



Hollow City

The Second Novel of
Miss Peregrine's
Peculiar Children

Teen Book Review

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As far back as ancient Greece people were utilizing books as methods for working through various ailments. The term, bibliography, is what we pair with the phenomenon of using media, specifically books, to help people suffering from trauma or psychological issues. While the Transfiguring Adoption is NOT claiming to be professionals in the psychological or mental health arena, we do believe that families can glean from this concept in using movies, video games, and, naturally, books, to help foster or adoptive children process their story.

Section I

Why are we using books, movies, and video games to help children?

- **Partially disengage mind from fear/problems**
Immersing yourself in media helps you to escape from reality for a bit. This can give our minds a partial break from the worry and stress so that we have more energy to attach the issue when we come back to it.
- **Introduced to new solutions**
We might discover new solutions to problems as we experience a character in media conquer an issue.
- **Emotional vocabulary**
Discovering more ways to express how we feel and think can help us to communicate our own thoughts and feelings. Overall, more effective communication allows us to ask for better assistance with our feelings and issues.
- **Identify with characters/stories**
You have heard the saying, “no man is an island.” No person wants to feel like they are alone in their thoughts, feelings, or experiences. When we discover a character in media struggling with similar issues as our own, it helps to “normalize,” our life situations and feel comforted. This can also help us to discover our own identity as a character goes through a process in their life.

Section II

This Only Works TOGETHER - Parent & Child.

Here is why it is IMPERATIVE that a parent or trusted adult walk through these questions and media with a child:

- **Trauma Triggers**

An event or language in a piece of media might remind our children of past events in their lives which were traumatic. If we are to assume that they have not yet had enough life experience to successfully walk through these situations and make sense of them, then they will need a safe adult to be able to process feelings and emotions.

Some caregiver might be nervous or scared to discuss the details of sexual abuse, physical abuse, and so on. Our children are also scared but have no choice but to live through it. Our children need an adult who can help them process through issues by listening. They need an adult who knows when information needs to be given over to a trusted therapist and other professionals.

- **Reliving Trauma**

Some media might not simply suggest or bring up past trauma but could expose a child to a similar situation as what they have experienced. If a child is exposed to such media, it goes without saying that they will need a safe adult to help them process their thoughts and emotions. They will even need a safe adult who may not have the right answers but can get the child to a professional who can help.

- **Living in a Dream World**

As much as negatively living through trauma can have a devastating effect on our children, too much of a good thing can also have a poor effect when it is experienced on their own. Some children who have come from traumatic backgrounds may have trouble separating fantasy from reality. When given media where the main character is always rescued in the nick of time, the waif always marries royalty, or all problems are solved in a neat package, our children could be given over to considering this is how the world operates and that the solutions of the characters will produce similar fantastical results. It is important to have a trusted adult on duty who can applaud the fun of a tale but also bring everyone back down to reality.

- **Never Really Find Results**

Again it can be a pitfall for caregivers to be nervous about a topic and simply hope that children will learn by experiencing a book or movie on their own. The problem is that many of our children lack the life experience to be able to connect the dots to see how a character's struggles and life solutions could be compared to their own life.

A trusted adult can help a child to glean solutions and conversations from a piece of media to make real life change begin.

Section III

How To Use Our Discussion Packets:

1. **Exposure as a Family**

Watch, read, or play the respective media this packet discusses together before you begin the conversation. It is important that parent and child experience things together. Natural bonding and teachable moments come about when we experience things together.

2. **Wait for the Right Time**

As foster and adoptive parents, many of us want to help our children so badly that when we get a new resource we want to try it out faster than a child wants to open up presents on Christmas. However, it is important to judge when your child is ready to talk about issues brought up by media.

If your child is struggling with habitual lying and just reprimanded earlier in the day at school, there might be intense feelings of guilt and embarrassment. It may not be the correct time to point out that Pinocchio gets in trouble when he lies and try to begin a discussion about how lies can harm your life. Instead wait a day or two when everything is going right in your family's world, and then try to begin a conversation.

People who are hurt, angered, frustrated or depressed due to a topic are not going to be open to having a dialogue about the issues.

3. **Nudging Toward Identification**

If we look at this conversation as a swimming pool, "Nudging Toward Identification" is going to be the shallow end of the pool. The goal is to simply notice - just notice - similarities you might see in a character's life and your child's life. This step is helping our children to see that they might be able to relate with a character. The media is going from merely a source of entertainment to something we possibly - POSSIBLY - could connect with in some manner.

This might come in the form of phrases such as:

- "Hey, did you notice that in the book Sally had to figure out how to make friends at school too?"
- "Tom's brother in the movie was really good at soccer just like you, right?!"
- "Too bad you're not in the story with Samantha, because you like learning about science as much as she does, right?"

4. **Emotional Involvement**

In Step 3 we helped our child to consider that they might be able to connect with a character. During this step, if the atmosphere is still good for conversation, we are going to push the similarities with the media character a bit further. We are going to take a look at specific situations and emotions. We are going to take a look at issues that characters confronted and discuss solutions and emotional outcomes. Hopefully, through this step our children will be able to more deeply and emotionally be able to identify with a character.

We might ask questions such as:

- "Sally made up stories to try and make new friends. Do you think this was the right way to make friends? Why? What should she have done differently?"

- “How do you think Tom felt when missed the goal and lost the soccer game for his team? What would you tell him? Do you ever feel like Tom?”
- “Which do you think made Samantha feel better, winning the science fair or making new friends at school? Do you ever feel like that? Why?”

5. **Continued Conversations**

Always remember that helping children walk through trauma is not a sprint but a marathon. Do not get discouraged if the right time to talk about themes in a piece of media don't turn up right away. Do not get discouraged if your child doesn't want to talk about anything “deep” or life changing.

Some people have reported that their children might watch a movie, lightly discuss it, and then a month later begin asking deeper questions about a theme or topic in the media.

As parents our job is to create an atmosphere where learning and growth can happen AND CAN CONTINUE HAPPENING. We need to equip ourselves with the tools to be ready for those small windows of time that our children are ready to discuss and learn from us.

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Comprehensive Review

Transfiguring Adoption's Overview:

Hollow City is the second book in the *Miss Peregrine's Home for Peculiar Children* series and picks up right where the first book left off, with Jacob and the other children trying to escape Cairnholm. Like the first book, *Hollow City* is intended for older teen and young adult audiences, as there are some mature themes and quite a lot of violence. However, this whole series deals with a group of children who are essentially Miss Peregrine's adoptive children. In this book specifically, Jacob wrestles with what he considers home and where he belongs. These themes are likely very relevant to foster and adoptive families, so despite the violence and mature themes, this is still an excellent choice.

Hollow City takes place in the several days following *Miss Peregrine's Home for Peculiar Children* as the children escape from Cairnholm after their loop is destroyed. They rescue Miss Peregrine from the wights but realize that she is unable to change back into her human form, and then embark on a journey to save her. As with the first book, *Hollow City* is interspersed with photographs. These photographs often show the peculiar children or scenes that Jacob and the others encounter. All of the photographs used throughout the series are vintage photos that the author, Ransom Riggs, found in various locations. Interestingly, the author notes that these photographs have not been altered, so pondering the origin of some of the more unusual pictures is another fun part of the series. Overall, I thought this was a great sequel that made me want to read more.

**** Spoilers Could Be Ahead ****

HOW IS THIS RELEVANT TO FOSTER AND ADOPTIVE CARE?

In *Hollow City*, we learn more about the peculiar children, both the ones who had previously been living with Miss Peregrine and some new ones that Jacob and the others encounter on their journey. We hear about their origin stories, or how they came to be living in the peculiar world. Many of these stories are full of trauma and can be difficult to read, but they are a good analogy for entering the real-life foster and adoptive system. Emma and Jacob in particular talk a lot about what Miss Peregrine means to them and the nature of birth families versus adoptive families. There are many of these discussions that may strike a chord with foster and adoptive families, and can spark a good discussion.

Discussion Points:

- **What makes something a home?**

Jacob struggles with this question a lot during this book. He never really felt like he belonged with his birth parents in Florida. The only member of his family he ever really connected with was his grandfather, Abe, who dies in the first book. Jacob has now discovered that he is peculiar like his grandfather was, and he feels much more at home with his found family in Miss Peregrine and her wards. However, he still loves his birth parents deeply and feels guilty for the pain he has caused them. He even entertains the idea of returning to Florida and leaving his peculiar friends behind after Miss Peregrine is returned to her human form, but ultimately decides that the peculiar world is his home. You can use this to talk with your reader about where (and with whom) they feel at home and why.

- **Diversity**

Diversity is a major theme throughout the whole series. In this book, we continue to meet other peculiar children who are persecuted because of their differences. There are also real-life examples within the books. Jacob and the children meet a group of Gypsies (note: the term “Gypsy” is seen as a pejorative term for the Romani people; however, it is how this group is referred to in the book and so will be used in this review). The peculiar children have a lot in common with the Gypsies as both groups experience a great deal of persecution. Much like the first book, in which the Nazi persecution of the Jews is used as an analogy for the persecution of peculiars by both wights and non-peculiars, the persecution of the Gypsies parallels the experience of the peculiar children. This can be a great time to continue your discussion of celebrating differences from the first book and an opportunity to learn more about a group you may not know much about that still experiences significant discrimination today.

Cautionary Points:

- **Animal abuse/Death**

There are numerous instances of animal abuse and death throughout the book, so if your reader is sensitive to that, please be aware. Early in the book, Jacob and the others read a story from the *Tales of the Peculiar* that discusses in detail the hunting of peculiar animals. Later on, when they visit the menagerie from the story, Addison gives descriptions (and photographs) of peculiar animals who were killed. The Gypsies' horses are killed by the wights. Finally, the bird we assume is Miss Peregrine tortures Miss Wren's pigeon for information and then kills it.

- **Child Abuse**

Many of the peculiar children's "origin stories" involve escaping from abusive households. Bronwyn discovers her peculiarity (super strength) by accidentally breaking her abusive stepfather's neck, though there is no description of the abuse. Emma's story, however, does include descriptions of abuse. When her peculiarity (fire) developed, her father locked her alone in a room, beat her and rarely fed her.

- **Violence and Torture**

Like the first book, the events of this book take place against the backdrop of World War II. As such, there are a lot of instances of war violence (e.g., bombings). There are also several instances of wights killing and/or torturing peculiars and even removing their souls. Some of this may be too much for young or sensitive readers.

Discussion Questions

Chapter 1:

1. Why do you think the children kept souvenirs from Miss Peregrine's house?

Caregiver note: After Miss Peregrine's home is bombed in the first book and the children had to escape from Cairnholm, they took mementos from the house. Hugh, for example, took a doorknob. For many of these children, it was the only loving home that they had ever known and were not able to deal with the trauma of losing it so they took whatever piece of it they could with them. Jacob notes that "[j]ust because they knew it was lost didn't mean they knew how to let it go." This may resonate with some foster and adoptive children.

Chapter 2:

2. Why do you think Enoch is so reluctant to trust Jacob?

Caregiver note: Enoch is reluctant to even consider Jacob a peculiar and doesn't like the idea of having to rely on him to know if there are hollows around. Enoch likely still feels like Abe, Jacob's grandfather, abandoned them and has not been able to process that trauma. Therefore, he is unwilling to put his life in Jacob's hands.

3. Do you believe in fate or destiny? Why or why not?

Caregiver note: Jacob and Emma have a long conversation about fate and destiny. Emma feels that Jacob is there for a reason while Jacob insists that he does not believe in fate. Obviously there is no right or wrong answer here, but can be fun to discuss.

Chapter 3:

4. Do you think Miss Peregrine picked the story about the peculiar menagerie on purpose?

Caregiver note: Miss Peregrine, in bird form, chooses that particular story in the *Tales of Peculiar Book* to read to the children. We find out that story is based in truth and there is a peculiar menagerie. At this point, we wonder if Miss Peregrine knows there is truth in these stories. However, towards the end of the book, we find out that this wasn't Miss Peregrine at all, so it may be interesting to revisit this question at the end of the book.

5. What would you do if you met a talking dog?

Caregiver note: We meet Addison MacHenry, a dog who speaks in a British accent and has a pipe and glasses. He's the first peculiar animal that we have met and Jacob is very surprised!

Chapter 4:

6. Which of the peculiar animals that described would you most like to meet and why?

Caregiver note: After Addison, Jacob and the others met several other peculiar animals who live in the menagerie, including chickens that lay exploding eggs, disappearing mice, and an owl. There is also Deirdre, an emu-raffe, who is part donkey and part giraffe. Addison also describes several other peculiar animals who are buried in the graveyard. This might be a difficult chapter for some readers because there is a lot of discussion of animals being hunted and killed, so this question might ease the tension a bit.

Chapter 5:

7. Why do you think Millard asked Bekhir if he loved his son?

Caregiver note: It is revealed that Bekhir has a son who is slowly becoming invisible like Millard. The boy wants to go with the peculiar children so he is with a group of people who are like him. Bekhir initially thinks this is a good idea, but Millard asks him if he loves his son, and when he says yes, explains that his son should stay with him, noting that “[t]he boy belongs with you, not us.” Millard feels that even though the boy is different from his family, since he is still loved, he should stay with them. Emma says something similar to Jacob towards the end of the book, suggesting that all of the peculiar children would have chosen to stay with their birth parents if they had been loving households. Jacob, however, disagrees, because even though he knows his parents love him, he doesn’t feel like he belongs with them.

Chapter 6:

8. Why do think Bekhir and his men keep trying to protect Jacob and the others?

Caregiver note: Bekhir and the other Gypsies protected Jacob and his friends from the wights by hiding them in their cart in the previous chapter. In this chapter, we learn that once captured by the wights returning from the train station, Bekhir again tried to lie and say he had never seen the children and didn’t know who they were. The wights don’t believe him, of course, but it is still a valiant effort to try to protect the children from being captured and killed by the wights. There may be several reasons why Bekhir wants to protect the children. First, as noted before, he has a peculiar son. Second, he and his people are used to experiencing persecution similar to the peculiars, so he sympathizes with them.

Chapter 7:

9. What do you think the children will find when they get to London?

Caregiver note: Having escaped the wights again and gotten on the train, the children are given a minute to relax as they travel to London in an attempt to find Miss Wren or another ymbryne to help Miss Peregrine. There is a lot of speculation about what the state of London will be, and if there are still any loops intact after so many of them have been raided by the wights and hollows. Take some time to speculate about where you think this book is going!

Chapter 8:

10. Why do you think Hugh is so upset after he saves everyone in the train station?

Caregiver note: Hugh has a hive of bees living inside of him. He released them earlier in chapter 6 where the bees attacked the wights to save the peculiar children as well as the Gypsies. He has to release them again when the children are trying to leave the train station because the children of London are being evacuated and the adults in the train station are trying to get the peculiar children on the train as well. We learn that Hugh's bees can only sting once and then they die, so he is down to only one bee. He feels that the other children take advantage of his bees and don't appreciate that the bees were his friends and are now all dead.

Chapter 9:

11. Do you think Jacob's ability is getting stronger?

Caregiver note: In the first book, we find out that Jacob's peculiarity is that he can see and sense hollows. Throughout this book, it's revealed that he can sense more and more things when he pays attention to the feeling, like how far away the hollows are, what direction they are coming from, and how many there are. It is not clear if his ability is actually getting stronger or if he is getting better at using it.

Chapter 10:

12. Do you think taking the ambulance would have been the right thing to do? Why or why not?

Caregiver note: After a bomb falls on the house that they were sheltering in, an ambulance driver comes up to the children but faints at the sight of them. The children discuss taking the ambulance to try to find Miss Wren using her pigeon. Several of the children, including Bronwyn, are against this because it would mean the ambulance couldn't help actually injured people. Others, like Enoch, emphasize that since they are currently in the past, none of the non-peculiar's futures can be changed, so it doesn't matter if they take the ambulance or not. It is an interesting moral quandary to ponder—do you continue to help people even if you know it won't make a difference in the end? Ultimately, the bird we think is Miss Peregrine punctures the tires with her beak so no one can use the ambulance, and the children are horrified.

Chapter 11:

13. How do you think the peculiar archive building came to be covered in ice?

Caregiver note: The children come across a loop, and in that loop, there is a building frozen in ice that seems to be coming from the inside. We find out later that this is due to Althea freezing it, but before we find that out, it is fun to speculate how this could have happened.

Chapter 12:

14. If you were Jacob, would you stay and fight or go home to Florida?

Caregiver note: Emma tells Jacob that he should go home because he completed his duty of saving Miss Peregrine and he has parents who love him back in Florida. Jacob isn't sure he wants to leave because he just discovered that the wights are torturing peculiars and extracting their second souls (which is what makes them peculiar). He is torn between staying to fight the wights and save peculiardom or returning to his home with his parents. It is a very difficult decision, made even harder by the fact that he is in love with Emma.

Chapter 13:

15. Why do you think Jacob decided to stay after talking to his Dad?

Caregiver note: In the previous chapter, Jacob decides he will leave and go home to Florida, and he tells the other children this and they are understanding. However, we find out that the bird they thought was Miss Peregrine is actually her brother, Caul, who is an evil wight intent on world domination. Upon escaping from Caul and his men, Jacob and Emma end up back in the present and Jacob's cell phone, which he has carried all this time, starts to work again. He gets a call from his dad at which point he tells his dad that he can't come home or tell them where he is because he doesn't want them to get involved. He also tells his dad that he is peculiar like his grandfather was.

General Question:

16. What do you think about the use of pictures in this book?

Caregiver note: As noted earlier in the review, these books include found photographs that are real and depict what appear to be peculiar children and the situations they find themselves in. It is definitely an interesting addition to the book. You might want to talk about whether the pictures add something to the story.

About the Reviewer

Julie Kittel-Moseley

Julie is a Central Virginia native who currently resides in Rochester, New York. She received her Masters of Arts Degree in Psychology from the College of William and Mary in 2012 and is currently a PhD candidate in Epidemiology at the University of Rochester. Julie has worked in various mental health research positions since 2012 and is passionate about researching how physical health, mental health, and trauma experiences interact. When not working, Julie enjoys reading, cooking, spending time with her cats, and watching videos about otters (her favorite animal).