SAVING MONTGOMERY SOLE
Mariko Tamaki

GRADE 7 & UP / ENGLISH

THEMES
Coming of Age • Social Situations • Peer Pressure
Bullying • Family • Alternative Family

THE STORY
Mariko Tamaki (This One Summer) has created a thoughtful, funny, and painfully honest story about family, religion, ignorance, and other unsolved high school mysteries.

BOOK SUMMARY
Montgomery Sole is a square peg in a small town, a girl with two moms forced to go to a school full of homophobes and people who don’t even know what irony is. Thank goodness for her two best friends, Thomas- one of Jefferson’s only openly gay students, and Naoki, a new student from Canada. The three of them form a Mystery club in which they explore paranormal mysteries like ESP, astrology, superpowers, and the healing powers of frozen yogurt. But when strange things actually start happening to Monty, she realizes that the greatest mystery of all is herself.

WEB RESOURCES
• Author Website: http://marikotamaki.blogspot.ca/
• Publisher Website - Book: http://penguinrandomhouse.ca/books/392187/saving-montgomery-sole#9780670070015
• Publisher Website - author: http://penguinrandomhouse.ca/authors/253293/mariko-tamaki

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES
• Encyclopedia Brittanica’s Article ‘Parapsychological phenomenon’: http://www.britannica.com/topic/parapsychological-phenomenon
• Sparknotes’ Summary of The Outsiders: http://www.sparknotes.com/lit/outsiders/
• Kid’s Health’s Article ‘Dealing With Bullying’: http://kidshealth.org/en/teens/bullies.html
• Kid’s Health’s Article ‘Teaching Your Child Tolerance’: http://kidshealth.org/en/parents/tolerance.html

AUTHOR PROFILE
MARIKO TAMAKI is one of Canada’s brightest and most exciting talents. Her work crosses age and genre categories. Laundered for her authenticity, Mariko has her finger on the pulse of contemporary teen hood and the issues teenagers face. Her cast of characters reflects not only the makeup of contemporary Canadian society but filling a much needed void in YA fiction. Her works include the graphic novels This One Summer, which has garnered over 20 awards and honours, including the Governor-General’s Award for Children’s Illustrated Book, and Caldecott Honor Book; and Skim (New York Times 10 Best Illustrated Books of the Year), both with Jillian Tamaki, and Emiko Superstar (DC Comics), with Steve Rolston.
**REVIEW**

- On page 129 Monty thinks to herself “I am standing in a hailstorm, and I’m the only one who can see it’s raining.” What does Monty mean by this? How is this phrase significant to the plot of *Saving Montgomery Sole*?

- Analyze and describe the characters in *Saving Montgomery Sole*. Who are the static characters? Dynamic characters? Character foils? Focus in on Monty, Thomas and Naoki. How are these characters similar? How do they differ?

- Identify and explain the key themes and morals throughout *Saving Montgomery Sole*.

- In Monty’s English class they learn about foreshadowing in literature. Define ‘foreshadowing’. What are some examples of foreshadowing in *Saving Montgomery Sole*?

**DISCUSS**

- What did Naoki mean when she referred the amulet as ‘The Eye of Assumption’ (p. 221)? How did The Eye affect Monty’s behaviour?

- On page 11, Monty explains that her ‘Unhappy List’ is a list of “things [she] does not understand and never will, and [doesn’t] care.” What does Monty’s ‘Unhappy List’ say about her character and her actions later on in the book?

- Discuss what “In sight/ not see/ black light/ not be” means in the context of *Saving Montgomery Sole*.

- On page 160 Tiffany states “My research. Yeah, well. It’s not healthy.” What do you think was ‘unhealthy’ about Tiffany’s research? What was Tiffany trying to explain to Monty during their conversation on page 160 and 161? Why do you think Tamaki included this conversation in the story?

- Think about how Thomas and Monty were treated by others at Jefferson High. How did each of the characters deal with this treatment? How do you think this type of bullying can be stopped?

**SUGGESTED READINGS**

**FROM THE SAME AUTHOR**

- (For Gr. 7 to 12) *This One Summer* (2014) http://houseofanansi.com/products/this-one-summer

- (For Gr. 7 & up) *Skim* (2010) http://houseofanansi.com/products/skim

- (For Gr. 9 & up) *You* *Set Me on Fire* (2012) http://penguinrandomhouse.ca/books/392186/you-set-me-fire#9780143150951

**BY OTHER ARTISTS FROM WORDFEST 2016**

- (For Gr. 9 to 12) *Flannery* (2016) by Lisa Moore http://houseofanansi.com/products/flannery

- (For Gr. 6 & up) *Exit, Pursued by a bear* (2016) by EK Johnston http://www.penguinrandomhouse.com/books/529826/exit-pursued-by-a-bear-by-ek-johnston/978101994580/


- (For Gr. 6 & up) *The Swan Riders* (2016) by Erin Bow http://books.simonandchuster.ca/The-Swan-Riders/Erin-Bow/9781481442749

- (For Gr. 7 & up) Jillian Christmas – Black Feminist Spoken Word Poet http://wordfest.com/speaker/jillian-christmas/

- (For Gr. 6 to 9) *Words That Start With B* (2010) by Vikki Vansickle http://www.scholastic.ca/books/view/words-that-start-with-b

**PAST WORDFEST AUTHORS**


- (For Gr. 8 & up) *To Kill a Mockingbird* (1960) by Harper Lee http://www.hachettebookgroup.com/titles/harper-lee/to-kill-a-mockingbird/9781455538966/


“A quietly assured story ... Montgomery’s slow confrontation with reality creates a realistic, satisfying arc, and Tamaki’s economical storytelling results in dimensional characters whose struggles feel viscerally real.”

—Publishers Weekly
ACTIVITIES

A RESEARCH ACTIVITY - MYSTERY CLUB’S NEWEST MEMBER
Imagine you are the newest member of the Mystery Club. What curious phenomena would you present at Mystery Club? Explain what the topic is, what your presentation would focus on and your reason for discussing it at Mystery Club.

The following resources may assist in researching and selecting your Mystery Club topic:

• http://www.britannica.com/topic/parapsychological-phenomenon
• http://kids.britannica.com/comptons/article-9276563/pseudoscience
• http://discoverykids.com/explore/
• http://discovermagazine.com/

A WRITING ACTIVITY – HEROES VS. VILLAINS
Throughout Saving Montgomery Sole, Mariko Tamaki integrates the dichotomous theme of ‘Hero vs. Villain’. Examine the conversations on pages 155 and 182. Write in your own words what your definitions are of a ‘Hero’ and a ‘Villain’. In the novel Monty is portrayed as both a ‘Hero’ and a ‘Villain’; where do you think her character lies on this spectrum? Explain your reasoning using examples from the book.

A CLASSROOM ACTIVITY – WORDS THAT HURT
Instances of bullying and verbal abuse occur frequently throughout the Saving Montgomery Sole. Characters like Matt Truit and the ‘High Bun’ say and do hurtful things to intentionally put down Monty and Thomas. The words we say are impactful and can cause harm even if it is not intended. Have students participate in the following activity to eliminate hateful words from the classroom, destigmatize certain words, and create a supportive environment for all.

“Saving Montgomery Sole is a beautiful and eloquent book that perfectly captures the yearning for a mystery larger than ourselves.”
—Holly Black, author of The Darkest Part of the Forest

CURRICULUM CONNECTION

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

GRADE 7
• Express personal understandings of ideas and information based on prior knowledge, experiences with others and a variety of oral, print and other media texts (1.1)
• Analyze how plot develops; the connection between plot and subplot; and the interrelationship of plot, setting and characters (2.2)

GRADE 8
• Interpret the choices and motives of characters portrayed in oral, print and other media texts, and examine how they relate to self and others (2.2)
• Distinguish theme from topic or main idea in oral, print and other media texts (2.3)

GRADE 9
• Identify explicit and implicit ideas and information in texts; listen and respond to various interpretations of the same text (2.1)
• Compare the development of character, plot and theme in two oral, print or other media texts (2.3)

GRADE 10
• Describe the personality traits, motivations, attitudes, values and relationships of characters developed/persons presented in literature and other texts; and identify how the use of archetypes adds to an appreciation of text (2.1.2)

HEALTH AND LIFE SKILLS
• W–7.7 analyze the definition, effects and possible consequences of various forms of harassment
• W–7.10 identify and examine potential sources of physical/emotional/social support
• R–7.2 analyze the need for short-term and long-term support for emotional concerns; e.g., family, friends, schools, professionals
• W–8.11 identify and develop personal resiliency skills; e.g., planning skills, social competence
• R–9.2 analyze why individuals choose not to express or manage feelings in situations; e.g., using anger to manipulate others, avoid others, feel powerful
• R–9.5 describe and analyze factors that contribute to the development of unhealthy relationships, and develop strategies to deal with unhealthy relationships
RESEARCH – Mystery Club’s Newest Member

ACTIVITY SHEET

Imagine you are the newest member of the Mystery Club. What curious phenomena would you present at Mystery Club? Explain what the topic is, what your presentation would focus on and your reason for discussing it at Mystery Club.

The following resources may assist in researching and selecting your Mystery Club topic:

- [http://www.britannica.com/topic/parapsychological-phenomenon](http://www.britannica.com/topic/parapsychological-phenomenon)
- [http://discoverykids.com/explore/](http://discoverykids.com/explore/)
- [http://discovermagazine.com/](http://discovermagazine.com/)

Today’s Mystery Club topic is...

What is your topic?

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Explain to Monty and Thomas why this should be discussed at Mystery Club.

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What would your presentation focus on?

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Insert or glue a picture, relevant to your text
Throughout *Saving Montgomery Sole*, Mariko Tamaki integrates the dichotomous theme of ‘Hero vs. Villain’. Examine the conversations on pages 155 and 182. Write in your own words what your definitions are of a ‘Hero’ and a ‘Villain’. In the novel Monty’s is portrayed as both a ‘Hero’ and a ‘Villain’; where do you think her character lies on this spectrum? Explain your reasoning using examples from the book.

**HERO**
What does it mean to be a ‘Hero’?

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Where does Monty’s character fall on the spectrum of ‘Hero vs. Villain’? Provide examples from the book to supplement your answer.

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CLASS ACTIVITY – Words That Hurt

ACTIVITY SHEET

Instances of bullying and verbal abuse occur frequently throughout the Saving Montgomery Sole. Characters like Matt Truit and the ‘High Bun’ say and do hurtful things to intentionally put down Monty and Thomas. The words we say are impactful and can cause harm even if it is not intended. Have students participate in the following activity to eliminate hateful words from the classroom, destigmatize certain words, and create a supportive environment for all.

Materials

- Balloons (enough for each student in the class to receive at least one balloon)
- Sharpie markers (amount necessary will depend on class size)

Directions

1. Clear away all chairs and desks, or find an open space to conduct the activity.
2. Have students stand in a large circle, so that everyone can be seen.
3. Pass out a balloon to each student and ask them to blow it up and tie it. Depending on class size and time restraints, each student can receive more than one balloon.
4. Explain to students the concept of ‘Words That Hurt’, which are words that they believe are offensive or carry a hurtful meaning. Emphasize to students that the words we elect to use carry meaning and can be very hurtful to others. Pass around the sharpie markers and have students write out their ‘Words That Hurt’. These are meant to be words that students believe should be removed from conversation, as they instigate bullying or enhance stigma.
5. Once all the students have written their ‘Words That Hurt’ on their balloon(s) go around the circle and have students explain what their word is, why they believe it is hurtful and why it should not be said.
6. After the student explains their ‘Words That Hurt’ have them pop their balloon(s) and eliminate the word from the classroom setting. The popping of the balloon is meant to symbolic of destroying the ‘Words That Hurt’. While giving the instructions for Step 6 explain to students that once the balloons have been popped these words will be removed from conversation in the classroom environment and encourage students to remove these words for their everyday vocabulary, as well.