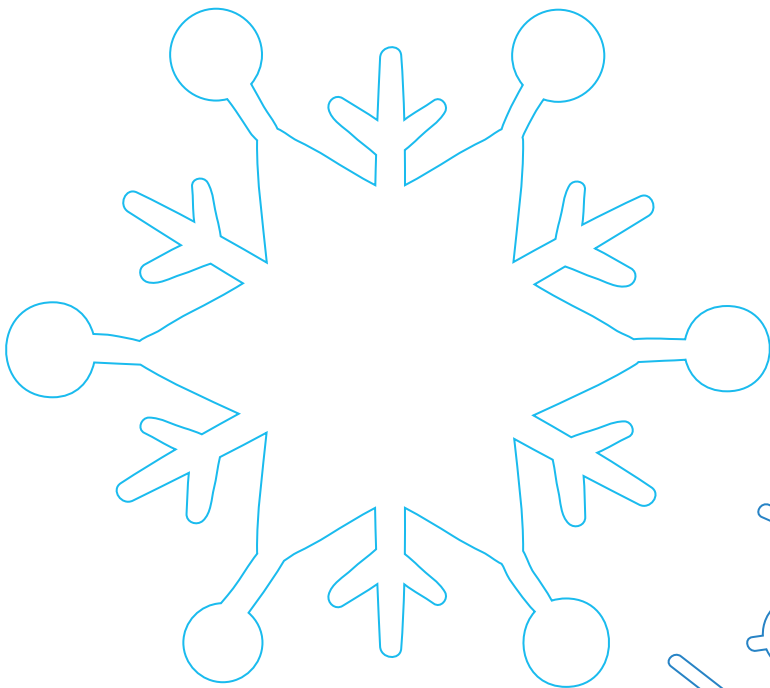
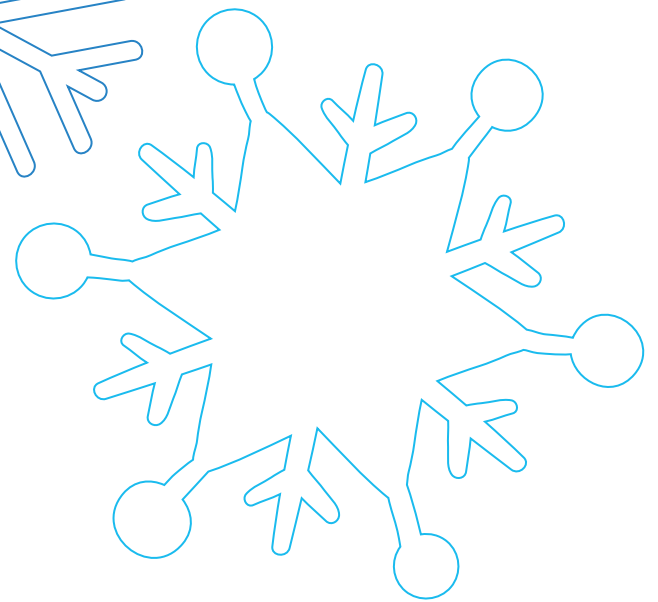
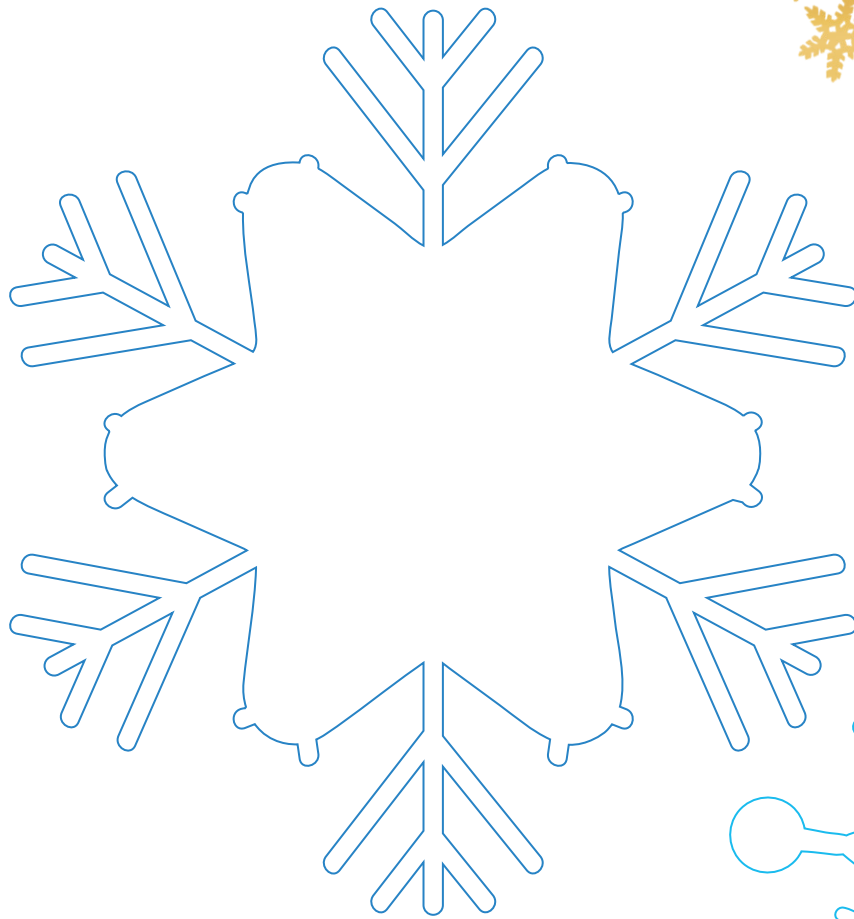
ACTIVITY! PREVENTING CLIMATE CHANGE

Jack Frost is trying to save winter by bringing human children to Winterton to give their hearts to Ishild. But is there another way to save winter?

How can we all take action to help prevent global warming? Carry out some research into climate change solutions. (Some of these solutions will be large scale actions, such as introducing electric trains and restoring tropical forests; and some will be smaller scale actions, such as using a bike instead of using a car and recycling household waste.)

Now, choose 4 small actions that you think you could do either individually, with your family or with your class to help reduce global warming. Write each action in one of the snowflakes below and pledge to do your best to fulfil them. You can display the snowflakes in your classroom to remind you of the small things you can do to make a difference!

How do you think Jack Frost would react if you told him about the actions you are taking to reduce climate change?





FURTHER ACTIVITY IDEAS

- Imagine you are a journalist for a local newspaper. Write an article reporting on the frozen children who have been found in chapters 1–5. Include key details of the events that have taken place and quotes from significant bystanders.
- On page 108, Bianca describes Firroft Forest. Read the second paragraph on this page closely. Can you find an expanded noun phrase, a metaphor, a simile and an example of personification? How do these words and phrases help you imagine the scene? Find a picture of a winter scene and write your own description of the scene. Can you use figurative language to help build a picture in your reader's imagination?
- On page 116, Pordis says that she belongs in a snowy, cold climate. Do you know of any other animals that belong in very cold climates? Carry out some research into an animal that lives in a cold environment. Can you find out your animal's size, appearance, diet, habitat and how it is adapted to survive in very cold temperatures? Create a presentation about your animal to share with your class!
- Each chapter in the book begins with a beautiful snowflake design. How many lines of symmetry does each snowflake have? Create some snowflakes of your own using paper and scissors!
- Bianca realises how much she loves winter. What are your favourite things about winter? Write a poem celebrating winter and everything it means to you.
- Investigate the science of freezing and melting. Where does an ice cube melt fastest? How could you speed up or slow down the speed at which an ice cube melts?
- We know that the book *The Vanishing World* is silver but we don't know what images or designs it has on its front cover. Design a front cover for *The Vanishing World*. You could use embossing foil or aluminium foil to create your book cover!
- *The Vanishing World* is a book that compels those who read it to want to save winter. Produce your own book called *The Vanishing World* that will inspire readers to take action against climate change. Perhaps you could tell the story of a vanishing world through the eyes of an animal that lives in cold climates? Or maybe you could create a non-fiction text about climate change and how to prevent it?
- Create your own festival of winter in your classroom! Decorate the room with snowflakes, lanterns and fairy lights. Why not serve hot chocolate and marshmallows just like they do in Winterton? Perhaps you could invite members of your school community to visit and learn about the impact of climate change and how they can help prevent it?
- At the end of the book, the author flashes forwards to the present day when Bianca and Finn are older. Now it's your turn to 'flash forward'! Write a description of life what life will be like in 20 years' time if humans take action to look after the natural world and reduce climate change. What does the world look like? What kind of technology exists? How does it feel to live in harmony with the natural world? Write a vision of a positive future that will inspire hope and action!
- At the end of the book, we learn that the ice children are pursuing careers that will help them be a part of the fight against climate change. Research real life people who are working towards preventing climate change and the work that they do. Who inspires you?