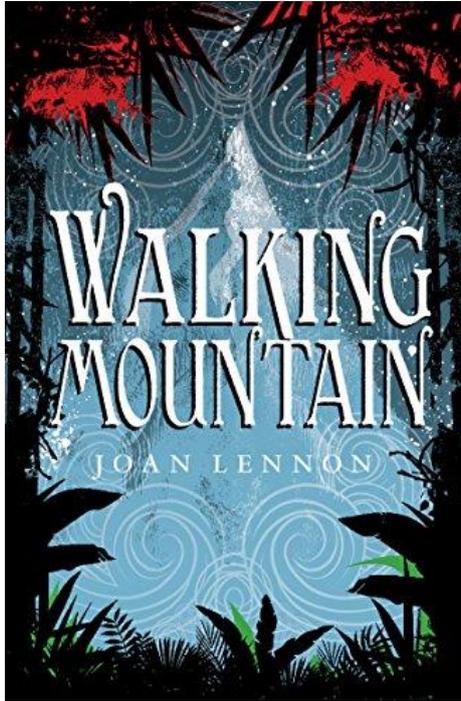


Walking Mountain
by Joan Lennon



Birlinn Press (BC Books)
ISBN: 9781780274560

Every year, for as long as anyone can remember, the Mountain has moved a little northwards. But now it's moving in the opposite direction. And it's picking up speed.

'Set in a future world where greed, corruption, hypocrisy and blind ignorance threaten the very fabric of the planet, Joan Lennon's novel has all the qualities of a classic quest - peopled with a fabulous cast of extraordinary characters and animals, it is witty, lyrical, dark, powerful, and constantly surprising.' *Books from Scotland*

'Another compelling futuristic story, fantastic and baroque.' Vicky Allan, *The Herald*

'Full of inventiveness and imagination. It's warm, funny, sad, happy. Do read it.' Sue Purkiss, *An Awfully Big Blog Adventure*

'... a hidden treasure' *The Bookwitch*

Nominated for the Carnegie Medal 2018
Scottish Book Trust Teen Book of the Month

Walking Mountain by Joan Lennon
Teachers' Notes

Some topics for individual work, class discussion or cross-curricular activities:

1. Rose, Pema and Singay are three very different characters, yet their experiences in *Walking Mountain* bring them together as fast friends. What other books have you read that feature unlikely friendships? Do friends have to be exactly the same as each other for a friendship to work?

2. The animals in *Walking Mountain* are a bit like the ones we know, but with some differences. Invent some animals yourself - you can do it by putting parts of two different animals together, like a bat-frog, or a buffalo-mouse - or you could make something completely new and amazing. Sometimes I used the noises animals make to name them, like grunts. Sometimes I just tweaked a name we already had, like ferreck. See what kinds of names you can come up with. Draw your inventions.

3. I love looking at maps in books I'm reading. They're also a great way to get clear in your mind what's happening when you're writing a book. Have a go at drawing a map for your favourite book - or for an adventure you'd like to write yourself.

4. Most of the names in *Walking Mountain* are from a language spoken in Bhutan, a Buddhist kingdom in the Himalayas (go to the back of the book to see how that happened!) Do you know any words in a language other than English that you could use to name characters?

5. In what ways - good and bad - are our world and the world of *Walking Mountain* similar? Choose one way, discuss it in a group, and then present your conclusions to your class.

6. If you could visit any one place in the *Walking Mountain* world, where would it be? Why? And would there be any downsides? Write a letter home about your imaginary visit.

Walking Mountain – Joan Lennon Author Interview

1. *You've created a unique and imaginative world within Walking Mountain. Where did it come from?*

Life is full of amazing facts that I keep stumbling across, and then they bump up against other amazing facts that I found out about earlier, and then, over time - sometimes a lot of time! - the story starts to build. Asteroid belts and the fact that mountains move and the ways evolution works (lurchingly) and how creatures adapt to their environment and the sheer variety of humanity, are all things that were shouting to be written about.

2. *The book contains a strong theme of our relationship with the natural world – was this always the main motivation behind the story?*

No, the story came first - the characters and the setting and the things that happened. Only gradually, as the story developed, did I realise how much of our world and the issues that concern us today were echoed in the world of the novel.

The Drivers say "Geography makes History" and I'm often surprised, as a story is growing in my head, how much the setting that the characters are in shapes them, and then how who they are shapes the plot.

3. *Who was your favourite character to write?*

An impossible question to answer! Without wanting to sound slightly insane, all of the characters in my head are completely real to me. Even the minor characters, like the little girl playing in the dirt in River Head or the Philosopher on the Aubergine or Noksam the accountant thief or big booming Lady Allum - all real, all irreplaceable. And if I can't choose a favourite from among *them*, there's no way I can choose a favourite between Pema, Singay and Rose! Just can't be done.

4. *What is your favourite scene or moment in the book?*

I love writing the dramatic scenes, like the chase after the ice eagle snatched Jeffrey the marmole, or the collapse of the roof inside the Mountain, or the tsunami coming at them out of the sea. But I also like writing the quieter bits, where the characters can sit down and rest a little and talk to each other.

5. *Have you ever regretted how you ended a story and wish you could change it?*

No - stories have their own shapes and their own endings, and you can't really argue with them. There are always sentences, though, that I think I could have done better!

6. *What's your favourite book, and why?*

There's no way I could choose a single favourite book, but if I had to choose a single favourite *author*, I'd go for Terry Pratchett. Wit, word play, empathy, toughness, intriguing ideas, creative world building, vividly real characters - I could read and re-read Terry Pratchett's books forever.

7. What inspired you to become a writer?

Stories. I've always loved stories - stories in books, stories in films, stories I've been told, stories I overhear. Making stories of my own was the logical next step.

8. What keeps you motivated as a writer?

Being a writer is a job of work. It's not about being in the mood or waiting for flashes of inspiration. Not that those things aren't nice, when they happen. But you can't count on them. What you *can* count on is sitting down every day and getting the words on the page. Then all you have to do is get them right. Well, as right as you can.

9. What advice would you give to any budding writers?

Have fun! Play with words and ideas and what ifs. Don't try to be perfect with every word you write - that's what re-writing is for. Just jump in the water and get swimming!

10. If you had a superpower what would it be?

Shapeshifting. Absolutely. I've always wanted to be able to become something or someone else at will. Also it would be helpful for writing.

11. If you could live in any other time period, when would that be?

That's difficult, because I'm a wuss. I'm fascinated by times that are in a state of change, in transition, but I don't like bad smells or no painkillers or dying in childbirth, and what if my glasses got broken? So perhaps I could choose sometime in the future - on a terraformed Mars, perhaps? That would be interesting!