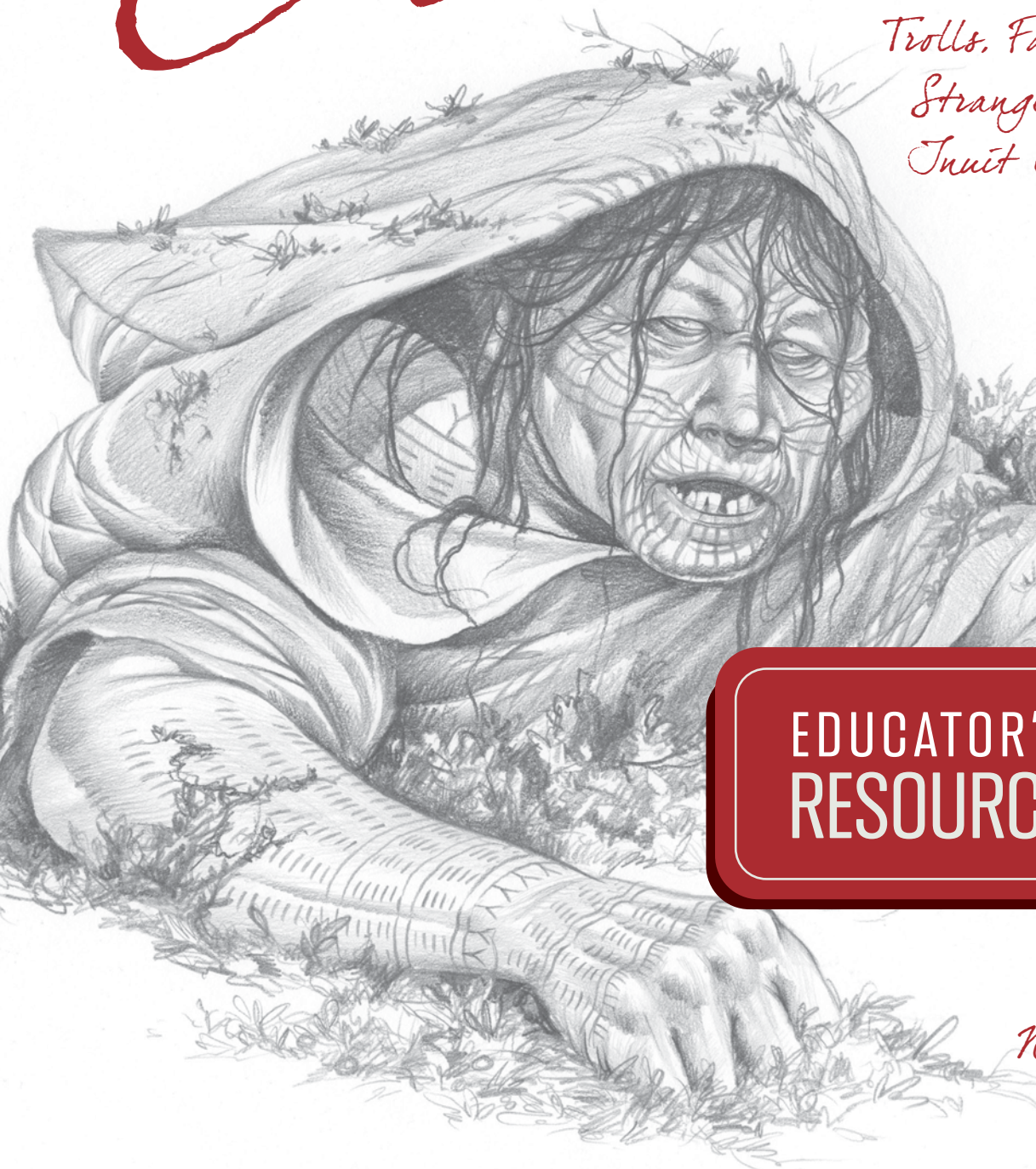
The Hidden

A Compendium of Arctic Giants, Dwarves, Gnomes, Trolls, Faeries and other Strange Beings from Inuit Oral History



EDUCATOR'S RESOURCE

INHABIT MEDIA

Written by
Neil Christopher

Illustrated by
Mike Austin

The Hidden

About the Book

Forget fairies and forget vampires! Let yourself be drawn into the dark world of the shape-shifters, ogresses, trolls, and demons of the Canadian Arctic. This collection of field notes meticulously documents the dark side of Inuit legends, complete with hideous monsters and unspeakable deeds. Each creature is brought to life by the stunning illustrations of Mike Austin, a world-renowned tattoo artist. *The Hidden* exposes the dark beings that lurk in Arctic shadows. This gothic illustrated book is destined to become a collector's item for any reader interested in dark folklore.

About the Author

Neil Christopher is an educator, author, and filmmaker. He first moved to the North many years ago to help start a high school program in Resolute Bay, Nunavut. It was those students who first introduced Neil to the mythical inhabitants from Inuit traditional stories. The time spent in Resolute Bay changed the course of Neil's life. Since that first experience in the Arctic, Nunavut has been the only place he has been able to call home. Neil has worked with many community members to record and preserve traditional Inuit stories. Together with his colleague, Louise Flaherty, and his brother, Danny Christopher, Neil started a small publishing company in Nunavut called Inhabit Media Inc., and has since been working to promote Northern stories and authors.

About the Illustrator

Mike Austin is a leading illustrator and tattoo artist with more than twenty-five years of experience. Mike was first introduced to the Inuit mythology pantheon through the work of Farley Mowat, and he has been transfixed by Northern mythology ever since. Mike strives to tell visual stories with his illustrations—both on paper and skin. His images have appeared in multiple books about Inuit mythology and he has represented Canada at several international tattoo competitions. Mike lives and works in London, Ontario.

Note to Educators

This guide is geared toward students in Grades 10 to 12, and contains pre-reading activities, discussion questions, and learning activities focused on the book *The Hidden*. The activities may be modified to suit the learning needs of your students. Students will participate in reading, writing, comprehension, and reflection activities to analyze and respond to the book. The activities encourage text-to-text, text-to-self, and text-to-world connections. It is recommended that the activities in this guide are completed over several class periods. This guide is intended for use with a class set of *The Hidden*.

Pre-Reading Activities

- *The Hidden* contains words in Inuktitut. If you are not familiar with Inuktitut, there is a glossary of all Inuktitut terms used in the story on pages 6–13. Ensure that students are aware of the glossary so they may refer to it while reading.
- Tell students that they will read the foreword of *The Hidden*. Explain to students that the foreword is where a person, sometimes the author, writes a short passage at the beginning of a book. Tell students that the foreword usually explains background information to help the reader better understand the book. Explain that the foreword of *The Hidden* provides the reader with information about Inuit traditional stories, the book's author, and the illustrator.
- Provide students with time to read the foreword. You may also choose to read the foreword to the class as a read-aloud. After reading, facilitate a discussion with students about the foreword. Consider the following discussion prompts:
    - The foreword explains that "the earliest accounts of fantastic beings were stripped of all Inuit flavour, becoming rendered as 'dwarves,' 'elves,' 'sprites,' etc." (page xii). According to the authors, why did this happen?
      (The stories didn't interest the missionaries or explorers in the Arctic.)
    - The foreword states that the word "ghost" is not an appropriate word to describe the beings from Inuit traditional stories. What do you think the authors mean by this?
      (Answers will vary. Referring to beings from Inuit traditional stories with a common description may take away from the unique characteristics of those beings.)

- How did the author, Neil Christopher, gather information to write *The Hidden*?
  (Through primary research, including listening to Inuit Elders.)
- What is unique about the way the illustrator, Mike Austin, interprets the subjects of his drawings?
  (He views the subject matter as if it were real.)

During and Post-Reading Discussion Questions

The following questions and discussion points can be used during and after reading *The Hidden*. Provide students with the chance to voice their own opinions, share their experiences, ask questions, or point out anything else they may notice about the book.

Creators of the Beasts of Land and Sea

- What are some of the names that people used to describe Nuliajuk? What do these names have in common?
  (Sedna, Takannaaluk, Kangna, Sassuna Arnaa, Nirrivik. Answers will vary.)
- What is the message that most versions of the story about the mother of the sea have in common?
  (Mistreating vulnerable people can cause hardship for the community or all Inuit.)
- Why is it important that the *angakkuq* calm the mother of the sea?
  (It allows the seals to swim freely and the weather to calm.)
- What similarities can you identify between the legend of Nuliajuk and Qimmiit Arnangat?
  (Answers will vary. They both refused to accept a husband.)
- How would life be different for Inuit if Tuktut Igviat had not created the caribou?
  (Answers will vary. The caribou is a source of food, clothing, and tools for Inuit. Without the caribou, Inuit would have to rely on smaller animals to meet these needs.)
- What do you think the legend of Lumaajuuq teaches those who hear the story?
  (Answers will vary.)

The Great Giants of the North

- What did Inukpasuksuk's great size allow him to do?
  (He could wade into the ocean to catch whales, or cross large rivers and mountains with a single step.)
- Inukpasarjujuk was so large that in her hands, whales appeared to be the size of what?
  (Sculpin, or fish.)
- What is unique about the *kayarissat*?
  (They hunt in enormous *qajait*, or kayaks.)
- Why do you think that the great giants have captured the imagination of Inuit storytellers?
  (Answers will vary.)

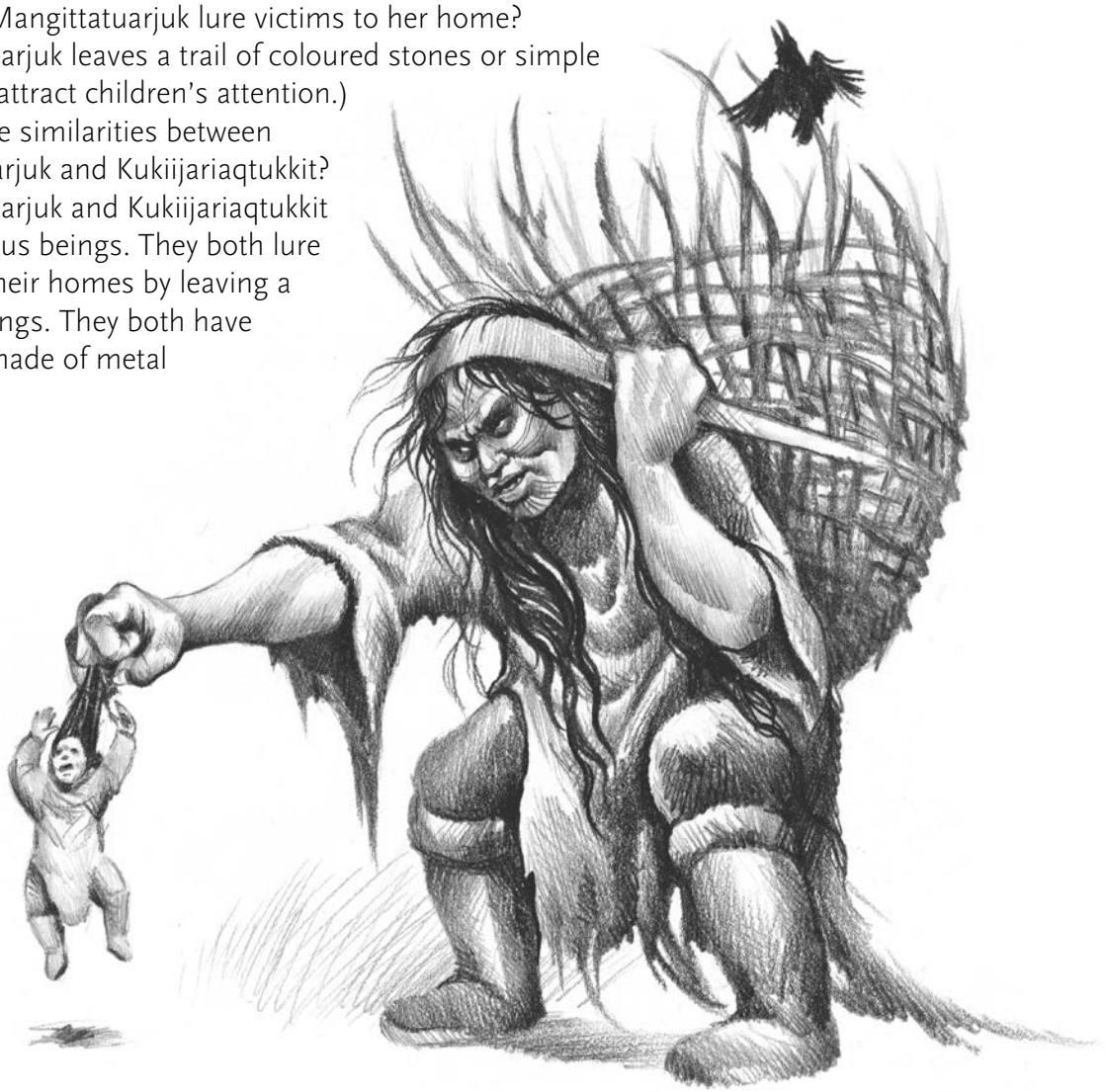
The Lesser Giants of the North

- How does the story of Kulluittuq differ from the stories of other lesser giants?
  (Kulluittuq lived amongst the smaller Inuit with kindness and benevolence.)

- What detail has led some people to believe that Sikuliasuujuittuq was a Norseman?
  (His enclosure was surrounded by a stone fence. Stone fences are uncommon among Inuit.)
- How did the people of Kangiqsuaq use the giant to their advantage during war?
  (The giant would sit on top of Kangiqsuaq and watch for enemies from the south.)
- Explain how Arappasugruk's dependence on human flesh eventually led to his downfall.
  (Inuit would hide when Arappasugruk was nearby. He could not remember how to hunt for animals and eventually starved.)
- According to accounts of the *tuniit*, how did they demonstrate incredible feats of strength?
  (The tuniit lifted huge boulders or carried walruses on their backs. They could break the neck of a walrus by jerking the line.)

Ogresses, Hags, & Child-Snatchers

- What does an *amautalik* keep in the pouch of her *amauti*?
  (The people she abducts, usually children.)
- Compare and contrast the *amautaliit* and *amajuqsuk*.
  (The amautaliit and amajuqsuk are both large and powerful females. The amautaliit wear a walrus-hide amauti, and amajuqsuk wears a basket made of bones, antlers, and driftwood.)
- How does Mangittatuarjuk lure victims to her home?
  (Mangittatuarjuk leaves a trail of coloured stones or simple carvings to attract children's attention.)
- What are the similarities between Mangittatuarjuk and Kukiijariaqtukkit?
  (Mangittatuarjuk and Kukiijariaqtukkit are dangerous beings. They both lure victims to their homes by leaving a trail of carvings. They both have bodyparts made of metal and stone.)



- Compared to the other ogresses, hags, or child-snatchers, what is unique about Aasivak?
  (She is a spider spirit. She has skills in shape-changing.)
- Which of the ogresses, hags, or child-snatchers would you least like to encounter? Why?
  (Answers will vary.)

Trolls, Demons, & Savage Tribes

- What does Mahahaa's wickedness embody?
  (The harsh climate of Arctic winters.)
- Elders have warned that the Nakasungnaikkaq are dangerous cannibals. In the service of an angakkuq, how can Nakasungnaikkaq help Inuit?
  (They make clever helping spirits.)
- Compare and contrast Mahahaa and Kukilialuit.
  (Mahahaa and Kukilialuit both have long, sharp fingernails/claws. Mahahaa tickles people to death while Kukilialuit are man-eaters who scratch and tear at their victims' bodies.)
- Why do you think parents told their children the legend of Tuutarjuit?
  (So the children wouldn't stay up into the night playing string games.)
- What unusual behaviour do Narajat perform after eating?
  (They dig large holes for their bellies and lie in one spot for several days to digest.)
- What is unique about the *palraijuq* compared to other trolls, demons, and savage tribes?
  (Answers will vary. It is the only dragon-like creature that the author came across in traditional Arctic stories.)
- Several stories of trolls, demons, and savage tribes describe beings who are cannibals. Why do you think there are many stories about eating human flesh?
  (Answers will vary. These stories may share that hunger and starvation were common fears in the North.)

Denizens of the Sea & Coastal Regions

- Identify one similarity between the *taliillajuut*, the *tuutaliit*, and *iqaluup nappaa*.
  (They resemble both humans and sea animals.)
- Why did Inuit sometimes mistake the *qikiqtarluut* for islands or shoals?
  (They have thick, dark, creased skin that resembles small islands.)
- What features do the *qallupilluit* have that distinguish them from humans?
  (They are covered in slimy, green-grey skin, with fins and webbed hands and feet.)
- Why were the *nanurluit* greatly feared by Inuit?
  (Their size, strength, and speed made Inuit fearful of nanurluit.)

Arctic Little Folk & Other Small Inhabitants

- Different accounts of the *inuarugligat* say that this race of little folk have the ability to change their size. Do you think it would be more beneficial to be one of the little folk, or an average-sized human? Why?
  (Answers will vary.)
- What is unique about the *uijjuit* compared to other races of little folk?
  (They live in Arctic waters and rarely come to the surface.)

Strange, but Benevolent, Beings

- What unique physical features do the *ignatsukkuaq* have?
  (They do not have eyelids. They have short hair that covers their body.)
- According to accounts of the *taaliqqat*, they are only visible to *angakkuit* and those they choose to reveal themselves to. What do you think is one advantage of being invisible?
  (Answers will vary.)
- Describe some of the characteristics of Kiviuq.
  (He is a great traveller and an angakkuq. He possesses cunning and skill. Some believe he is immortal.)

People of the Moon & Elementals

- As the man of the moon, how does Taqqiq help Inuit?
  (He occasionally intervenes when someone is being abused. He has been known to come down to Earth to rescue mistreated women.)
- How is Ululijarnaat different from Taqqiq?
  (Taqqiq is a guide and helper while Ululijarnaat will harm people with her *ulu*.)
- What happens when Naarjuk is upset?
  (The land is ravaged by strong winds and blizzards.)

Extension Activities

- Read the following quotation out loud to students:

  > "As for the artwork: a hazard of illustration, it might be said that it does not so much illustrate as interpret" (page xiii).

  Ask students to share their understanding of the quotation. Explain to students that all illustrators will interpret the appearance of a character differently. Tell students that they will listen to a description of a being from *The Hidden* and use the information from the description to create an illustration. Without revealing the name of the being, read the following description out loud to students:

  > "This is a malevolent, or evil, being. It has pale skin, with white eyes and black hair, and very long fingers" (adapted from *The Hidden*, page 95).

  Students will create an illustration of the being as they listen to the description. It may be helpful to read the description a second or third time. Students will post their completed illustrations around the classroom. Allow students to look at each illustration and compare the different ways they interpreted the appearance of the character based on the description.

  After students have had an opportunity to look at all of the illustrations, reveal that the description they heard was based on Mahahaa. Facilitate a discussion with students about their illustrations. Use the following discussion prompts:
  - Did the illustrations all look similar, or were there differences?
  - Did any of the illustrations resemble the illustration of Mahahaa in *The Hidden*?
  - What do you think might influence how an illustrator interprets a character or being that they are drawing?

- Remind students that *The Hidden* shared information about many different giants and groups of little folk. Ask students to consider whether they would rather be a giant or one of the little folk. Organize students into pairs. Ask each pair to brainstorm the advantages and disadvantages of being a giant, and the advantages and disadvantages of being one of the little folk. Remind students that an advantage is something that puts a person in a better position, and a disadvantage is something that puts a person in a worse position. After each pair has had an opportunity to discuss advantages and disadvantages, ask each pair to share their ideas. Record student responses in a chart that resembles the chart below:

Giant		**Little Folk**	
Advantage	Disadvantage	Advantage	Disadvantage

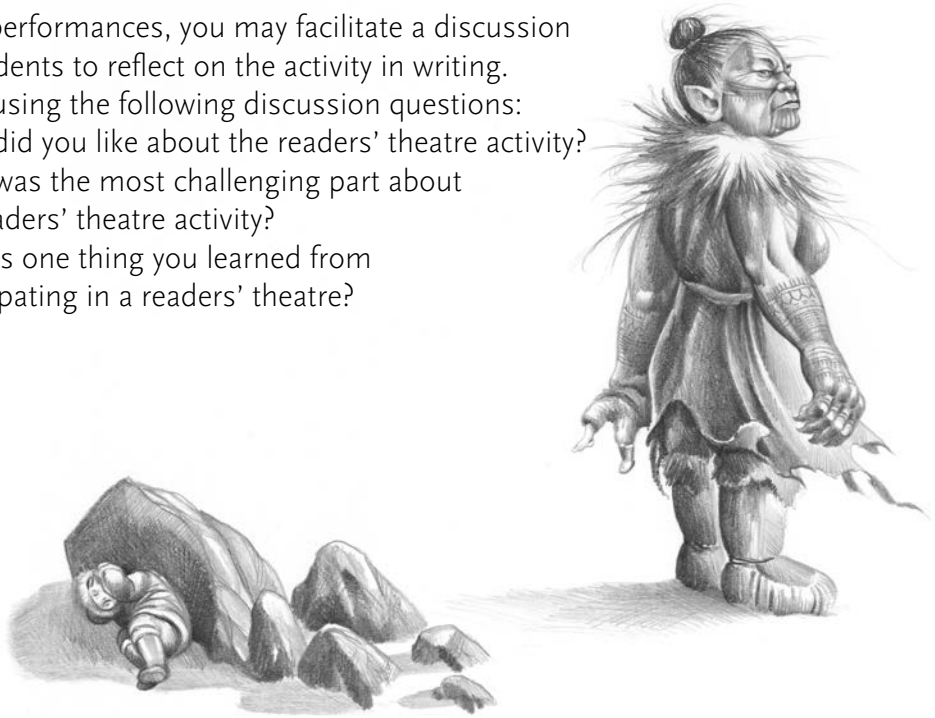
  After each pair has shared their ideas, ask students to vote on whether they would rather be a giant or one of the little folk. Ask a few volunteers to share how they came to their decision.

- Tell students that they will be creating a character sketch based on the denizens of the sea and coastal regions described in *The Hidden*. Write the following list on a piece of chart paper and explain to students that a character sketch often includes:
  - Information about age, name, and/or gender
  - A description of the character's appearance
  - Physical and/or personal strengths and weaknesses
  - Likes and dislikes
  - Values, beliefs, and/or attitudes

  Tell students that they will combine character traits of the beings described on pages 123–145 of *The Hidden* to create an entirely new being. Students will use the criteria outlined above to write their character sketch. When students have completed their character sketches, ask for volunteers to share their character sketch with the class. You may also have students present their character sketches in small groups.

- Tell students that they will be writing a persuasive paragraph explaining which of the trolls, demons, or savage tribes described on pages 95–121 of *The Hidden* is the most fearsome. Explain to students that a persuasive paragraph should convince or persuade the reader that the claim they are making is correct. In this case, students will be claiming that their chosen troll, demon, or savage tribe is fearsome. Tell students that when they're writing their persuasive paragraph, they should use the following steps:
  - Begin by engaging the reader with one or two sentences that introduce the topic of the paragraph.
  - Use strong, logical arguments to convince your reader of your claim.
  - Support your claims with evidence from *The Hidden* that explains why the chosen being is fearsome.
  - End with a conclusion that summarizes your most important points.

- Tell students that with a group, they will select one of the ogresses, hags, or child-snatchers described on pages 77–90 of *The Hidden* and transform the information about that being into a readers' theatre script. Explain that readers' theatre is similar to oral storytelling and encourages students to read with expression. Tell students that readers' theatre often involves no props, no memorizing, and no costumes. It may be helpful to provide students with an example of a readers' theatre script. Many examples of readers' theatre scripts are available online.

  Organize students into small groups and ask each group to select an ogress, hag, or child-snatcher from *The Hidden*. If possible, try to make sure that the groups choose different beings, so there isn't too much repetition. Then, students will work in their groups to transform the information about their chosen being into a script. When groups finish writing their readers' theatre scripts, they will take turns performing their scripts for the class.

  After the performances, you may facilitate a discussion or ask students to reflect on the activity in writing. Consider using the following discussion questions:
  - What did you like about the readers' theatre activity?
  - What was the most challenging part about the readers' theatre activity?
  - What is one thing you learned from participating in a readers' theatre?