



Eloise the Witch and the Wordsmith

Discussion Starters General

The following are ideas per chapter that can be used in discussing the adventure of Eloise with children. The ideas involve the potential in children's lives and challenges they could face. The educator may well find further ideas in addition to those suggested or may wish to make some modifications to the ones presented. The language used keeps in mind that the discussion will be with children. If considered beyond their capacity of understanding, depending on age levels, please adapt the presentation accordingly.



Eloise the Witch and the Wordsmith

Chapter 1 Eloise has had enough!

Discussion Starters

Teasing

Eloise is teased by her brothers. Why does teasing give such a bad feeling? How could you respond best when being teased?

Hiding

When people are not very kind, it may make you wish to hide. You can creep away somewhere out of sight or you can hide within yourself. How might you do the second? Is that a good idea and should you stay there?

Land of Beginnings

Eloise comes to the Land of Beginnings. Where do you think the world began? People have different ideas about that? Do you know some of these ideas perhaps? What idea do you like best?

Darkness

Eloise comes to a dark forest. Are you afraid of the dark? How does it make you feel? Some people like darkness. Why might that be?



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Chapter 2 Eloise finds a Password and uses her Imagination

Discussion Starters

Promise

As you know, there are lots of words in a dictionary, which give names to all the things and ideas in the world. One of those words is Rainbow, the password Eloise has selected. It means promise. Eloise walks into the Land of Beginnings with a promise, a very beautiful and colorful one. Do you think you have a promise for your life also? Why would that be and what might your promise perhaps look like? Eloise keeps Rainbow, her promise, close to her. Should you do the same with your promise and how might that be done?

Imagination

Eloise is asked to use her imagination. Why is it that you could never think what the surface of the moon looked like, if you didn't have imagination? Because, you've never been there, of course. Why is it so important to have imagination? Otherwise you cannot think of any place you haven't been or anything that hasn't happened to you. Why is it good to use your imagination? Well, if you can imagine what it would be like falling off the stairs you will make sure it won't happen. Imagination also helps us to create art, do science and all sorts of other exciting things.

Company

Eloise imagines a soft furry animal and it was a beautiful cat. What kind of animal might you have imagined going into a dark forest to lead the way? If you had to imagine a person to guide you into the darkness, what kind of person would that have been?



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Chapter 3 Eloise learns about the Doors

Discussion Starters

Anxiety

Rainbow was very anxious about going into the forest. Are you ever anxious about living every day? And what could make you anxious? Have you got any idea what you could do about it? Perhaps you might talk with someone you trust.

Apprehension

Eloise finds her journey not at all comfortable. It is cold and eerie and Jackdaws attack Cat. Can you think of things that happen in life that could make you feel that way? What is Eloise carrying with her though? It is a Rainbow – a promise. What might that mean? That darkness need not last forever.

Attitude

Rainbow is a good promise, but loves her colors rather too much and thinks she is ever so smart. Could you put some words to Rainbow describing this attitude? Words like pride and selfishness come to mind. Why are these not qualities to be admired?

Wisdom

The Owl is a beautiful bird. What does it look like? Do you have any idea what in stories it often speaks of – what word would you connect with the owl? It is the word wisdom. What is wisdom actually? Why is it so helpful to have it as a helper? Can you give an example when you would have used wisdom?



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Chapter 4 Eloise is confused about Time

Discussion Starters

Time Next

Eloise learns that there is a time before the world and people came into existence and it's called Time Before. Nobody really knows what that was like. Today, in the world we're living in, we know very well what things are like and we have clocks to keep our time. The world takes a full day to turn around against the sun. So that makes the length of a day. That is the time we live in – Time Now. Then there is a time to come, the future, which is Next Time. Nobody is sure what the future will look like. It's rather a mystery. Now, why might stepping out of our Time Now into the future, Next Time, not be something you have to be afraid of? How do you feel about the future?

Being Sure

Eloise cannot find the doors at all; she definitely cannot see them. Cat told her to point her finger straight ahead and follow it. That would only be of help really, if Eloise believed she was pointing it in the right direction. Any idea in what direction you would like to point your finger in life? What do you believe in and would like to find? Why is it good to make decisions about your future and believe in it?



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Chapter 5 Eloise meets the Owl and the Clock and chooses a Door

Discussion Starters

Doubt and Fear

Do you know what it means to be troubled by doubts and fears? Can you give some examples? Such negative feelings and thoughts are like the Jackdaws. They keep attacking you and try to limit you in doing the good things you are capable of. Can you think of ways in which doubts and fears are best dealt with?

Time Now

The Jackdaws try to make us doubt. They wish to take away the certainty from our minds. They wish us to believe that the clock is broken and we are stuck in Time Now with little power to deal with Next Time, our future. Can you think about people and things that make you feel good about the future? How about what makes you think negatively about it? How might you best respond to all of this?

Faith

Eloise didn't think the two doors were leading anywhere. They were standing in Time Now with more of Time Now showing all around them. The secret of the doors is that they are leading into a future time, which cannot be seen. Eloise is told to *believe* that there is something behind those doors. Perhaps we too may miss stepping through a door before us, a door into the good things of the future. We may refuse to believe in those good things simply because we do not see them as a possibility. It is called being 'too unsure.' What might you do about that?

Merriment

Eloise has to make a choice between two doors. Neither door shows where it is leading. The one she enters first brings her into rather a silly place. It leads to nothing significant and helpful. Many people step through that door and get quite lost in the merriment. They spend most of their time making life as much fun as possible. They don't mind much that it is leading nowhere. What do you think will be missing in those people's lives?



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Chapter 6 Eloise meets Mr Henry and enters the Castle

Discussion Starters

Doubt and Faith

Eloise believes, as best she can, that the door with the frosted window will lead to the Castle. The Jackdaws try to sow confusion till the last moment, but finally don't succeed. What do you think? Is it a bad thing to have doubts? No, not at all! Doubts are normal. Every person has doubts. Sometimes doubts are justified. You can doubt that your sports team will be winning and be right about that. Still, we can become a real doubting Thomas. That's not good either. Doubting should not make us negative. Remaining positive is best. It can be rather confusing. Do you have any ideas how doubt may be best dealt with?

Memory

When Eloise looks back the door has simply disappeared as if the whole event was an illusion. Making an important decision can be like that. You positively decide on something and that feels really good. Then you look back a few days later and your decision may seem not that real anymore, as if it never happened. But Eloise did pass through a door, and your decision was a real and an important one. So what might you do to reaffirm what happened some days ago? You simply say to yourself: Yes, it was real then and it's real now. I still believe in what I decided.

Titles

Mr Henry finds titles rather impressive. Why do many people think just like him, you think? When may titles be important perhaps? Do you care much for titles?



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Chapter 7 Eloise is all alone and meets the Girl-with-no-Name

Discussion Starters

Questions

Eloise meets all these question marks but never gets an answer from them. I'm sure you have questions as well to which you don't get an answer. There are many questions in life, which may not be answered. Can you think of some of these perhaps? Yes, the 'why?' questions. There can be sickness in our family; the world looks in trouble with wars and famines etc. It is true that bad things can happen to good people. There is little we can do about it. We are living in a world in which the good and bad are very much present. As people we are exposed to both. We simply have to accept that and do the best we can to make the world a better place. And if a question doesn't get an answer we need to be strong, believing for better times.

Self-confidence

How about the Girl-with-no-name? When Eloise meets her she is looking at herself, it seems. What would you feel like if this were to happen to you? But in a sense you could say it *is* happening to you. There is a Girl or Boy-with-no-name in your life. It is the person of promise, the person you can become. Every young person has a promise in his or her life. You may have thought of some promises for your life, who you would like to be, or where you would like to go. Could you perhaps tell us about that? How confident are you that you will succeed?



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Chapter 8 Eloise visits the Towers and finds the Book Room

Discussion Starters

Deception

Eloise meets quite a beautiful lady, but is she really beautiful? Appearances can be deceiving. Have you come across people or things that are not what they look like? You may even come across ideas that are not what they seem, like – if only I am rich, I will definitely be happy. Could you think of an idea that seems OK, but isn't perhaps?

Assertiveness

Eloise was quite surprised that she stood up for herself when that swarthy looking man grabbed her. When is it right to stand up for yourself? When might it be wrong to assert yourself? Those are not always easy questions to answer. It depends on who you're dealing with and the situation you find yourself in. If we were to write out some guidelines, how might these read?



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Chapter 9 Eloise learns about the Great Witch

Discussion Starters

Missed Potential

Everyone's life has a story that gets written as we live through the years. Your life too is a story; as we have discussed before, a story of promise. But what happens if the story is not written as well as it could, if the characters, the possibilities in your life, are being bound up? What happens then? Your life will then not become what it could be.

Now, none of us know what the future brings. However, we are not totally helpless. We can decide what kinds of people we would like to be. What kind of person would you like to be? And that's the real question. We may not know the future but will we let our possibilities be bound up, like the characters in the story? If we decide to do things in selfish ways, and only think about me, then we will become narrow-minded people. It surely will limit us in how good a person we can be. What other things can you think of that can limit us in becoming the best we can be?

The Future

The characters who Eloise finds in captivity talk about an invitation by the Wordsmith to receive new stories for another year. Without new plots there cannot be further stories. Do you expect new stories for your life? Of course, you do. But you will need to make the stories happen by believing in yourself. What makes it possible to believe in yourself?

Stolen Stories

The Wordsmith knows that one day the Witch will try to take over the Castle and the handing out of stories. She would like to steal the best stories that are available and make them hers. It would be a great pity if she succeeded. What might I, and my life, look like if my best life stories would be stolen? I might be selfish, frustrated, unkind, unhappy, greedy, tired etc. The kind of stories the Witch would write. How can I prevent that? Eloise decides that she is not going to be a prisoner of the Witch for long. What decision would you like to make about your life story?



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Chapter 10 The Great Witch and the Treasure Hunter

Discussion Starters

Attitudes

The Treasure Hunter is greedy and looking for treasure. But what he finds is no treasure anywhere. He has been duped. What looked a great idea in becoming rich ended up in emptiness, worse than he had before. After all, he had become a liar and a bully in the process. His attitude has been all wrong. What really are we talking about, when we speak of attitude? Why is the right attitude in life so important? Have you got any idea what our thinking has to do with this? I have to think about good things and not the negative ones that my selfishness tells me of. I have to be careful not to follow deceptive ideas in our world that aren't at all helpful. Like, unless you're beautiful and smart you cannot amount to much. Those thoughts are unwise. Can you think of other ideas that the world tells us are needed to get happy and which may not be true?

Bad Ideas and Habits

The Witch has real power over the Treasure Hunter who thought he could just walk away. When you begin to follow bad ideas and habits, these can get real power over you. Let's see whether we can find some examples. How about drugs, what do you know about that? Can you mention some? How about being unreasonably competitive? What would that do to you and your friends? How about wanting to have everything without sharing? What will that do? Can *you* come up with some more suggestions of where you can become enslaved to a bad idea?



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Chapter 11 An Escape Route is Discovered

Discussion Starters

Revision

Today we are not discussing all the characters from all kinds of stories Eloise discovered in that prison room. They are so busy trying to find a way out that we'll leave them to it. Instead let's have a look briefly at the things we have discussed in the first 10 chapters of the Eloise adventure to date. See whether you can remember and what further comments you might wish to make. (The educator can select what seems most appropriate for revision.)



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Chapter 12 Eloise stays with the Gentle Giant

Discussion Starters

Getting Stuck

The Gentle Giant gets stuck in the trapdoor. There is no way for him to go through. Have you ever felt stuck in a situation? Would you care to talk about that? How did it make you feel? Did you find an answer to the problem? Sometimes in life we do get stuck and it isn't always our fault at all. When that happens perhaps you can find someone to talk with, someone you trust. Who would you go to for some help? Would you have someone in mind perhaps?

Courage

Isn't it brave of Eloise to stay with the Gentle Giant? It's never good to let your friends down and Eloise makes up her mind that she won't do so. That requires courage. What exactly is courage? Do you know the difference between courage and being naively brave? If you live your life without courage what might happen? Everybody needs courage at times. Have there been times when you needed to be courageous? What happened?

Challenges

The Gentle Giant is also very courageous. He refuses to open the trapdoor once the Witch has discovered it. He is condemned to dwell with the Jackdaws. That's when Eloise challenges the Witch, a challenge she cannot possibly win. Can you think of some difficult challenges that life may bring? When faced with challenges we cannot seemingly win, what could you do about it? You can seek help. Or, you can try to think of another way forward that does not include quite the same challenge. If there's no way out, then it is best to find someone you can talk to about it.



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Chapter 13 Eloise makes a Plan

Discussion Starters

Light

How can you change a dark room into not being dark? You let the light in. How can that be done? Draw back a curtain, switch the light on or a torch, or light a candle. Any sort of light will do, when you are dealing with darkness. Darkness simply has no answer to light. That's why Eloise is to expose the Witch to the Fireflies. Light compares with the good things in life we can do. It is much more powerful than being negative. Why might that be so?

Walking in Light

Light can also be compared with us having a conscience. Do you have any idea of the meaning of that difficult word? Why is it good not to ignore your conscience? How does it feel, when your conscience begins to speak to you? How does that happen – as a warning in your mind, your feelings or your intuition perhaps? What can happen if you do ignore it? Do you think animals have a conscience? It is the very fact that people have a conscience that makes us able to decide between what is good and what is bad. Can you give an example of when your conscience spoke to you?

What kind of Light

There can be a real problem with having a conscience though. Where do you get the ideas of what is good and what is bad from? In China they think it is okay to eat dogs. So people have different ideas about what is acceptable. The ideas Australia finds acceptable are part of the Australian culture. What do you think that may mean? You will pick up a lot of ideas from your parents, your friends and at school and the TV. Not all of it will be good. The best is not to worry about it for now. Just do the best you can with what you feel is good and try to avoid what feels bad. Someone has said it is best not to do to other people what you wouldn't like done to yourself. Can you think of some practical examples of that?



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Chapter 14 The Great Witch meets her End

Discussion Starters

Being Let Down

The Witch had sent the Treasure Hunter to go and wait for the Wordsmith in the book room and arrest him. That doesn't seem to be an instruction he could have carried out easily. It's gone from bad to worse for him and all because he has betrayed his friend the Gentle Giant of Oorlappy. Have you ever let a friend down? How does that make you feel? Some people, who let you down, don't seem to feel much about it at all. They may even laugh about it. What might you do in such a situation? If you can, tell them you don't appreciate it at all. But then, try to forgive and forget. If you don't, who will be the loser? They don't care, so it's you who will have all these negative emotions to deal with. What sort of thoughts might go through your mind? How might you feel?

Pride

Proud and arrogant people usually think themselves more capable than they really are. They get away with it most times, but not always. It's better not to be proud and overly pleased with yourself. It's a real trap to get caught into. What is the difference between being proud and being properly self-confident? The first sets itself off against other people – I am better than you. The second is a healthy belief in your own abilities. It's wrong to be proud, but good to have confidence. So it's quite okay to be really good at something. It's wrong to then think that you are a better person than someone else.

Victory

The Witch was proud and overreached herself. She was so set on becoming the most important person at the Castle that she never properly considered the dangers of going into the Castle grounds. That was her downfall. She was defeated by the light of the fireflies. Eloise then decided that the Witch should not be able to get her hands on characters and stories anymore. We have spoken before about the story of our lives ahead of us. What do you remember about that?



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Chapter 15 The Party

Discussion Starters

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Exciting Words

The Wordsmith tells Eloise of the many good words that are available to write stories with. He mentions words like Wonder and Mystery, like Love, Longing, Goodness, Adventure and Peace. What do you think about these words? What do they mean and would you like to see them in your own life. Why might that be so? Could you think of more words?

Psychological Needs

Mr Henry was ever so wrong letting the Witch into the Castle. What made him do so? He obviously had a great need to be called handsome. That's fair enough. However, it can be that our deep needs become a stumbling block to others and us. Can you think of some ideas here, like needing to win and then you begin to cheat?

Forgiveness

Fortunately the Wordsmith forgives Mr Henry and he is ever so happy thereafter. Why is it important that we can forgive? Who really loses when we don't? Yes, we do. We may get bitter and all angry inside while the other person doesn't actually care about it. How difficult is it to forgive someone and why?

Promise

The Wordsmith explained to Eloise that her password Rainbow, speaks of the promise Eloise can become. We have talked about that before. What do you remember about that discussion? It's easy to say that you have a promise on your life, but how can you begin to believe that yourself?

Parties

The Castle has a great party. What do you think about parties? It's never good to be a spoilsport at a party. But of course parties can go wrong and often do. Can you think of reasons why parties go wrong?

My Story

Eloise finds out that the Girl-with-no-name now has a name, and it's Eloise. While Eloise wasn't too sure about herself and the promise on her life, the Girl-with-no-name was waiting for Eloise to find out who she is. Once Eloise discovered herself, the Girl-with-no-name can be called Eloise as well. It's all about each of you having the promise on your life to become the best person you can be – to feel happy with yourself and with who you are. Eloise has learned a lot during her adventure. It has made her far more assertive and sure of the person she would like to be. The Wordsmith has a story for her life that is a truly excellent one. Your story will be a good one as well. What can you do from your side to help it come to pass?

The End

Well, Eloise is back home with her brothers, and future challenges no doubt, and we have come to the end of her adventure. Is there anything you have learned that has been particularly helpful?