

a **MARROW THIEVES** novel

CHERIE DIMALINE

# HUNTING BY STARS

**"A revelatory must-read."** —ANGELINE BOULLEY, *New York Times*  
bestselling author of *Firekeeper's Daughter*

## EDUCATOR'S GUIDE



# HUNTING BY STARS

**CHERIE DIMALINE** is an author from the Georgian Bay Métis Community. Her book *The Marrow Thieves* won the Governor General's Literary Award and the prestigious Kirkus Prize for Young Readers' Literature, among others. *The Marrow Thieves* was named a Book of the Year on numerous lists, including those from NPR, the *School Library Journal*, the New York Public Library, the *Globe and Mail*, *Quill & Quire*, and the CBC. It has been translated into several languages and continues to be a Canadian national bestseller. Cherie is currently adapting work for stage and film, and working on new novels. Follow Cherie Dimaline online at [cheriedimaline.com](http://cheriedimaline.com) and [@cherie\\_dimaline](https://twitter.com/cherie_dimaline).

This guide was created by **APRIL WATERS**, a Métis educator from Treaty One territory in Winnipeg, Manitoba. She has been a classroom teacher and Indigenous Education teacher for over a decade and provides instructional support and professional development for educators in bringing authentic Indigenous perspectives, culture and history into their classrooms.

From the acclaimed author of *The Marrow Thieves* comes a thrilling new story about hope and survival.

Years ago, when plagues and natural disasters killed millions of people, much of the world stopped dreaming. Without dreams, people are haunted, sick, mad, unable to rebuild. The government soon finds that the Indigenous people of North America have retained their dreams, an ability rumored to be housed in the very marrow of their bones. Soon, residential schools pop up—or are reopened—across the land to bring in the dreamers and harvest their dreams.

Seventeen-year-old French lost his family to these schools and has spent the years since heading north with his newfound family: a group of other dreamers, who, like him, are trying to build and thrive as a community. But then French wakes up in a pitch-black room, locked in and alone for the first time in years, and he knows immediately where he is—and what it will take to escape.

Meanwhile, out in the world, his found family searches for him and dodges new dangers—school Recruiters, a blood cult, even the land itself. When their paths finally collide, French must decide how far he is willing to go—and how many loved ones he is willing to betray—in order to survive. This engrossing, action-packed, deftly-drawn novel expands on the world of Cherie Dimaline's award-winning *The Marrow Thieves*, and it will haunt readers long after they've turned the final page.



# DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Early in the novel, author Cherie Dimaline describes what the world looks like during this extreme stage of climate change. How has it affected the lives of Indigenous people like French? Is it different from how it has affected the non-Indigenous population?
2. The “Plague” has affected people not only emotionally but physically as well. How does Dimaline describe the non-Indigenous people living without their dreams? How does she describe the Indigenous people living on the land in hiding?
3. French wakes up locked in a room within the institution. On page 7, he is struggling and scared. “I’d spent the last eight of my seventeen years outside, running, trying to stay on the other side of walls. Walls only slowed you down. Walls left you without options. Walls kept you still.” Why do you think French would value his freedom? Have you ever felt like you had no freedom? Do people behave differently when they have no options?
4. Storytelling is an important part of life in Indigenous communities, including for French’s newfound family. Miigwans states that “Story is a home, it’s where we live, it’s where we hold everything we’ll need to truly survive — our languages, our people, our land.” (p.21) How does storytelling support the development of relationships in French’s family? Why do you think they share stories so often? Does your family value storytelling?
5. We learn about Chi Boy’s coming to story in the novel. In one part of his story, Chi Boy gets shot at by an older farmer who he was hoping would help him. The farmer’s wife says, “Don’t go getting dirty blood all over the front walk, Harold.” (p.46) What do you think she means by this statement? Why do you think the farmer shot at him?
6. French realizes that not only is his brother still alive, but he is also the agent who initially interviews him. He experiences a wide range of emotions, from happiness and excitement to sadness and anger. If you were in French’s position, how do you think you would feel and react?
7. French “sees” his mother at different times while in the institution. As he sees her in the storage closet, she says that, “Maybe dreams were always in the marrow. Maybe not. Maybe they used to be everywhere — muscles, skin, voice — and then we learned how to hide them better.” (p.67) She connects the need to hide the dreams with past situations, such as tuberculosis hospitals and residential schools. Why do you think Indigenous people would have had to hide their dreams? What else do you think they have had to hide?
8. As Mitch explains his story to French, he states, “I recognize that I was different back then, more focused on individual freedom than collective survival. I was a child.” (p.78) What do you think he means by that? What do you value more as a person? Can you connect this with what we see happening in the world during the COVID-19 pandemic?
9. The staff within the institution have negative, racist attitudes towards Indigenous people and often make inappropriate comments towards/about them. “Too many years spent on their asses, living off the taxpayers.” (p.89) How do Indigenous people react to these comments? How would you react if you heard someone making similar comments?
10. Rose discusses her understanding of where dreams come from with the Chief. “Where exactly do you think our dreams come from? My dreams are full of lakes and the small islands that skip across them like a heartbeat . . . Our lands are who we are. That’s not something easily replaced.” (p.160) Do you think that the Chief is disconnected with his dreams? Why do you think he has been able to captivate these non-Indigenous women into following him? Do you think his intentions are good?
11. French is forced to capture three Indigenous people in the bush in order to keep his plan moving. He struggles with this but tries to justify it so that he can live with his decision. “They would be taken in sooner or later anyway. They’re so close to the school. So loud and oblivious. If not you, some other person would’ve found them.” (p.232) What would you do if you were in French’s position? How difficult would it be to turn your own people over to authorities? Does this situation remind you of another book/movie/situation where this has happened?
12. French makes a difficult decision regarding his brother Mitch. What is his reasoning behind it? How does the rest of the family react? Were you surprised that he did this?

# FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES

1. Towards the end of the novel, Miigwans acknowledges the important part that Rania played in helping the family escape. “We are here because of this woman, because of what she did for us. I am alive because she raised her voice for me, even in the worst of times. That’s what matters most. How you use your voice, and sometimes even your whole body, when things are at their worst.” (p.378) Allyship is an important part of creating change in society. As a class, examine and create your own definition of what allyship is. What should it entail? What can you do to be a good ally for Indigenous peoples?
2. The family realizes that it needs to get across the border in order to have a higher chance of survival. They are hidden away in a train and helped by a series of different people. Research the Underground Railroad. What does the Underground Railroad have in common with this part of the novel? How is it different? Can you think of other situations in history, in different parts of the world, where citizens have had to help others survive dangerous laws and legislations imposed by government?
3. *Hunting By Stars* is set in the future but is closely connected to the history of Canada and how it has treated and continues to treat Indigenous peoples. What different events, government policies and legislations are referenced in the novel? The Truth and Reconciliation Commission created 94 Calls to Action to give Canada a road map to improve the lives of Indigenous peoples. As a class, go through the Calls to Action, and discuss how they would help. Create a way (posters, multimedia, video, etc.) to share the Calls to Action with the rest of your school community.
4. There are a wide variety of words from Indigenous languages throughout the novel. Gather the words and research them. What language is each word from? What does it mean? How can you find out how to pronounce it properly? Create a glossary for others who might be interested in reading the novel.
5. Imagine that *Hunting By Stars* is turned into a movie. In small groups, create movie posters that theaters would use to advertise. Who would you choose (which actresses/actors) to play the different characters? What imagery and words/phrases would you include on the poster to entice viewers, without giving away the story? How would you honor Indigenous culture within the movie and on the poster?

