

INTO THE FAERIE HILL

H.S. NORUP

READING GUIDE

‘A GORGEOUS BOOK . . . I COULDN’T PUT IT DOWN.’

HILARY MCKAY

Helle Norup grew up in Denmark where she devoured fairy tales and escaped into books. After living in six different countries, she now lives in Switzerland with her family and writes stories inspired by her travels. When she is not reading or writing, she spends time skiing (in the winter) or hiking or gardening (in the summer) and she loves swimming in fresh water, ideally without water sprites.

INTO THE FAERIE HILL is a story about a rootless boy called Alfred, an eco-warrior girl who calls herself Saga, and a community protest against a motorway tunnel that will harm nature and disturb the faeries – fearsome faeries!

Alfred and Saga venture deep into the mysterious faerie realm to unravel secrets from the past and find a way to protect both nature and otherworldly creatures. At its heart, INTO THE FAERIE HILL is about family, friendship, and discovering who you are and where you belong. Caring for nature and the environment are also important themes in the book.

Helle Norup says:

Summer or winter, I love to be outside in nature. I think there’s something magical about the outdoors, and, for as long as I can remember, I have daydreamed about otherworldly creatures hiding just out of sight. INTO THE FAERIE HILL is full of faeries that I imagined on long walks in my local forest. In the book, the faeries are hiding behind trees, under brambles, or deep underground inside the Faerie Hill. Some of them are helpful while others are tricky or downright spiteful. But all of them share my wish, and that of Alfred and Saga, that we do our utmost to protect our natural world.





NATURE & THE ENVIRONMENT

Alfred moves to the village that his grandmother lives in because his father is helping build a tunnel that will burrow through a hill behind his grandmother's house. When Alfred meets Saga, he quickly finds out that the tunnel is not universally welcomed, and that she is leading a campaign to protect the local environment. Through his friendship with Saga, Alfred starts to realise that there are different ways to understand a situation and that some people take their responsibility for caring for nature and the environment very seriously. Read **chapters 6 and 15**. What do you think about the tunnelling project in INTO THE FAERIE HILL? Are there any campaigns near where you live that are working to protect the local environment?

On **pages 54-55** Saga shows Alfred an idyllic pond that will be destroyed by the tunnel project. Make a drawing of the pond or your own favourite place in nature. Write about something that you would like to do to preserve or improve the place that you live. Think about things like the impact of traffic on your neighbourhood, about what can be done with waste land or rewilding areas in your local park.

On **page 48** Saga is making a protest placard saying NO DRILL INTO THE FAERIE HILL. Design a placard that would help you make clear your mission.

FAMILY

One of the big mysteries of the book is what happened to Alfred's mother. No one seems to want to talk to Alfred about when she died, and his father and grandmother always change the subject when he brings her up.

Read **chapter 7, page 40 to 44**. When Alfred visits the church yard and sees his mother's gravestone and talks to the gravedigger, he finds out some very interesting information. How do you think he feels?

Alfred is an only child and Saga comes from a big family, what do you think this means in terms of their personalities? In **chapter 8** Saga is looking after her younger siblings and baking a cake on her own. Describe Saga and Alfred and see if you think that the way that they have been brought up influences the way they are. Think about things in the book that help you get a sense of them both. For example, how does Alfred feel about moving around the world with his engineer father? Do you think that Saga's role as a big sister has made her more responsible?

Alfred's Grandmother is an important person for Alfred. She protects him and knows a lot about the world of magic that he is drawn in to. Think about your grandparents, aunts and uncles or someone that you love and why you love each other. Make a list of the things that are important to you about them and that are important to them about you.





FRIENDSHIP

Why do you think Saga and Alfred get on so well? What is it that is so important about friendship? What is it that makes people like each other? At the start of the novel Alfred is a bit reluctant when he is encouraged to be friends with Saga. Do you think that friendships can be stronger if the friends have overcome some difficulties? Write about how you met your best friend and also write about a time when you and your friend were not getting on so well. Think about how you felt in both situations.


Friends often complement one another. Alfred is often hiding and trying to be invisible, whereas Saga revels in standing out from the crowd. He notices this from the first time he sees her on **page 25**. How does this help him?

Do you think that Saga and Alfred are good friends? Can you give us some examples from the book of times that they helped each other to understand and solve problems? Saga knows a lot about the faerie world, does she use her knowledge well to help Alfred?

Alfred is an excellent swimmer, but he sometimes struggles with the fact that one of his legs is shorter than the other. This limb length difference has led to bullying in the past, as he recalls on **pages 20-21**. How does it affect him in the story? Does it stop him from doing anything? Saga and Alfred discuss this difference on **pages 116-117**, when she suggests he might be a changeling. Do you think that he feels that this is one of the things that makes him different? Do you think Saga is an understanding friend?

On **page 78** we read that Alfred feels that he can trust Saga 'not to think he was weird', and on **page 119** and **page 149** Alfred realises that Saga accepts him just as he is.

Can you write a list of the values and actions that make someone a good friend? Think about things like loyalty, kindness, trust and honesty. There are lots of things that are important in a friendship. Think about things that matter most to you both in terms of how your friends behave as well as how you are as a friend.



FAERIES CAN BE FEARSOME

In this book the magical creatures are both good and bad. Saga alerts Alfred to this fact while they're eating chocolate cake on **page 49**. Some of the faeries want to help Alfred and Saga and others want to stand in their way of finding out about the faerie world. What do you think about the way that the author represents the faeries and magical creatures in her book? Little Mother and Little Father and Mr Tumbleweed are very important to the story. Do you like the way that they get involved with Saga and Alfred's plans? Do you like the way that the author represents the magic in the book in a conflicting way? Thinking about the authors descriptions of the magical characters, can you draw a portrait of your favourite?

Alfred first sees and describes Mr Tumbleweed on **page 26**. If you had a magical companion, what would it look like? Mr Tumbleweed is very important because he helps Saga understand the faerie world and warns her of some danger. What role would your magical companion play in your life? Would it be a bit naughty or well-behaved, would it be visible only to you, might it be like the woodcarvings in INTO THE FAERIE HILL and only come to life sometimes. Write about the time you and the magical creature first meet – what are your first impressions of them? How do you feel? Think about everything you would see and think as well as where the encounter takes place.

OTHER TITLES BY H. S. NORUP:

