

# THE LAST SPELL BREATHER

## Ideas for discussion and activities

### ABOUT THE BOOK

In this stunning fantasy story, enter the unique world of the Spell Breathers!

Spell breathing does not come naturally to Rayne—she hates the hours of practice, the stacks of scrolls, and the snapping mud devils that cover her mother's precious spell book.

But it is spell breathing that keeps her village safe from the dreaded monster curse that plagues their world. It is ancient powerful magic, but as Rayne learns to her horror, it is also fragile.

In one clumsy move, the magic that keeps them safe is broken, her village is plunged into danger, and an incredible adventure begins . . .

Ultimately it is a story of friendship, courage, and the power of believing in yourself.



FOR  
READERS  
AGED  
9+

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Julie Pike grew up on a council estate, nestled between the forests and foothills of the Welsh Valleys. She is a graduate of the Bath Spa MA in Writing for Young People and is passionate about adventure stories, volunteering in local schools and libraries, and helping children find stories that excite them.

She loves real-life adventures too, and has travelled to the peak of Kilimanjaro, across the Tibetan Plains to Mount Everest, and skydived over New Zealand.

Read more about Julie and *The Last Spell Breather* on her website:  
<https://www.juliepikewrites.co.uk>



Artwork © Dinara Miralipova



# THE LAST SPELL BREATHER

## Broken words

Here are some words and names of characters from *The Last Spell Breather*. They have fallen from the book and the letters are scattered and jumbled.

Can you repair these broken words and names?

1 NEARY

The Spell Breather's feisty main character!

2 ERMILE

The mother of the last Spell Breather – she is on a quest to save their village from monsters.

3 MAIL

The aunt of the last Spell Breather – she seems friendly, but is she?

4 KNARF

An animal with no bones, who is not what he seems.

5 MOT

Friend of the last Spell Breather.

6 GOREQUESTS

Mud devils who guard the Spell book.

7 BUTSBY  
SONE

A 'helpful' mud devil.

8 TAGER  
BRILARY

The place where Spell books are written and kept.

9 ENDRIPEN

The village home of the last Spell Breather.

10 DROW  
STREAM

A writer of spells – he also appears as a very different character!



# THE LAST SPELL BREATHER

## The magic and making of spells

### MAKE YOUR OWN SPELL!

*'... bright inky words swept from Mam's forehead and cascaded onto the parchment like a waterfall.'*  
(p2)

*'Market day is always busiest with people wanting Spells breathed over them.'* (p3)

Look again at the first chapters of this story where Meleri is teaching Rayne about Spells. What are the different stages which they need to follow, in order to make a Spell and then use it?

Think about mind-writing and spell-breathing, and what is involved in each stage. What do you have to be careful about, so that the Spell doesn't go wrong?

Imagine you have the magic spark, like Meleri and Rayne ... with the power to make words real ... and have a go at creating your own Spell!

► Use the Spell Making Tool-kit at the end of this book.

*'The centre of each page showed the Spell rhyme, written in neat golden handwriting ... the margins were intricately drawn ...'* (p7)



When you've created your own Spell rhyme, write it down on a special page or scroll, and design it like the pages in the Spell Book, decorated around the sides, and with little doodles in the margins.

*'Somehow, broken spells meant broken people.'*  
(p70)

What happens to people when Rayne's Ripening Spell goes wrong—and when she drops the Spell book on the fire and breaks the Spells in it?

Look at the spell which you have written. What effects might there be if it goes wrong?

### THINKING ABOUT MAGIC —and our own strengths and weaknesses

*'... there's nothing a spell can do that we can't do ourselves.'* (p139)

What do you think about what Tom says here?

Later in the story Tom admits that *'Maybe we do need some Spells after all.'* (p246) What makes him change his mind?

What makes a precious spell? What kind of special abilities can it give you, which are different from the effects of most of the spells which Meleri has used for the people in the village?

Do we sometimes use a kind of spell to help ourselves or give ourselves confidence?

Read what the author Julie Pike says about the **Spell of You Can Do This**

<http://www.serendipityreviews.co.uk/2019/07/the-power-of-words-by-julie-pike.html>

*'Well then, she'll have to rely on herself instead of word-magic.'* (p99)

Tom says this about Meleri.

How much do you think it's the magic and how much is it the strength and abilities of the characters themselves which gets things done?

What is the most powerful thing of all in this story?



# THE LAST SPELL BREATHER

The magic and making of spells

## MATCH THE SPELL SCROLLS

1  
SPELL  
OF  
ENERGY

2  
SPELL  
OF  
RIPENING

3  
SPELL  
OF  
SLEEP

A

... a giggle  
burst from  
her...

B

... lightning quick,  
she rolled the  
parchment...

C

... feeling the  
scroll softly  
vibrate...

4  
SPELL  
OF  
LAUGHTER

5  
SPELL  
OF  
THINNING

6  
SPELL  
OF  
SPEED

D

Her fingers  
felt flat and  
flimsy...

E

... immediately  
her fingers felt  
fat and heavy.

F

She rolled it up...  
and tried to stop  
herself yawning.



# THE LAST SPELL BREATHER

## More things to talk about

- What did you especially like about this story?
- What kind of story did you think this was going to be? When you looked at the front cover and title, and when you read the first sentence, did you think you were going to like this book?
- How did the magical theme work for you?
- What did you think of the twists and turns of the plot? Were there surprises, or scary parts for you? Were there times when you realized what might be going to happen—or who someone really was?
- Are there parts you want to read over again?
- What was the thing you most liked finding out from the book?
- What about the characters and their relationships? What strikes you most about each character? Who do you like best, and why?
- Did you feel you'd been in the story too?
- How did you feel at the end of the book? Here's the last sentence:  
*'Dull?' repeated Frank . . . 'I doubt that. Knowing you two, I doubt that very much.'*  
What does this make you think might happen next?

### CHAPTER HEADINGS

When you've read the story look again at the chapter headings used in the book. You've probably noticed that some of them are well-known sayings. Have a look at this list.

What do these sayings usually mean, and what are they telling you in this story?

- Two's company, three's a crowd
- Fish out of water
- In over her head
- Words with the power to hurt me
- Once bitten, twice shy
- Where there's a will there's a way
- Keeping it in the family
- All you need is . . .
- No place like home

### ANIMAL DESCRIPTIONS

*'He's a fox. Everyone knows they're sly.'* (p95)

Have you heard the sayings 'As sly as a fox' or 'As quiet as a mouse'?

We often think of animals as having particular characteristics. See if you can fill in the gaps with the name of an animal or bird—you may think of more than one for some of them.

- As busy as a *B* \_ \_ \_ (3 letters)
- As brave as a *L* \_ \_ \_ (4)
- As blind as a *B* \_ \_ \_ (3)
- As free as a *B* \_ \_ \_ (4)
- As hungry as a *H* \_ \_ \_ \_ (5)
- As proud as a *P* \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ (7)
- As poor as a *C* \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ *M* \_ \_ \_ \_ (6,5)
- As slow as a *S* \_ \_ \_ \_ (5)
- As strong as an *O* \_ \_ (2)
- As wise as an *O* \_ \_ \_ (3)
- As weak as a *K* \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ (6)



# THE LAST SPELL BREATHER

## More things to talk about

### THE GREAT LIBRARY

*'A grand staircase led up to a terrace and huge double doors emblazoned in gold with the letters G and L.' (p162)*

In this library are kept spell books, ancient spells, and dictionaries with all the words needed for writing the spells. Where is your favourite library—in your town or your school? Why do you like it?

What do you use it for? What would your ideal library be like?



**Have a go at designing a library—it could be for your school or town, or it could be an imaginary fantastical one! Draw a picture or a floor plan, showing all the things you'd like to have in it.**

Artwork © Dinara Miralipova

#### Have you heard of the Great Library of Alexandria?

It was an ancient library, founded about 300 BC, and it is said to have held as many as 400,000 scrolls. See if you can find out more about it.



# THE LAST SPELL BREATHER

## Words and dictionaries

'Really, Tom, does your school even have a dictionary?' (p141)

Talk about what a dictionary is and what it is used for, and then have a look at these words from *The Last Spell Breather*, which may be new to you.

their shimmer <b>dissipated</b> (p3)
<b>grotesque</b> (p6)
'If you want to know my name in the <b>Vulpine</b> language it is . . .' (p95)
<b>citadel</b> (p102)
Tom handed her a rope and she tied it to a <b>bollard</b> . (p144)
' <b>Indubitably</b> ', murmured Frank. (p166)
The Spell of <b>Omniscience</b> (p183)
<b>Convene</b> and convoke (p184)
The <b>fetid</b> air was cold (p203)
Despair, destroy, <b>devastate</b> (p205)
The Spell of <b>Apnoea</b> (p264)
<b>Static</b> and still (p267)
<b>Stationary</b> and passive (p267)
<b>Dormant</b> heavy bone (p267)

'... each page has a different Spell listed by the letter of the alphabet.' (p6)

Make a list of the red words in alphabetical order, like the words in a dictionary—or the books in the Great Library. You could use the table below.

WORD	MEANING
Apnoea	Temporary holding of breath
Bollard	
Citadel	



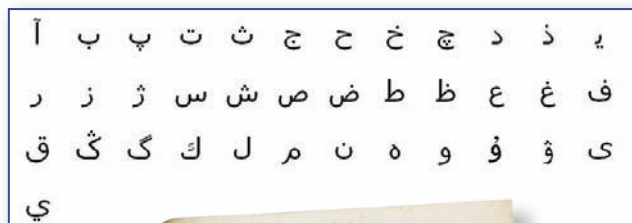
# THE LAST SPELL BREATHER

## Words and dictionaries

### ALPHABETS

*'More golden letters circled the building . . . The alphabets of every language in the world . . .'* (p162)

Here are some of the letters used in the Arabic alphabet:



Have a look on the internet to see what other alphabets of the world look like—for example there are Hebrew, Greek, and several different Indian alphabets.

### THE POWER OF WORDS

At the very front of this book, even before the title page, you'll find these words:

*'Sticks and stones may break my bones but words...that's a whole different story.'*

Usually the saying is *'Sticks and stones may break my bones but words will never hurt me.'*

Why do you think the author is saying something different here? Can words hurt you?

Near the end of the book the Word Master says:

*'No word is evil... but in the wrong hands they can be horribly twisted.'* (p260)



Here's some writing advice from Julie Pike, the author of this book:

- Keep going. Creating something new, from scratch, is hard . . . Stories don't come with a 'how to' guide. When it comes down to it, it's just you and your story, inching forward in the darkness, one scene at a time.
- If you'd like to write stories, then my advice is to 'fill your story cauldron'. Fill it with Books, and TV, and Films and Video Games—and keep stirring. That way, when you settle to write, the synthesis of all your favourite stories is guaranteed to deliver a 'unique' adventure, one that you want to follow and read yourself.
- Ideas come from all the stories that have gone before. We writers pass them on to each other in a glorious story continuum, from one cauldron to another.



# THE LAST SPELL BREATHER

## The power of illustrations

### WORDS AND PICTURES

Have you heard the saying 'One picture is worth a thousand words'? What do you think this means?

*'... constructed of solid red stone, rose a magnificent building.'* (p162)

There are some vivid pictures in words of the places in this story.

Look at the descriptions of the Great Library (p162), the Dictionary Room (p171), the Scriptorium (p215), and the Hall of Spells (p238).



Choose one of these places and make a painting or drawing of how you imagine it, inspired by the author's description.

### DESIGN YOUR OWN MARGINALIA

*'The margins were intricately drawn, illuminating different groups of thumbnail-sized people.'* (p7)

In Meleri's Spell book the Word Master who crafted it has drawn little doodles in the margins, showing what might happen to people if the Spells go wrong.

Illustrations in the margin of a book are called marginalia and you can often find them in old books and manuscripts which were handwritten and hand-drawn. As in the Spell book they made a visual reference to the text—here is an example of an illustration in the margin of a medieval book, showing a man with his sword cutting into the letters on the page.



Choose a page from *The Last Spell Breather*, photocopy it, leaving wide margins, and then do your own drawings there—maybe doodles of the Grotesques, the fish-monsters, or Frank the fox!



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## Further reading and answers

### After *The Last Spell Breather*: MORE TO READ

Sophie Anderson	The House with Chicken Legs	Usborne	978-1474940665
Kirsty Applebaum	The Middler	Nosy Crow	978-1788003452
Peter Bunzl	Cogheart	Usborne	978-1474915007
Cressida Cowell	How to Train Your Dragon	Hodder	978-0340999073
Lorraine Gregory	The Maker of Monsters	OUP	978-0192768834
Michelle Harrison	A Pinch of Magic	Simon & Schuster	978-1471124297
Abi Elphinstone	Sky Song	Simon & Schuster	978-1471146077
Vashti Hardy	Wildspark	Scholastic	978-1407191553
Julie Hearn	The Merrybegot	OUP	978-0192769589
Eva Ibbotson	Monster Mission	Macmillan	978-1447265696
Sally Prue	Cold Tom	OUP	978-0192769572
J K Rowling	Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone	Bloomsbury	978-1408855652
Angie Sage	Magyk	Bloomsbury	978-1408814932
Jonathan Stroud	The Amulet of Samarkand	Corgi	978-0552562799

## ANSWERS

### BROKEN WORDS

1. RAYNE
2. MELERI
3. MALI
4. FRANK
5. TOM
6. GROTESQUES
7. STUBBY NOSE
8. GREAT LIBRARY
9. PENDERIN
10. WORD MASTER

### SPELL SCROLLS— how they feel when you pick up each one!

1. C
2. E
3. F
4. A
5. D
6. B

### ANIMAL DESCRIPTIONS

1. Bee
2. Lion
3. Bat
4. Bird
5. Horse
6. Peacock
7. Church mouse
8. Snail
9. Ox
10. Owl
11. Kitten