

## **CONTENT ACTIVITIES: BOOK STUDIES**

## Morning Girl: A Novel Study

This activity is based upon the following book:

Dorris, Michael. (1992). *Morning Girl*. New York: Hyperion.  
ISBN-10: 078681358X; ISBN-13: 978-0786813582

*Morning Girl* is a novel that can be used in a variety of ways. It can be used as a Read Aloud novel study, small group guided reading, or a class guided reading novel if you have enough copies of the book. This activity doesn't necessarily need to be the first activity that you do, but as a guided-reading activity it is better to start it early on in the unit. If you do, try to read a little each day so that your students absorb the information from the novel sooner rather than later. It is a short book (only 74 pages), so it could easily be read in a week or two depending upon how much time you devote to the activities and guided reading questions.

The book is divided into nine chapters. The chapters alternate between the sister's point of view and the brother's point of view. Because of this, it makes the most sense to read two chapters in one sitting.

Below I've included Character Map Activities, Guided Reading Questions and Writing Activities that can be used to accompany the book. The Writing Activities are interspersed within the Guided Reading Questions because they are connected to specific chapters of the story.

### ACTIVITY ONE: CHARACTER MAP

One possible ongoing activity is to have your students create character maps of the two main characters: Morning Girl and Star Boy. These could be started after the first two chapters, then added to throughout the rest of the story. When the class has finished the entire story and completed their character maps, the activity could be extended further. Using their character maps, students can fill out a Venn diagram comparing and contrasting Morning Girl and Star Boy. If you would like to extend it further, students can use their Venn diagram to write a two paragraph compare and contrast essay about the two characters. Depending upon the grade level of your students, you may need to provide a template or model sentences to guide students in how to write appropriately structured paragraphs for a compare and contrast essay. Another option is to do the character maps, Venn diagram, and compare and contrast essay as a whole class. This could be especially helpful if students are new to any of these activities. This would provide the opportunity to model these activities using a read aloud book.

The link below connects to a more interactive character map that students can fill out online—cutting and pasting images, shading shapes depending upon what they relate to, etc. It is a great way to teach character mapping and computer skills, but obviously requires access to computers. It could be used as a small group activity that students rotate through if you have classroom computers. For those teachers who have RtI (Response to Intervention) blocks, this could also be an activity appropriate for that time—it could be used as either a remedial or enrichment activity depending upon the grade level of your students and the expectations you set for the assignment. It could also be offered as an extra credit activity if your students have access to computers outside of the classroom.

<http://www.microsoft.com/education/en-us/teachers/plans/Pages/character-mapping.aspx>

## ACTIVITY TWO: GUIDED READING QUESTIONS

The following questions can be used in multiple ways, in part depending upon how you are using the book. They can be cut and pasted into a sheet of questions that students fill out; they can be used as oral comprehension questions that you ask students to assess and guide their comprehension; or they can be used to create a comprehension test. I've divided the questions up by chapter and provided the page number that the question is connected to so that they can be used as chapter review, or oral comprehension questions that you ask throughout the chapter. The italicized, indented text below indicates sample answers to each question. I've also included various writing activities that can be used as quick writes, or activities to encourage students to make real life connections.

### Chapter One (p. 1-6)

1. What does it mean when Morning Girl says "Father taught me to swim on land, careful as a turtle"? Why would it be important for Morning Girl to learn to "swim on land"? Use the context clues in the sentences before and after this one to help you answer. **[Page 2]**

*Turtles are part of nature, they blend in. As someone who lives so closely with nature, it's important that Morning Girl blend in as well. She says that she "steps gently. . .so that the sounds I make will blend in with the rustle of the world." Turtles are also quiet. Morning Girl writes that "You'll see more if you're quiet" and "things don't hide or wait for you to pass. And it's more polite". Morning Girl will see more if she's quiet and respectful of nature. It's one way of surviving without harming the environment.*

2. What are the patterns that her brother sees in the sky—what would we call them? **[Page 2]**

*Constellations*

3. If her parents named her Morning Girl, based on her description of her brother, what do you think they might name him? **[Page 3]**

*Night Boy, Nighttime Boy, Evening Boy. In the next chapter we do find out what his parents name him—His name is Star Boy*

4. Who are the "ghosts" that Mother and Father are talking about? **[Page 4]**

*Their two children—Morning Girl and Star Boy, who are waking them up with all of their talking when they would rather still be sleeping.*

5. Based on what you've read so far, do you think Morning Girl and her Brother are close? Why or why not? Explain your answer with details from the story. The answer to this question will change throughout the story, especially by the end. This would be a good question to keep coming back to, or map out how their relationship progresses throughout the story. **[Pages 3-6]**

*At the beginning of the story they do not seem to be close. Morning Girl talks about how different they are and that "It's as though time is split between us, and we only pass by each other as the sun rises or sets" (p. 3). Morning Girl also talks about how her mother says that one day Morning Girl and Star Boy will be friends. Morning Girl also doesn't seem to be very patient with her younger brother (p. 4), and possibly a little competitive.*

### Chapter Two (p. 7-12)

1. What lesson about nature does Star Boy share that he has learned? **[Page 8]**

*Star Boy has learned that "the more you watch, the more you see"—the more you pay attention to what is around you, the more you are going to notice and learn.*

2. What does Star Boy say that he doesn't like? How does he deal with this when he feels it? **[Pages 8-9]**

*Star Boy doesn't like nothing—like when there is nothing to hear, nothing to see, nothing to touch. He seems to be describing a time when he feels very detached from the world. He deals with this by using all of his senses to bring him back—Hearing—he sings his father's song; Touch—rubbing his fingers together; Taste—the salt water.*

3. What is Morning Girl's brother's new name? Why do they name him this? **[Page 11]**

*His new name is Star Boy. They name him this because he likes the night time, especially looking at the stars in the night sky.*

### **ACTIVITY THREE: WRITING ACTIVITY**

#### **Quick Write at the end of chapter two.**

Do you have any siblings? Are you the oldest or the youngest? How do you feel about your big/little brother(s) or sister(s)? Do you think it's better to be the youngest or the oldest? Why? If you don't have any siblings, do you want any? Would you rather be the youngest or the oldest? Why?

#### **Chapter 3 (p. 13-22)**

1. How does Morning Girl describe Star Boy? **[Page 14-15]**

*She describes him as the one who messes everything up—the one who leaves the footprints on the smooth sand of the beach. He does everything at the wrong time—laughing, talking, interrupting, etc. He jumps, he kicks, he digs, he makes messes, etc.*

2. What does Morning Girl think of the new sister? What does Star Boy think of the new sister? **[Pages 16-18]**

*Morning Girl is very excited about the new sister. Star Boy is not so sure he wants a new sister if she's going to be just like Morning Girl.*

3. How does the relationship between Morning Girl and Star Boy change by the end of this chapter? **[Pages 20-22]**

*When they hear about the death of their little sister, both children are afraid - Morning Girl sees this in her brother, but also realizes that she and her brother are more alike than she realized. She sees him as more than just the little child who always annoyed her. At the end of the chapter, she's not jealous of the attention her brother gets anymore.*

#### **Chapter 4 (p. 23-29)**

1. What is Star Boy doing at the beginning of the chapter? **[Page 23-24]**

*He is hiding by pretending to be a rock.*

2. Do we know why he is hiding? **[Page 24]**

*We don't know all the details yet, but we get a hint when he says, "I wondered if the other rocks all around me had made mistakes, too" (p.24).*

3. What mistake did Star Boy make? How do we find out? **[Pages 25-26]**

*Star Boy's mother is talking out loud, while looking for Star Boy. She says that Star Boy wouldn't leave without saying good-bye "even if he had made a mistake, even if he had played in his father's canoe and then forgotten to pull it high enough up the beach so that the tide would not carry it away" (p. 25). Star Boy has played with his father's canoe and*

*let it drift away.*

4. Why does Star Boy turn from a rock back into a boy? **[Pages 27-29]**

*Starboy hears his father talking out loud about how his canoe has been found and there was no damage done, and that he could always replace his canoe but not his son, so now Star Boy knows he will not be in trouble. Then, his father says that Morning Girl admitted to losing the canoe, that's when Star Boy jumps up and takes responsibility for losing the canoe.*

5. Do you think that Star Boy's mother, father, and sister all realized he was curled up pretending to be a rock when they were looking for him? Why? **[Pages 27-29]**

*Yes, because all of them stop right next to Star Boy and start talking out loud, saying things that they think Star Boy needs to hear.*

6. How has the relationship between Star Boy and Morning Girl changed by the end of this chapter? **[Pages 27-29]**

*Star Boy realizes that his sister loves him, and Morning Girl realizes that she really loves her little brother. She worries about him when he goes to hide and even admits to losing the canoe to cover for him.*

### Chapter 5 (p. 30-36)

1. What does Morning Girl want to know at the beginning of this chapter? **[Pages 30-33]**

*Morning Girl wants to know what she looks like.*

2. Why is she asking so many questions? What does she not have that we do have today? **[Pages 30-33]**

*Morning Girl is asking so many questions because she has no way of knowing what she looks like—they don't have mirrors like we do.*

3. How does her mother explain and describe to her how she looks—what does she do physically? **[Pages 32-34]**

*Her mother takes one of Morning Girl's hands and places it on Morning Girl's face and then places her other hand on her mother's face. She guides her hand over her face and tells Morning Girl to compare what she feels on her own face to what she feels and sees on her mother's face.*

4. How does Morning Girl finally see what she looks like? **[Pages 35-36]**

*Morning Girl finally sees what she looks like by looking into the eyes of her father and seeing her reflection in his eyes.*

### ACTIVITY FOUR: WRITING ACTIVITY

#### Sketch and Listen

Re-read out loud pages 32-34 where Morning Girl's mother is describing what she looks like. Give each student a piece of blank white paper. Re-read the same section again. Then, tell students to sketch what they think Morning Girl looks like based on the description. Re-read the section again,

if students need to hear parts over. Give students the time to color in their drawings and then share them with the class. Discuss the students' different interpretations.

### Chapter 6 (p. 37-44)

1. Was it day or night when the storm hit? How do you know? **[Page 37-38]**

*It was night. Star Boy says that he was outside studying the sky and watched as the stars were drowned by the storm (p.38).*

2. What kind of natural disaster is Star Boy describing? What is he caught in? **[Page 38-40]**

*Star Boy is describing a hurricane.*

3. How does Star Boy describe the hurricane? **[Page 41-42]**

*Star Boy describes the hurricane as if it is someone or something trying to beat him up: "I was being pushed, shoved, a giant fist at my back and beneath my knees. . . all I knew was water and movement that slammed and hissed and screamed by name. . ." (p. 41) "The wind was angry that I had discovered how to stop myself. It slapped my cheeks and banged my head and pulled at my elbows. . ." (p.42).*

4. How does Star Boy stay safe during the hurricane? What saves him? **[Page 41-42]**

*Star Boy gets stuck in a tree and hangs on to it throughout the hurricane.*

5. Who does Star Boy visit with during the storm? **[Page 43]**

*Star boy visits with his grandfather's spirit.*

### Chapter 7 (p. 45-53)

1. What do they do after the storm? What does Father decide they should do? **[Page 47-48]**

*They don't immediately start to work and rebuild everything. Father decides that this is a chance to be happy together, to dance, make music, play games, and share food. It was a time to celebrate that no one had been killed in the storm.*

2. What does Star Boy do that causes so much trouble? **[Page 48-49]**

*Star Boy races into the area where they are holding the celebration and immediately begins to grab food, acting like a young child, and doing whatever he wants. Star Boy is mocked by his uncle for acting so inappropriately.*

3. What happens that lets us know that the relationship between Star Boy and Morning Girl has changed? **[Page 50-51]**

*When Star Boy is mocked, he is quite stunned and embarrassed, but Morning Girl does not make him stand alone, embarrassed and the center of attention. Instead, she begins to act just like he did, running around and grabbing food. She does this to make him feel better, to take attention away from what he had done. Morning Girl shows that she loves her brother and feels loyalty to him by sticking up for him.*

4. What does Star Boy call Morning Girl at the end of the chapter? What does this new name mean? **[Page 53]**

*Star Boy calls his sister "The One Who Stands Beside" because she had not made him endure the humiliation of being reprimanded and mocked by their uncle alone.*

### Chapter 8 (p. 54-61)

1. Who does Star Boy get upset with first? Why? [Page 54-55]  
*First, Star Boy gets upset with his best friend, Red Feathers because he teases him about the scene the day before at the celebration.*
2. Who does he get upset with next? Why? What does he do? [Page 56-57]  
*Next Star Boy gets upset with his father because he feels like his father is also teasing him about the day before.*

### Chapter 9 (p. 62-72)

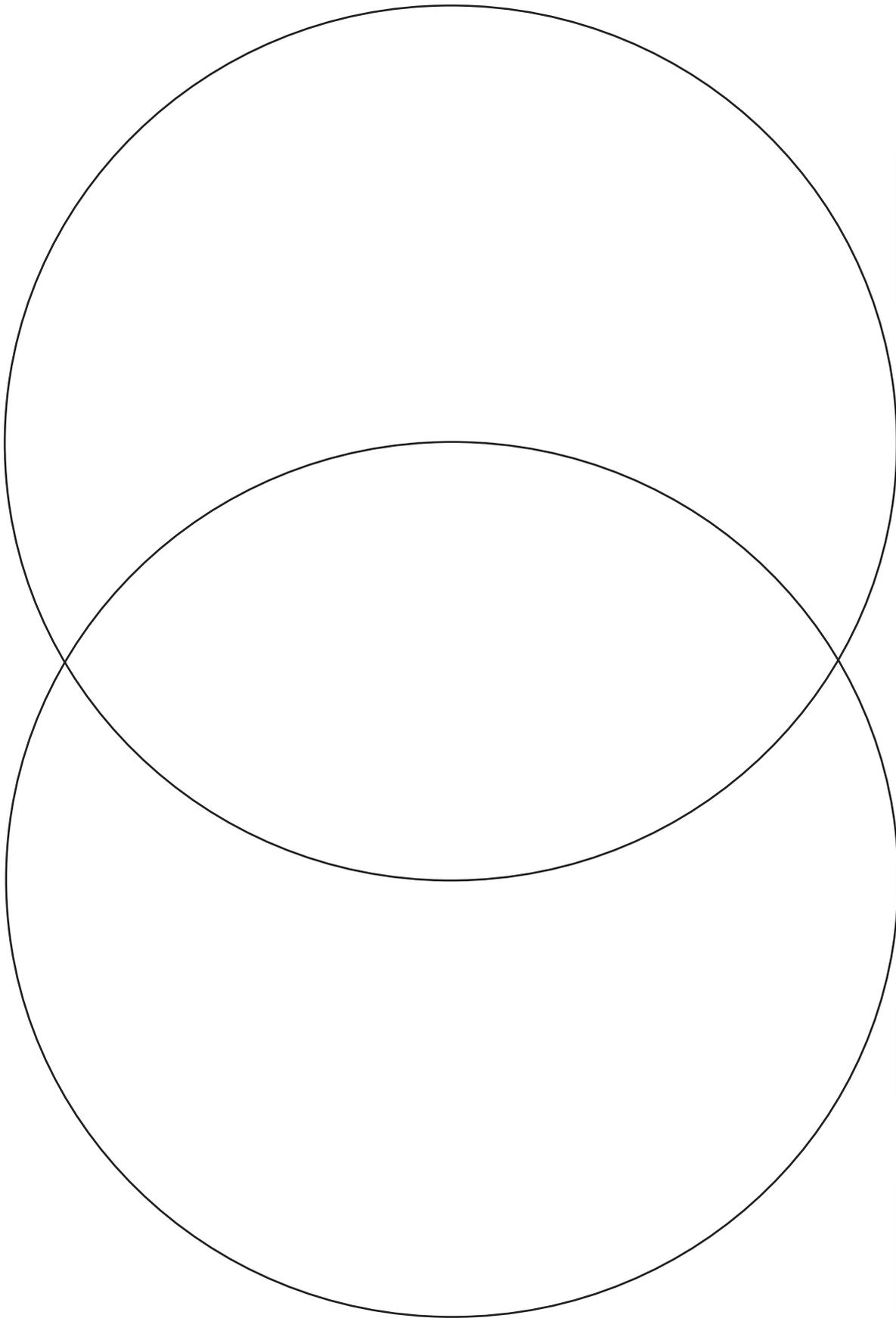
1. How do you know that Morning Girl's family really cares about each other? How do they demonstrate this? [Page 62-67]  
*When someone is in trouble, they all try and help. They all worry about Star Boy and all try and get him to come home. No one really rests until he's back.*
2. Two things happen in the morning when Morning Girl leaves her home that make her feel better. What are they? [Page 67-68]  
*First, Morning Girl decides that she will give her new sister a name—She Listens. Then, Morning Girl finds a perfect conch shell that would be perfect for Star Boy's collection. Both things that make her happy are related to her siblings.*
3. What does Morning Girl see when she's swimming? How does she describe it? [Page 68]  
*Morning Girl sees the Spanish explorers rowing toward the shore, although she doesn't know who they are. She describes this as "I heard an unfamiliar and frightening sound. It was like the panting of some giant animal, a steady, slow rhythm, dangerous and hungry. And it was coming closer" (p.68). Note: This may be a good chance to discuss foreshadowing and/or predicting if those are appropriate skills for your class.*
4. Morning Girl sees what we know to be Spanish explorers, possibly Columbus or his men. How does she describe them? [Page 69]  
*She describes their dress as "The strangers had wrapped every part of their bodies with colorful leaves and cotton. Some had decorated their faces with fur and wore shiny rocks on their heads" (p.69). She describes them physically as "very round".*
5. How does Morning Girl treat and respond to the visitors? [Page 70-72]  
*Morning Girl is very friendly to the visitors. She shouts out hello and welcomes them. She tells them where to leave their canoe and that she will go get the others. She doesn't realize that they don't understand her.*
6. What does Columbus think of the Taíno based upon his journal entry? [Page 73-74]  
*Columbus thinks that they will be friendly, writing that they do not carry weapons. He writes that they are poor, but very handsome. He thinks that they are intelligent and will make good servants because of this. He also believes that they can be converted to Christianity quickly.*

**ACTIVITY FIVE: WRITING ACTIVITY**

Think about the relationship between Morning Girl and Star Boy. What was their relationship like at the beginning of the story? Describe it. By the end of the story their relationship has changed. Describe what it is like now. Do you think it is better or worse at the end of the story? Why? Explain your answer.

**ACTIVITY SIX: WRITING ACTIVITY**

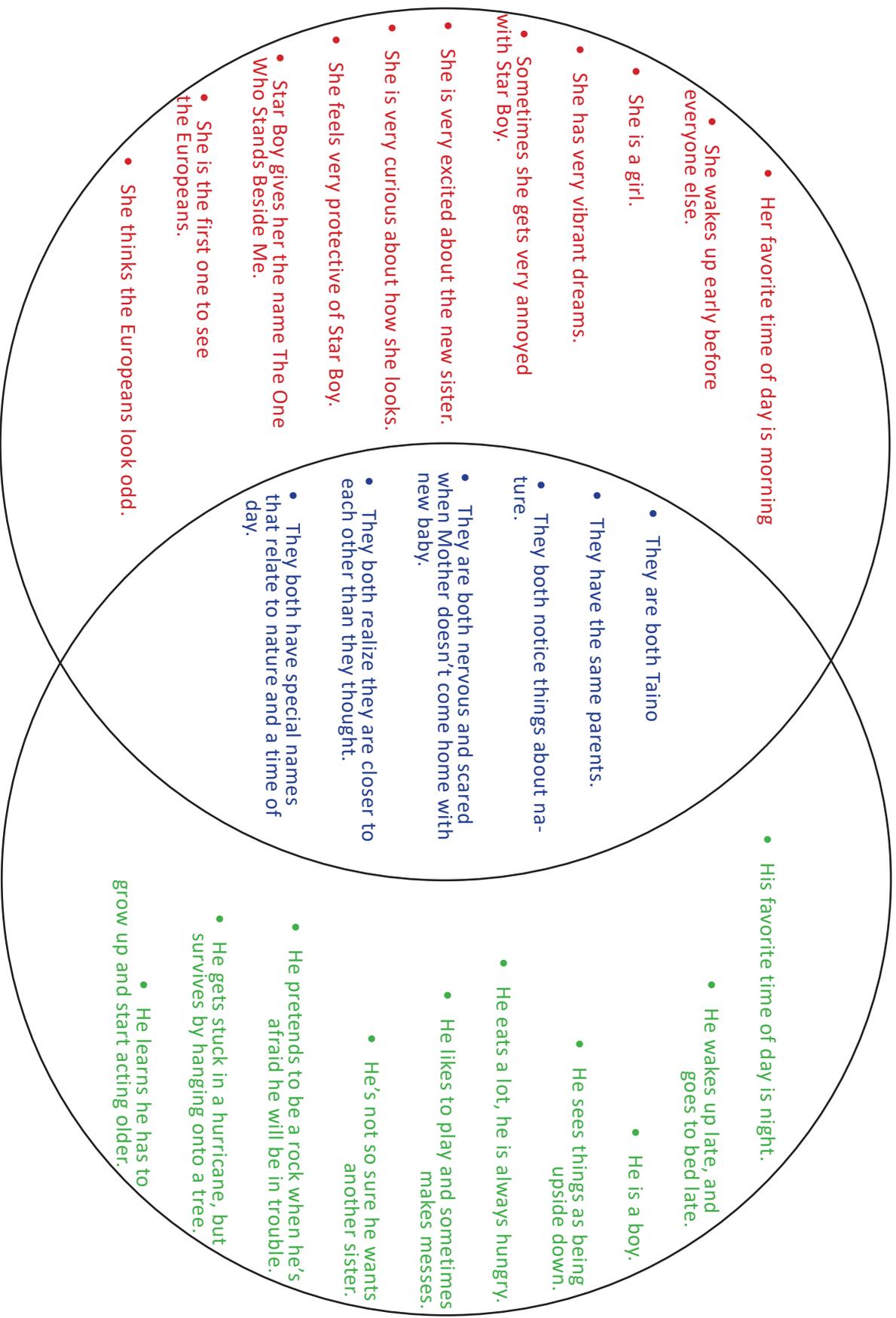
At the end of the story, Morning Girl meets the Spanish explorers. How do you think the life of her family might change now? Do you think it will change for the better or do you think it will be worse? Why? Explain your answer.



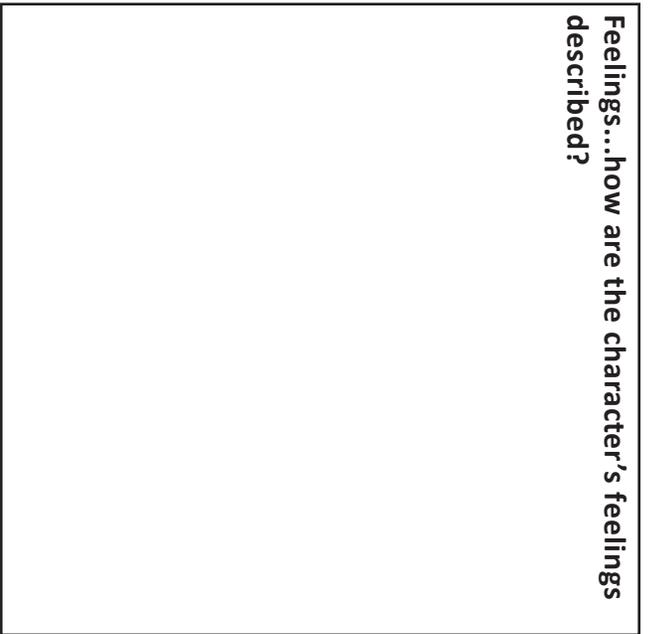
## Morning Girl

## Both

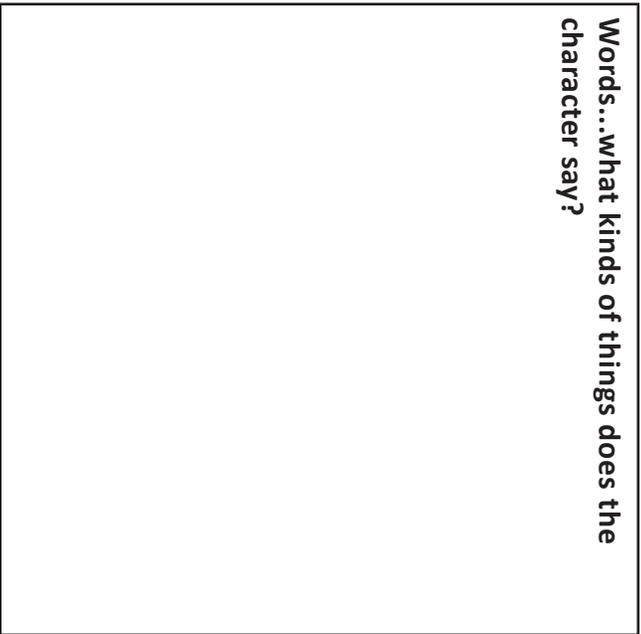
## Star Boy



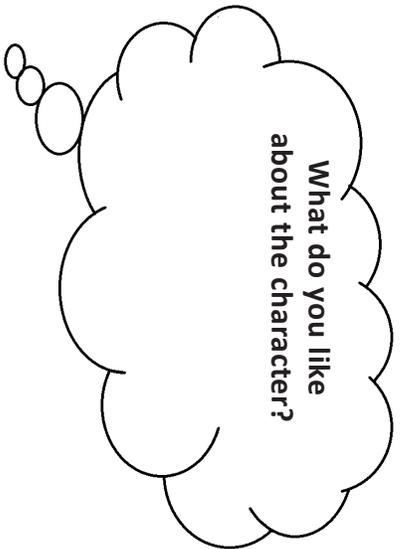
**Feelings...how are the character's feelings described?**



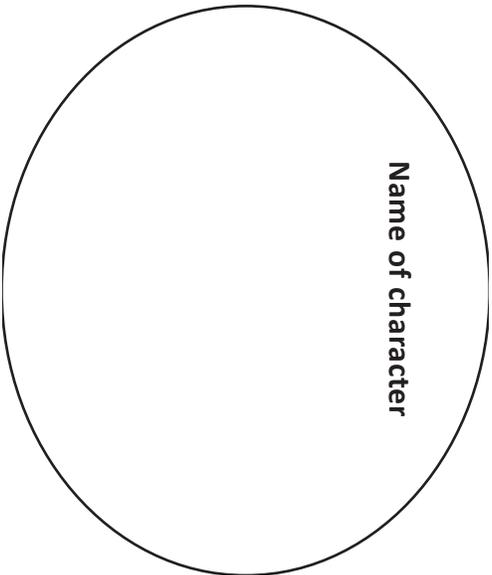
**Words...what kinds of things does the character say?**



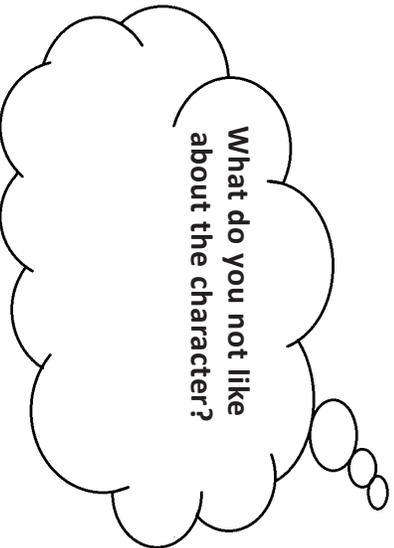
**What do you like about the character?**



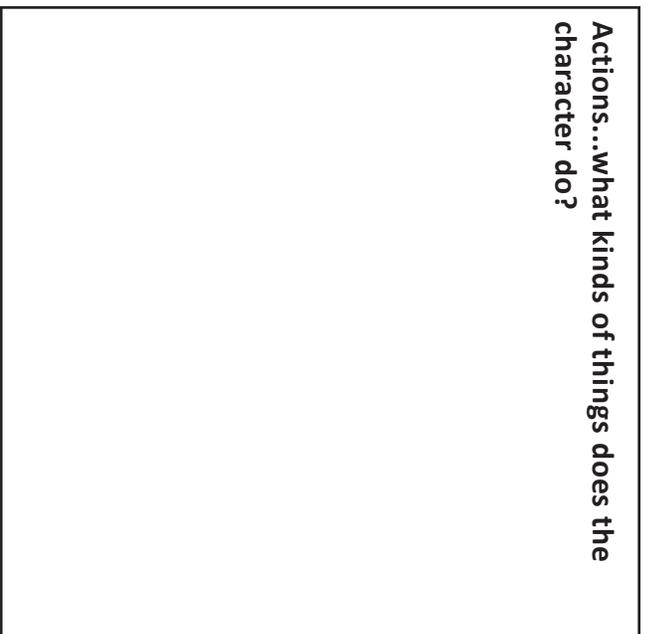
**Name of character**



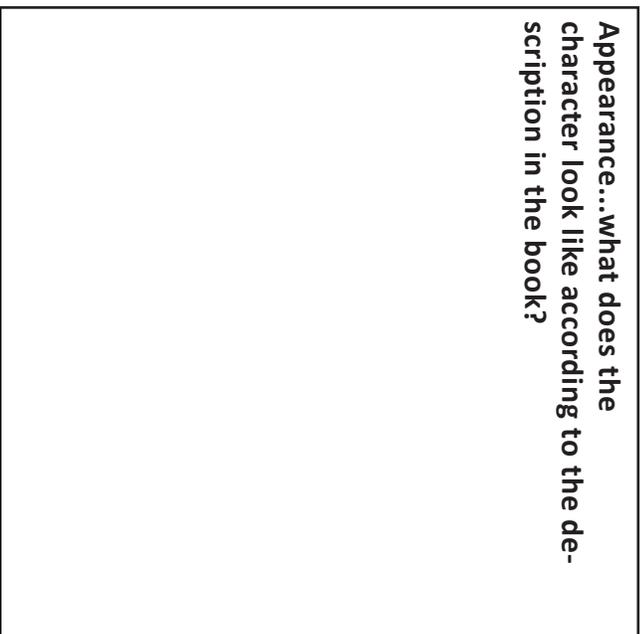
**What do you not like about the character?**



**Actions...what kinds of things does the character do?**



**Appearance...what does the character look like according to the description in the book?**



**Feelings...how are the character's feelings described?**

- She likes the aloneness of the morning.
- She gets annoyed with her little brother.
- She is excited about her new sister.
- She feels scared when her mother doesn't come back with the new sister.
- She worries about Star Boy when he goes away from the house.
- She feels embarrassed by Star Boy's actions at the celebration, but also loyal - that's why she runs and yells, too.
- She's more excited about the explorers she sees from the shore.

**Words...what kinds of things does the character say?**

- She corrects Star Boy a lot when she feels like he's doing something wrong.
- She asks lots of questions like when she wants to know what she looks like.
- She says she lost the canoe when it was really Star Boy.
- She welcomes the explorers and tells them where to leave their canoe.

**What do you like about the character?**

She sticks up for her brother. She appreciates all of the nature surrounding her. She is curious.

**Name of character**

**Morning Girl**

**What do you not like about the character?**

**Actions...what kinds of things does the character do?**

- Morning Girl gets upset with her brother when he makes messes or is loud, she tries to correct him and tell him how to act.
- Morning Girl walks on the beach and explores in the morning, always trying to preserve nature.
- She tries to get her brother to come home when he thinks he's in trouble over the canoe.
- She sticks up for her brother at the celebration.
- She tries to welcome the explorers when she sees them from the shore.

**Appearance...what does the character look like according to the description in the book?**

The book describes Morning Girl like this "She has a chin like a starfish, and brows like white clouds on the horizon. Her nose works. Her cheeks swell into mountains when she smiles. The only thing that is right about her is her ears." (p. 33-4).

"...faces were clear, their brows straight as canoes, and their chins as narrow and clean as lemons..." (p. 35).