

Baen Books teacher's guide to *Changeling's Island* by Dave Freer

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Recommended reading level

Changeling's Island is appropriate for a young adult audience. Classroom use of the book is probably most appropriate for middle school students.

Biographical information on Dave Freer

Dave Freer is a popular author of science fiction and fantasy. He grew up in South Africa, on the edge of a 500-acre nature preserve that stretched from the bush to the sea. His father crewed on a commercial fishing boat on the weekends. In his final year of school, he told his teacher he wanted to be a novelist, to which the teacher replied that Freer couldn't spell, and also it was impossible to make a living at it. When Freer was 17, South Africa went to war in Angola, and he was conscripted into the South African army as a medic for two years. Afterwards he became an ichthyologist, studying sharks and writing papers about them. Fish research didn't pay well, so he moonlighted as a mussel diver in the same waters where he was doing his research. Later he managed a fish farm, until it folded because of the skyrocketing cost of fishmeal. When he decided to ignore his teacher's advice and turn his hand to writing, he racked up 74 rejections before his first book, *The Forlorn*, was published by Baen Books in 1999. Since then he has published fourteen more novels and dozens of shorter works, often in collaboration with other writers such as Eric Flint and Mercedes Lackey. His novel *Slow Train to Arcturus* won the Preditors & Editors Readers Poll 2008 for SF/F novel. In 2010, he emigrated with his wife to Flinders Island, the setting of *Changeling's Island*.

Suggested class activities

Before they read the book, have your students read the biographical information about Dave Freer. They might also want to explore some of the interviews available on the [Baen Free Radio Hour](http://www.baen.com/podcastfiles/mp3/Baen-Free-Radio-Hour-2016-04-08-Freer-Graveyard-44.mp3) podcast (<http://www.baen.com/podcastfiles/mp3/Baen-Free-Radio-Hour-2016-04-08-Freer-Graveyard-44.mp3>) and on Baen's website (<http://www.baen.com/Interviews/intfreer2>) in which Freer discusses his development and interests as an author. Ask them to take notes on this material, and then have the class discuss the influences that led Freer to become a writer.

To get your students thinking about the theme of belonging, explore with them the geography of Flinders Island. (The [Baen Free Radio Hour podcast](#) features a great discussion of this topic.) Compare Flinders' geography with that of Ireland, the other land from which the protagonist's ancestors hail. Discuss how, because of the geographical similarities, Irish and Scotsmen who traveled around the world felt somewhat at home on Flinders Island. Research the geography of South Africa, where Freer was born, and compare and contrast its geography with that of Freer's new home, Flinders Island.

For further information on Dave Freer and his work:

- Freer's website contains a blog, biography, bibliography, photos, and downloads (<http://davefreer.com/>).
- Freer's page at Amazon.com contains a brief biographical note, a list of books available, and a forum for reader comments.

- Several interesting interviews with Freer are available at Baen's website (<http://www.baen.com/Interviews/intfreer2>) and on the [Baen Free Radio Hour](http://www.baen.com/podcastfiles/mp3/Baen-Free-Radio-Hour-2016-04-08-Freer-Graveyard-44.mp3) podcast (<http://www.baen.com/podcastfiles/mp3/Baen-Free-Radio-Hour-2016-04-08-Freer-Graveyard-44.mp3>).

Plot summary

Tim Ryan is a 17-year-old boy living in the big city of Melbourne, Australia at the novel's opening. He gets in trouble for committing petty crimes (trying to impress a girl) and for a series of fires and catastrophes that mysteriously occur in his vicinity. As a result Tim has been sent to live on a rundown farm on a remote island off the coast of Australia with his crazy grandmother, a woman who seems to talk to the local spirits. To make matters worse, Tim is expected to milk cows, chase sheep, and hunt fish with a spear. But he's been exiled to an island with ancient magic – land magic that Tim can feel in his bones, and sea magic that runs in his blood. The magic gives him strength, which he needs in order to protect himself from a seal woman who will stop at nothing, even the taking of innocent life, to complete her mission – the recovery of a key to the hollow hills of Faerie, a legacy of power beyond any Tim has ever imagined, and his birthright, though he doesn't know it. Tim must also contend with other dangers: sea storms, drug-runners, cops, insurance assessors, and a manipulative teen model. He works hard to save money so he can return to the city he has always considered home. But as he works on the land and the sea and learns the rural ways of the island, he becomes stronger and more confident. He discovers talents, in areas like fishing and steersmanship, that city life might never have revealed to him. He builds strong

friendships with an island girl named Molly and her large dog Bunce, and he earns the respect of a professional diver who not only employs Tim but becomes a sort of father figure to him. And he learns from his “crazy” grandmother to believe in and reward the Faerie servant whose actions have caused strife because its ways were not understood. When Bunce is bitten by a venomous snake, Tim unhesitatingly hands over the money he has toiled for, and saves the dog’s life. He realizes that Flinders Island is where he wants to be and where he belongs. And when an island kid gets lost at sea in a kayak in a violent storm, Tim makes a bargain with the seal woman: he will give her the key to Faerie, his ticket to a life of luxury and power, if she will help him save the girl’s life. With Molly’s help he rescues the child, and as a celebrated hero he finally feels assured that he’ll be able to remain on Flinders Island where he belongs.

Link to prequel story at Baen Free Library

Go to the [Baen Free Library](http://www.baen.com/categories/free-library.html?author=0&category=0&dir=asc&order=name&p=3&publisher=0) to download “Free Stories 2016,” which includes Dave Freer’s story “Trouble: The Changeling and the Phooka,” a prequel to *Changeling’s Island*.

<http://www.baen.com/categories/free-library.html?author=0&category=0&dir=asc&order=name&p=3&publisher=0>

Major characters

- **Tim Ryan** is a high-school freshman who doesn’t fit in. Ever since his thirteenth birthday strange accidents have happened around him. This is because he has Fae blood and a Fae spirit-servant trying, without any guidance, to protect him.
- **Áed** (pronounced “Ed”) is a Fae sprite, one of the lesser spirits of air and darkness. He tries to protect his master, Tim Ryan, but because Tim never expressly

commands him, Áed has to use his own best judgment. All he wants in return for his loyal service is a little appreciation in the form of a bowl of beer. He hates iron.

- **Mary Ryan** is Tim's grandmother or "nan." A small, slight, hardworking woman with fierce, staring eyes and a gruff voice and manner, she is proud and self-sufficient. Though her eyesight is so poor she can only see things in her peripheral vision, she can see Áed and other fae, and she sometimes has the second sight, the inner eye that sees the future and places far away. Her mission in life is to give her land to her grandson.
- **Molly Symons** is Tim's friend and love interest; she lives on the island with her parents and her large dog Bunce.
- **Bunce** is Molly's beloved Irish wolfhound-Great Dane cross. He loves Tim and protects him from danger.
- **Mike Symons** is Molly's father. A cheerful jokey dreamer, organic gardener, and struggling bed & breakfast entrepreneur.
- **Alicia Symons** is Molly's mother, a kind woman who loves the island and calls everyone "honey."
- **Fenn** is a fenodree, a fae creature of air and shadow, lower in the fae hierarchy than Áed, hardworking, not very bright, but strong and determined, and with an excellent memory that goes back a very long time.
- **Maeve** is a selkie, a dangerous, predatory, shape-changing seal-woman whose mission is to find a key that belongs to Tim and return it to her master, a faerie king.

- **Hailey Burke** is an attractive young woman who was Tim's schoolmate in Melbourne, and who influenced him to do drugs and shoplift. She spends holidays on the island because her father lives there.
- **Dicky Burke** is Hailey's father. He runs an illegal drug operation on the island.
- **Jon McKay** is a local abalone diver and Tim's friend and mentor who teaches him all about boats and fishing.
- **Mally** is Jon McKay's funny friend who is aboard for Tim's first fishing trip.

Guide to chapters 1 – 5

Prepare to read

Familiarize yourself with the following vocabulary and terms.

- CCTV: closed-circuit television
- changeling
- Faerie
- glamour
- exile
- sprite
- B&B
- azure
- wallaby
- gregarious
- pinafore
- selkie
- tartar
- flotsam
- abalone

Focus question/initiating activity

Investigate with your students the power of peer pressure. Ask them if they have ever done something, especially something they knew was wrong, in order to be accepted or to look cool.

Chapter summaries

Chapter 1: High-school freshman Tim Ryan tries to impress his crush Hailey by shoplifting a DVD, but store security guards nab him and drag him to a back room. Before they can prove their suspicions, a filing cabinet spills out its contents, and while the guards are distracted by this, the DVD that was in Tim's pocket somehow gets moved onto a table. When the guards say they can use fingerprints to prove he stole it, a fire breaks out in the room, and the flimsy building material gives way. Tim's supernatural minion Áed, of whom Tim is only dimly aware, causes all the mysterious accidents, by way of trying to protect his master. Tim's mother flips out when she hears of this latest incident, and she gets Tim's absentee father to pay the airfare for Tim to be exiled to Flinders Island, to live with his crazy grandmother. Tim, hating what is happening to him, resigns himself to it and packs the small amount of possessions that he's allowed to carry on the plane.

Chapter 2: On the flight to Flinders Island, Tim meets Molly Symons, a girl just a bit taller than him, with braces, who lives on the island. Her designer clothes make Tim feel self-conscious about his second-hand wardrobe, but she welcomes his company on the flight because it distracts her from her fear of flying, and Tim is happy to help by asking about her dog, Bunce, an Irish wolfhound-Great Dane cross. While they talk, Áed rides on the wing and notices traces of magic in the rocks of the island below. He also notices another fae

creature, an old, strong seal-woman that seems to be following the plane, and he wonders what she's doing so far from the coasts of Ireland or Scotland. When Tim steps down off the plane, he feels a shock go through him, and the island's distant mountain feels strangely familiar to him though he knows he has never seen it before. No one is there to meet him at the tiny airport, so he waits outside, alone but for his unseen fae companion.

Chapter 3: Hungry and desperate, Tim is finally picked up from the airport by Dicky Burke, the father of Hailey, the girl who dared Tim to steal the DVD and then left him to take the fall. On the drive to his new home Tim takes in the lonely landscape, not even farmland but just bush (land remote from settlement) and a few sheep. Dicky drops Tim off a ways from his grandmother's house, and as Tim wanders in what he hopes is the right direction, he is scared by a peacock and he trips. As soon as his hands touch the soil, he feels a strength surge through him. He meets his grandmother, or "nan," an old woman who seems crazy when she refers to Áed, whom she can see despite her near-blindness. Áed in turn senses ghosts on the land. Nan immediately puts Tim to work pushing heavy wheelbarrow-loads of compost and firewood, but she makes him feel better by saying, "Welcome home."

Chapter 4: Before they sit down to dinner, Tim's nan gives him beer to pour in a bowl in the corner of the kitchen for his "little friend," and she instructs him to say "Be welcome to the house and hearth." Áed, both comforted and threatened by her knowledge of him, explores the farm and is displeased to find the predatory selkie who he spotted from the plane, now smiling on a rock near the shore. Áed also meets another fae living on the farm, a hardworking and not very bright fenodree who tells him the selkie is from Finvarra, king

of the Shee and a great power still in the hollow hills of Faerie. The fenodree says the selkie wants Tim, and a key. Tim's nan worries about money, the extra expenses that come with a teenage boy. Tim worries that the islanders will find out why he was exiled to the island. Molly, Bunce, and Molly's mom give Tim a ride to the school bus on his first day, and after meeting Tim, Molly's mom has her husband do a little digging into Tim's background.

Chapter 5: At Tim's first day of school, a light bulb explodes and papers fly across the office when he meets the headmistress, but she doesn't mind at all because she's so delighted to have a new student. Tim notices that people don't lock their doors on the island, or keep their lunches stashed safe away, so he is afraid they'll not think well of him when they learn he's a shoplifter. To distract attention from Tim, Áed creates a whirlwind, but Tim, afraid of being blamed for it as he usually is, and remembering his nan's beer story, shouts, "Stop it! I won't give you any beer!" and the whirlwind stops. On the way home he comes across a man whose truck is broken down. Tim offers to help, because his smaller arm can get into the narrow space under the hood, and Áed helps him fix the problem. The man, John McKay, an abalone diver, offers to take Tim out on his boat fishing for flathead on the weekend, and he insists on driving Tim the rest of the way home, where he trades Mary some abalone for some potatoes, which she tells Tim to dig up. Áed asks the fenodree to teach Tim, who doesn't know potatoes from asparagus, but the fenodree refuses ... until they see lines of force and strength running from the land into Tim, which means the old ones like him. Tim is distraught when his nan informs him that there is no TV here, and no Internet either, and that instead of relaxing after a hard first day of school, he has work to do.

Quiz/reading comprehension questions

1. Why does Tim try to steal a DVD? (chap. 1)

2. What sentimental item(s) does Tim make sure to pack? (chap. 1)

____ a. His favorite stuffed animal

____ b. His "I love Ireland" T-shirt

____ c. His photo album

____ d. All of the above

3. What aspect of Molly's dog Bunce do she and Tim joke about? (chap. 2)

____ a. His tail

____ b. His slobber

____ c. His moustache

____ d. All of the above

4. Who is there to meet Tim as soon as he gets off the plane? (chap. 2)

5. Who is Tim's driver, Dicky Burke, related to? (chap. 3)

____ a. Tim's grandmother

____ b. The mayor of Flinders

____ c. Tim's godfather

____ d. Hailey, the girl Tim has a crush on

6. What is unusual about Tim's grandmother? (chap. 3)

____ a. She sees things that happen thousands of miles away.

____ b. She sees the future.

____ c. She sees fae creatures.

____ d. All of the above.

7. What does Tim's nan have him pour into a bowl in the corner? (chap. 4)

8. What dangerous creature does Áed spy in the water? (chap. 4)

9. What is Jon McKay's occupation? (chap. 5)

_____ a. Abalone diver

_____ b. Tour guide

_____ c. Island historian

_____ d. All of the above

10. What does Áed avoid? (chap. 5)

_____ a. Cheese

_____ b. Iron

_____ c. Laughter

_____ d. Rain

Answers

1. To impress Hailey, a girl he has a crush on. 2. b 3. c 4. Nobody 5. d 6. d 7. Beer 8. A selkie or seal-woman 9. a 10. b

Suggested activity/inquiry-based exploration

Tim Ryan is exiled from the big city of Melbourne and plunged into an agricultural lifestyle about which he knows practically nothing. Have your students explore the economics of food production. Have they ever farmed or raised livestock? What are the costs associated with farming, animal husbandry, and food production in general? What factors affect the supply of and demand for food? How does food production compare to other economic sectors in terms of profit? What non-monetary rewards does food production provide?

Guide to chapters 6 – 10

Prepare to read

Familiarize yourself with the following vocabulary and terms.

- anticoagulant
- bung
- sea change
- wary
- oilskin
- blooding
- guile
- rueful
- belligerent
- Aboriginal
- enthralled
- sea wrack

Focus question/initiating activity: Why do we sometimes want things that don't make us happy? And why are we sometimes repelled by things that would make us happy? Have your students discuss these questions and provide examples of things that they thought would make them happy but didn't, and things that make them happy but that they initially resisted.

Chapter summaries

Chapter 6: Tim routinely wakes early to walk four kilometers school, walks home after school and works on the farm, and falls into bed each night exhausted. He tells himself that he can go on this way, in “survive” mode, for a few weeks, until his mother sorts everything out so he can go home to Melbourne. Áed helps Tim avoid farm disasters, like being kicked by the cow, and he also investigates the selkie who still hangs about the ocean near the farm. The selkie confirms what the fenodree said: she wants the key to the door into the hollow hill, where King Finvarra feasts and rides and hunts. The selkie explains that Tim is the descendant of a royal fae halfling, put out as a changeling to live among humans, expected to return to the hollow hills when grown. But Tim’s ancestor did not return, nor did the key, and now King Finvarra wants the key back. The selkie threatens to hurt or kill Tim if she cannot get the key back. But she cannot set foot on the land or it will trap her. Tim’s mother calls and says the police have been looking for Tim, investigating a case of arson. She says Tim will have to stay on Flinders at least a year. Tim hangs up on her and shuts himself in his room, refusing to come out for supper. His nan calls Jon McKay who invites Tim to come fishing with him and his friend the next morning. She gives Tim her dead husband’s flask, which is precious to her.

Chapter 7: Tim goes fishing with Jon McKay and his friend Mally. It is Tim’s first time fishing and his first time on a boat, but he takes to it easily, catching more fish than anyone. Áed spots the selkie in the waters around them, and he learns that she is responsible for Tim catching so many fish, because she wants him to enjoy fishing so that one day he’ll come to the sea alone and she’ll have him. At the end of their outing, the selkie disguises

herself as a shark, which excites the fishermen a great deal when Tim gets it on his line, though it ends up getting away. Tim shares the fresh-baked cinnamon rolls his nan packed for him, and they all compliment her cooking and gardening. Jon is impressed by Tim's flask, and Tim feels guilty when he thinks about selling it. He has the best time of his life out on the boat. They catch their limit of fish and give some to Molly's dad, owner of the local B&B. Molly watches Tim talking with Jon and Mally and her dad, and notices how much more lively and animated Tim is, compared to how he is at school. Tim earns some money by helping Jon scrub the hull of his boat, and Jon says there's always work on the island if you're reliable and hardworking. Tim's nan makes fish and chips for tea, and Tim enjoys it and is content.

Chapter 8: Tim is irked when his nan goes through his clothes and questions him about the money Jon McKay paid him. He plans to save enough money for a plane ticket back to Melbourne where his mother will be forced to take him back, or where he can support himself with a job on a boat when he turns sixteen. Molly gets her dad to fix Tim's computer, and she invites him to the annual Flinders Island Show, a popular event featuring off-island vendor stalls and competitions for art, vegetables, and wool. His nan gives him five dollars to take to the show, but Molly's mom insists on paying his entry charge. At the show he sees Hailey, to whom he is irresistibly attracted. She ignores him and goes off with some guy with tattoos, which upsets Tim very much, and he feels a need not only to get off the island, but to do something more, but he's not sure what. Áed, observing this interaction with Hailey, is reminded of humans who enter the hollow hills of Faerie. They are usually seduced by the feasting, hunting, and womanizing there, but their

lives are short. Áed is glad that his master is weak and that they live in the change and challenge of the world above. When Tim returns home, his nan is gone. Still upset that she went through his clothes, he goes into her room and pulls from under her bed a tin box, in which he finds a small amount of money, and fifty-year-old letters from her late husband. He replaces the box under the bed without taking anything from it, and when his nan returns, he gives her back the five dollars she gave him. The next day, while working for Jon McKay, he finds an old leather change pouch, which Jon tells him to keep.

Chapter 9: Tim's nan teaches him to drive the old pickup, just on the farm and down to the beach. Tim sees Áed hanging off the side mirror, but when he looks again all he sees is weeds. His nan spies the selkie in the water and threatens to stick a pitchfork in her. When his nan finds out Tim doesn't have a knife, she gives him his great-grandfather's pen knife and commands him never to go near the sea without it, because it is the only defense against the selkie. Áed tells the selkie that Tim carries an iron tooth, and she replies that she'll bargain for what she wants before using force. The next time he sets out a saucer of beer, Tim sees ripples in it and then sees it tipping up by itself, but he explains it away as a hidden mouse. As Tim continues to work on the farm, his nan notes that he has grown stronger and can do things he couldn't do when he first arrived on the island. As the summer/Christmas holiday approaches, he calls his mom about returning to Melbourne for the holiday, but he has trouble reaching her. His nan teaches him to spear flounder, which he absolutely loves. When he spears his first fish, he hears thousands of people, like generations of a huge family, cheering him on and yelling in delight. McKay offers him a job for a few weeks during the holiday, which he accepts instead of going back to the mainland.

The work is very hard, but he makes up for his lack of strength with extra effort and for his lack of knowledge with extra concentration. McKay begins asking him about tides and currents, and Tim feels satisfaction when he gets things right. McKay gives him a Christmas present.

Chapter 10: When he sees a cop car behind him, Tim panics and dives into bushes on the roadside. Responding to his panic, Áed makes the car's tire explode and whips up a wind that blows papers out of the car. Tim helps the cop retrieve the papers and change the tire, and it turns out the cop is heading to inspect a gun safe at Molly's parents' B&B. Tim reluctantly accepts a ride home from the cop, and his nan quickly gets rid of the cop, telling him he's not welcome. She gives Tim her old fishing rod as an early Christmas present and warns him to keep his knife by him, stay away from seals, and don't talk to any strange women. At the shore, he meets a beautiful girl on a surfboard, the selkie in disguise. She introduces herself as Maeve and invites Tim to try to surf, but Áed summons Bunce to help, and he drives her away. Molly, following after Bunce, helps Tim look for little shellfish to use as bait, and then together they land two enormous flathead, an edible tropical marine fish that has a pointed flattened head with the eyes positioned on the top, typically burrowing in the seabed with just the eyes showing. To Molly's surprise, Tim stops after two fish, citing his nan's and McKay's rule that you don't kill more than you can eat. Molly guts the fish, but they don't have anything to carry the fish with until a tangle of baling twine blows along the beach and she catches it. They string the fish up with the twine, not knowing that Áed flung the twine at Molly, having set it with little charms so that by catching it, "accepting" the gift, Áed will now be able to summon her to help his master.

Quiz/reading comprehension questions

1. What precious item does Tim's nan give him? (chap. 6)

- _____ a. A flask
- _____ b. A coin purse
- _____ c. A pocket knife
- _____ d. A tackle box

2. How does Tim get to school and back each day? (chap. 6)

- _____ a. He walks.
- _____ b. He takes the bus.
- _____ c. He gets a ride from a neighbor.
- _____ d. By boat.

3. Why does Tim catch so many fish? (chap. 7)

- _____ a. He is an experienced and knowledgeable fisherman.
- _____ b. His faerie blood gives him a magical edge.
- _____ c. The selkie puts the fish on his hook.
- _____ d. Beginner's luck.

4. What shape does the selkie assume while Tim is fishing with Jon and Mally? (chap. 7)

- _____ a. Dolphin
- _____ b. Barracuda
- _____ c. Flathead
- _____ d. Shark

5. To what does Tim compare the islanders? (chap. 8)

_____ a. Sheep

_____ b. Cattle

_____ c. Zombies

_____ d. Fish

6. What does Tim find in the tin box under his nan's bed? (chap. 8)

_____ a. War medals

_____ b. Letters from her late husband

_____ c. Photographs

_____ d. All of the above

7. What does Tim's nan give him to protect him from the selkie? (chap. 9)

_____ a. A knife

_____ b. An amulet

_____ c. A gun

_____ d. A spear

8. Tim's nan teaches him how to fish with _____. (chap. 9)

_____ a. A blow gun

_____ b. Dynamite

_____ c. His bare hands

_____ d. A spear

9. What early Christmas present does Tim's nan give him? (chap. 10)

_____ a. A sweater

_____ b. An orange

_____ c. A ten dollar bill

_____d. A fishing rod

10. What gift does Áed give Molly? (chap. 10)

_____a. A kiss

_____b. A saucer of beer

_____c. Some twine

_____d. A blessing

Answers

1. b 2. a 3. c 4. d 5. c 6. b 7. a 8. d 9. d 10. c

Guide to chapters 11 – 15

Prepare to read

Familiarize yourself with the following vocabulary and terms.

- geas
- Anzac
- paper nautilus
- languorous
- doubloons
- mead
- encompassment

Focus question/initiating activity

One of *Changeling's Island's* main characters is Maeve, a selkie or seal woman. Because seals have long been game for human hunters, people forget that seals themselves are predators. Investigate these fascinating animals with your students. Where do seals live? What do they eat? What interesting behaviors do they display? What worldwide superstitions are associated with them?

Chapter summaries

Chapter 11: Tim's nan is impressed by the big flathead he brings in, but is angry when he says he gave an even bigger one to Molly, who in Nan's mind is "a strange woman." Tim

demands to know why she is so worried about the seal-woman. She tells him the story, that her husband claimed his great-grandfather was nearly drowned by the seal-woman. And Tim's father, while diving when he was about thirteen, had a run-in with a woman who nearly killed him, and he never went back in the water after that. Tim opens his present from McKay, a lifejacket that he could not be happier with, and his nan cries to see him in it. Tim's mother calls on Christmas day but has not made any arrangements for Tim to visit. Her present to him has not yet arrived. His nan doesn't have anything for him except some chocolate, because the prices for cattle have been so bad, she says. This confuses Tim because the kids at school have been saying the price is up. While he is going about his chores a big copperhead slithers across his path, but he stands quietly and it slides away. Meanwhile Maeve, the selkie, ruminates on Tim, how he is stronger than his father, who only survived her attack by luck. But she is confident that her spell-hooks, and his own lust, will draw Tim back to her.

Chapter 12: Tim's father calls from the Middle East, for the first time in months, since before Tim came to the island, to tell Tim he won't be back to Australia for a year, and that Tim will have to continue staying with his grandmother. To distract Tim after the unpleasant call, his nan tells him a long story about a man who found shipwreck loot in a hole but didn't want to share it with the man he was with, so he pushed it back down again, thinking he would come for it later, but he could never find it again. Molly's father wants to ask Tim for fishing advice, and Molly wants to lend him some books, so they drive over to the farm with Bunce just as Tim and his nan are out in the field trying to catch and treat a sheep that's infested with blowfly maggots. With the help of Molly, her dad, and Bunce, the

work goes much faster, and after the sheep is treated Tim's nan has a vision of Molly in the future, middle-aged, changing the flowers in the family lot where nan's husband is buried. Molly's dad notices the way Nan looks at people sideways and recognizes it as a sign of macular degeneration, a type of blindness that his own mother suffered from. He takes some of her excellent vegetables, but only in exchange for rides into town. Nan reckons that soon she will have to go into town to ask for Social Services support, which her pride would never allow her to do on her own behalf, but which she is willing to do for Tim's sake.

Chapter 13: Molly and her father wonder how Bunce got out of the car when they were chasing the sheep, and Molly speculates that it was Tim's nan who let him out. Nan says, "The little folk let him out," but Molly doesn't believe in the fae. She is disturbed by how spare Tim's nan's house is, with no pictures on the walls, though you can see by the faded paint that there used to be some. As Tim has told her, there is no TV, but she is surprised to find that the only electric things are the kitchen light and an old refrigerator. Tim's nan says Molly and her folks can bring Bunce anytime, and she invites them to come fish on the land too, which is out of character for Nan. Molly's dad is very pleased with the visit. Molly wonders why Tim's nan is so poor, when cattle prices are up. She mentions she saw old beer bottles outside the back door. When a long, fat, poisonous copperhead comes hunting at the dunes, Maeve remembers that she bespelled it once when it was washed out to sea, and now the snake serves as a set of magical eyes for her to watch Tim. Tim is excited about the books Molly lent him, and about a chance to be a deck hand for McKay again. At the rate his money is coming in he'll soon be able to fly back to Melbourne and have enough left over to take Hailey on a date, though his feelings for her are confused. The next day, Molly's

dad almost runs into Hailey's dad, Dicky Burke, when he pulls onto the road without looking. Dicky uses a racial slur to refer to Tim's nan, and Molly's dad sees him haul a dead branch across the track after he pulls onto the road.

Chapter 14: Molly's dad teaches Tim how to cast properly and how to fillet, and within a week Tim can do both better than Molly's dad. He realizes that fishing is different from the rest of his life because he's good at it. Very good at it. But he feels down when he considers that his mom might never want him back with her, and his dad has pretty much abandoned him too. And even if he could get back to Melbourne, he wouldn't be able to afford a place of his own. He walks onto the beach and sees the sexy surfer girl twenty yards out, waist deep in the waves, calling for him to help her because her foot is caught in a rock. Afraid that the weather will change for the worse before he can return with help, he walks into the water to help her, and she drags him under and takes him far from shore. He kicks free and opens his pen knife, and she lets him go. He scrambles onto a rock, and from there he confronts the selkie, who now resembles not so much a sexy woman as a terrifying predator. He threatens to stab her, and she threatens to sic sharks on him. She explains that she wants the key, to return it to King Finvarra and thus free herself of the geas that binds her. Or Tim can return the key to Ireland himself. She shows Tim a magical vision of Faerie, vast and green with sumptuous feasts and beautiful women. She explains that he would be a prince there and could live out long days in happiness, in contrast to his current life of hard labor and poverty. Tim finds the opportunity tempting, but he informs her that he can't afford a trip to Ireland. She says Áed could get the money for him, but as Tim has discovered, magic selfishly applied gets him into trouble. Maeve offers to provide him with treasure from the

sea, if he will agree to return the key. Their conversation ends when Bunce swims out to them, barking ferociously at Maeve, who swims away. Back on shore, Tim finds a perfect and valuable paper nautilus shell nestled between his shoes, which convinces him that the encounter with Maeve was not a hallucination. Molly is there too, having been summoned by Áed, and Tim gives her the shell.

Chapter 15: Áed sees spirit dancers leaping, dancing, and waving their spears around Tim as he and Molly do cartwheels on the beach. The land throbs with strength in the aftermath of Tim's escape from the selkie. Molly is delighted with the shell. In the days that follow he finds and sells twenty-three more paper nautilus shells, but when he checks the price for a flight to Ireland, he still has a ways to go. He reflects on what the selkie told him about Faerie, and in his dreams he rides across the green, misty fields, hunting, but the dream shifts and he's hunting wallaby on foot with a bunch of black men, and it's a good dream. He also considers what Maeve told him about Áed, his "lesser spirit" servant, and he comes to realize she is probably right about that, the "wee folk" are real. He watches the saucer of beer in the corner to see something. Nan worries about money. Usually Dicky Burke takes her cattle to market for her, but he's out of town, and Molly's dad offers to set up a sale to Jon McKay. When McKay tells her what the going rate for cattle is, she realizes Dicky Burke has been ripping her off. But she is pleased to no longer be worried about money, and pleased by Mike Symons' kindness to her. While Tim is doing some more work for Jon McKay, McKay says that Tim's nan deserves better than she's gotten and that Tim has been a godsend to her, which Tim has never thought of. Molly spends time with Nan, who has warmed up considerably towards her and her family. Tim runs into the policeman again,

who questions him and makes him uncomfortable, until Áed busts open a bag of fertilizer and the cop runs off. Tim feels increased pressure to make a lot more money so he can get to Ireland where the past won't turn up and spoil everything. Molly brings him some cookies she baked. They are the same kind of cookies Nan sent to her husband in Vietnam, and she cries at the memory of it.

Quiz/reading comprehension questions (Section 3, Chapters 11 – 15)

1. What present does McKay give Tim? (chap. 11)

_____ a. A boat

_____ b. A lifejacket

_____ c. A wallet

_____ d. A gift card

2. Why is Tim's nan wary of the seal-woman? (chap. 11)

3. What do Molly, her dad, and Bunce help Tim and his nan catch? (chap. 12)

_____ a. A copperhead

_____ b. A cow

_____ c. A sheep

_____ d. A fish

4. Tim's nan has a vision of Molly in the future. What is Molly doing in the vision? (chap. 12)

5. What land-dwelling creature does Maeve use as a set of magical eyes? (chap. 13)

_____ a. A copperhead

_____ b. A wallaby

_____ c. A sheep

_____d. A dog

6. What does Molly lend Tim? (chap. 13)

7. What does Maeve give Tim? (chap. 14)

_____a. Doubloons

_____b. Jewels

_____c. Pearls

_____d. A paper nautilus shell

8. To what country would Tim have to travel to return the key? (chap. 14)

9. When Jon McKay offers to buy some of her cattle, what does Tim's nan learn? (chap. 15)

_____a. Cattle prices are down.

_____b. She has been ripped off.

_____c. Her cattle are sick.

_____d. What she thought were cows are actually goats.

10. What does Molly bring over that makes Tim's nan cry? (chap. 15)

_____a. Cookies

_____b. A guitar

_____c. A tape player

_____d. A photograph

Answers

1. b 2. She almost killed Tim's father when he was thirteen. 3. c 4. Changing the flowers on a grave. 5. a 6. Books 7. d 8. Ireland 9. b 10. a

Suggested activity/inquiry-based exploration

Maeve, the selkie, appears beautiful to Tim, but her true nature is more menacing. Talk with your students about all the natural dangers in Australia, including sharks. How are these different from wildlife where you live? Be sure to discuss the role that predators play in agriculture.

Guide to chapters 16 – Epilogue

Prepare to read

Familiarize yourself with the following vocabulary and terms.

- carte blanche
- assessor
- nervy
- executor
- overdraft
- mortgage
- ombudsman
- prodigal
- tussocks
- manikin
- seething
- ravel
- welter
- lee
- squall
- tiller
- limpet
- acerbic
- keel

Chapter summaries

Chapter 16: Tim tries to hold Molly's hand a couple of times, but she shoves him away with a laugh, not sure how she feels about him. Things are tense with her parents because money is extremely tight for various reasons. Tim gets a harassing call from an insurance assessor regarding the fire at the store in Melbourne where he tried to shoplift the DVD. The assessor called his mom at work, and he worries they'll call the school and then everyone on the island will know his criminal past. And if the authorities come for him, he knows his nan will try to protect him, and then they'll find out she can't see well and they'll make her leave the farm. So the best course of action is for him to leave, go to Ireland and be a prince of Faerie. One day when the weather is unseasonably warm, the bespelled copperhead is out hunting on the Ryan property, and it bites Bunce. Tim helps rush him to the vet, where they are told that Bunce can't get the antivenin unless they pay \$1500. Molly's dad can't afford it, but Tim has over \$1400 in his neck pouch, and he tells the vet to administer the antivenin. Mike Symons, concerned about how Tim had so much money on him, calls Jon McKay, who reassures him Tim came by it honestly. Mike mentions that Tim's nan's husband died in Vietnam, and McKay says she probably isn't getting a pension, and he'll have his friends look into it. In the days after the snake incident, things are a bit tense between Molly and Tim, because Molly doesn't want Tim to think he can buy her affections. They fight, and afterwards Tim confesses the crimes he committed in Melbourne, the ones he's so worried that the islanders will find out about, and Molly tells him not to worry about it because people like him. Then he tells her about Áed, and has him tip over a glass,

and Molly believes him. She worries when he tells her his plan to return the key to Ireland, and she consults Diana Wynne Jones's *Fire and Hemlock* for information about Faerie.

Chapter 17: Molly explores her feelings for Tim. Hailey returns to the island and has a screaming fit in the supermarket because she doesn't want to take care of her stepmother's two children, who Molly used to babysit for. Hailey calls Molly, her neighbor, to get a ride into town, but when she insults Tim, Molly hangs up on her. Hailey pesters Tim on the phone to entertain herself, but Tim isn't interested anymore. Molly's parents' financial situation suddenly reverses, so they're no longer worrying about money, and Molly's mom says she doesn't want Molly babysitting Hailey's stepsiblings anymore, which is fine by Molly because she doesn't like Hailey or her father. Hailey's parents go off the island and leave her in charge of her two stepsiblings, but she has other plans, to go to a party. She hears that Tim and Molly may be at a certain boat ramp, and she sends the two kids down to ask them to babysit, and then she takes off. Later her father calls her, furious, wanting to know what she's done with the kids. A bird-watcher saw them out at sea in a kayak, without lifejackets. When Hailey blames Molly, her father informs her that Molly is off-island.

Chapter 18: Tim and McKay are coming home from a long day on the boat when a policeman informs them that Troy and Samantha Burke are missing and were last seen paddling around in a kayak. Tim goes to the beach, summons Maeve, and asks her where the children are. She refuses to tell him. He makes a bargain with her, that if she can get the children back to shore alive and safe, she can have the key. Otherwise she can never have it.

She tells him the boy is dead in the water and the girl is on a reef where Maeve cannot reach her. She says he will need a good boat and good seamen to get to her, because it is wild out there. He tells her to keep the girl where she is, and if they get her off alive, Maeve can have the key. He phones the policeman and tells him where the girl is, but the policeman doesn't believe him. He tries to call McKay but can't reach him. So he goes to McKay's boat to take it out himself. Molly sees him at the boat and insists on driving him to the boat ramp. On the way there he tells her the deal he made with Maeve, and that he no longer wants to leave the island, and she tells him she doesn't want him to leave either. They barely manage to get the boat in the turbulent water, and Molly jumps aboard and they speed off toward the girl with Maeve leading the way.

Chapter 19: Molly's mother, in the process of checking holiday houses for the lost children, stops to ask a backpacker if he has seen them. He hasn't, but he mentions that he left his kayak by the boat ramp, and it has a solar-powered motor in it that would allow the kids to go farther than the search party had thought they would be able to. She gives this news to the search party, and they prepare to expand their search. Jon McKay checks his messages and learns from Tim that the girl is on Marriott Reef, and that Tim has taken McKay's boat to go get her. Tim proceeds confidently toward the reef, though it's a more turbulent sea than he has ever been on. On the farm, Áed presses the pickup's keys into Nan's hand and points her down the beach track. When Molly doesn't answer her phone, her parents deduce that she is out on the boat with Tim. As the search team speeds toward a different boat ramp closer to Marriott Reef, the policeman confesses that he thought Tim was

involved in drugs, and one of the other searchers informs him that Dicky Burke is the one he's looking for. The search team finds the little boy's body washed up on the beach.

Chapter 20: Tim and Molly arrive at the reef and see Sammy Burke still alive, huddled on the rock. There is no way the boat can safely land, so they must swim to the girl, and Molly can't handle the boat, so she must be the one to swim out to her. Tim cuts the anchor off its rope with his knife, ties the rope around Molly, and instructs her to tie it also to Sammy when she reaches her. Maeve helps Molly swim from the boat to the rocks, and then helps them get off the rock. Tim's nan, Molly's parents, Jon McKay, and the rest of the search party are all at the shore, trying to figure out how to launch a boat in the terrible weather, when they see a boat coming toward them. As the boat approaches land, Tim sees a mudbank in their way. McKay sees it too, and thinks it would be suicide to try to come in over it, because it would scrape the bottom off the boat. But there are no better alternatives. Tim sees a vision, similar to the one of Faerie, but this one is of eight men in archaic garb in a long, narrow, wooden boat, rowing in a storm, in the same place Tim is. At the stern, steering the boat, is a man who is a mirror image of Tim, but in old-fashioned sailor clothes, saying, "On the double wave. On my call, on the double wave." By judging it just right, Tim is able to bring the boat safely to shore over the mudbank, to the cheers and tears of the crowd gathered there. The girl, hanging on by a thread, is quickly taken care of. Tim hugs his nan and tells her he wants to get back onto her land, back home. Molly and her folks and the rest of the search party gather at the Ryan place to celebrate, and Tim realizes that this is where he belongs, where he has a lot of space. Molly hugs and kisses him before she leaves.

Epilogue: Reporters interview Tim and Molly and others about the heroic rescue. Tim doesn't have much to say except "I was just doing what had to be done," but he enjoys telling of Molly's heroics. The policeman visits Tim's nan because he's putting Tim up for an award for his courage. Molly's dad talks with Tim about Tim's past that he has been ashamed of, and he tells Tim he doesn't need to care about that anymore, and he'll help Tim if the insurance scumbag bothers him anymore. The policeman tells McKay and Mike Symons that Dicky Burke's wife shopped him to the police and they arrested him for his cannabis operation. With McKay's help, Tim and Molly travel to Prime Seal Island, where Áed leads them to the hole where the key is buried. The key is a silver chain with a gem that looks like it's worth a million dollars. Tim flings it as far as he can. Maeve, in her seal form, catches it and disappears into the sea. Molly points out that he has nowhere to run away to now, and Tim says he's not running anymore, because this is where he belongs.

Quiz/reading comprehension questions (Section 4, Chapters 16 - Epilogue)

1. What trouble befalls Bunce? (chap. 16)

_____ a. The selkie tries to drown him.

_____ b. An islander shoots him for disturbing the sheep.

_____ c. A snake bites him.

_____ d. He falls off a cliff.

2. How does Tim save Bunce? (chap. 16)

3. What responsibility does Hailey shirk? (chap. 17)

- _____ a. Babysitting
- _____ b. Cleaning the house
- _____ c. Going to school
- _____ d. Feeding the dog

4. What does Hailey insult Molly about? (chap. 17)

- _____ a. Her freckles
- _____ b. Her braces
- _____ c. Her hair
- _____ d. Her accent

5. Who tells Tim where Samantha Burke is? (chap. 18)

- _____ a. His nan
- _____ b. Molly
- _____ c. Jon McKay
- _____ d. Maeve

6. What bargain does Tim make with the selkie? (chap. 18)

7. What is unusual about the kayak the kids went to sea in? (chap. 19)

- _____ a. It leaks.
- _____ b. It tends to veer to the left.
- _____ c. It has a homing beacon in it.
- _____ d. It has a motor.

8. What does the policeman find out about Dicky Burke? (chap. 19)

- _____ a. He told the kids to take the kayak.
- _____ b. He is wanted for child abuse.

_____ c. He grows cannabis on the island.

_____ d. He locked the kids out of the house.

9. What rope does Tim use to rescue the girl? (chap. 20)

10. How does Tim bring the boat over the mudbank? (chap. 20)

_____ a. He cuts straight through it.

_____ b. He rides a double wave.

_____ c. He flips over it.

_____ d. Maeve helps him.

11. What is the “key”? (Epilogue)

12. Why is Tim no longer running? (Epilogue)

_____ a. He’s broke.

_____ b. He sprained his ankle.

_____ c. He’s taking a break.

_____ d. He’s where he belongs.

Answers

1. c 2. He pays for the antivenin. 3. a 4. b 5. d 6. If they are able to save the girl, he will give Maeve the key. 7. d 8. c 9. The anchor rope 10. b 11. A silver chain with a jewel. 12. d

Suggested activity/inquiry-based exploration

1. A major theme of *Changeling’s Island* is belonging. For most of the novel, Tim thinks he belongs in the city, in Melbourne. But by the end, he knows he belongs on Flinders Island. In the epilogue, Mike Symons says to Tim, “You’re lucky. It took me until I was forty to figure it out, that I wasn’t happy where everyone said I should be, and I am happy here.”

Have your students discuss or write about what it means to belong. Do you belong where you are now? Why or why not? If you don't belong here, how do you find where you do belong?

2. Tim's grandmother, Mary Ryan, is extremely self-sufficient. What are the skills she has mastered that let her live without relying on anyone else? Have your students explore the skills and knowledge they would need in order to be self-sufficient. What tools and training would they need to survive and thrive? What would they have to sacrifice to live such a life? Have them write papers about how they would prepare themselves to be self-sufficient.