About the Book

Having lost most of his family to coal mining accidents as a little boy, Curley Hines lives with his grandfather in the Appalachian Mountains of Wonder Gap, Kentucky. Ever since Curley can remember, Papaw has been giving him a word each week to learn and live. Papaw says words are Curley's way out of the holler, even though Curley has no intention of ever leaving.

When a new coal boss takes over the local mining company, life as Curley knows it is turned upside down. Suddenly, his best friend, Jules, is interested in the coal boss's son, and worse, the mining company threatens to destroy Curley and Papaw's mountain. Now Curley faces a difficult choice. Does he use his words to speak out against Big Coal and save his mountain, or does he remain silent and save his way of life?

From debut author Mary Knight comes a rich, lyrical, and transporting tale about friendship, the power of words, and the difficult hurdles we must overcome for the people and places we love.

Book Details

Saving Wonder by Mary Knight
Leveled Reading: AR Points 9.0.  ATOS Book Level 5.5.  870 Lexile.
www.scholastic.com/teachers/books/saving-wonder-by-mary-knight

Available as an ebook through the Ohio Digital Library: ohiodigitallibrary.com

Available through the State Library of Ohio Talking Book Program:
www.klas.com/talkingbooks/ohio

Book Awards:
2017 Green Earth Book Award: Children’s Fiction
Parents’ Choice Award Silver Honor
Notable Social Studies Trade Books for Young People 2017
About the Author

Mary Knight has always enjoyed the power of a good story, whether it’s been as a children’s librarian, a freelance writer, or a writer-in-residence teaching kids how to write. Several years ago, she decided to go back to school to learn how to write a novel. After graduating from Spalding University’s MFA program in writing, Mary completed her middle grade novel, Saving Wonder, found the agent and editor of her dreams, and is now a published author with Scholastic.

Of all the things she appreciates in life, she especially values loving kindness, a good laugh, the wisdom of young people, and the ability to see the world through another person’s eyes. She believes this last quality, empathy, is the key to being not only a good friend and an awesome person, but being a good writer as well. “I must first step into the minds and hearts of my characters to discover their viewpoints,” she says. “Only then, can I find the words to create their world.”

Speaking of the world, Mary has lived in many beautiful places—among them, northern Michigan and an island in Puget Sound where she often saw whales, eagles, and great blue herons close to home. Born and raised in Cincinnati, Mary and her husband now live in Lexington, Kentucky, where she enjoys the rolling green hills of horse country, exploring the Appalachian Mountains, and watching University of Kentucky basketball. Most of all, she treasures time with friends and family who add great wonder to her life.

Author Resources

Mary Knight’s official website
www.maryknightbooks.com

Author page on Scholastic website
www.scholastic.com/teachers/authors/mary-knight

Ways to Engage Saving Wonder in the Classroom
www.maryknightbooks.com/classroom-resources
Mary Knight offers educators an array of engaging extension projects for classes and groups to enhance their reading of Saving Wonder and to explore related themes.

CoreEmpathy
www.coreempathy.com
Mary Knight and her collaborator Christie Kesler promote academic growth through the practice of empathy. CoreEmpathy is a story-based, K-12 curriculum designed to cultivate empathy and compassionate living skills while also aligning with literacy standards.

For publicity and speaking engagement inquiries:
www.maryknightbooks.com/educators
Contact Mary through the Contact link on her website.
Talk About it!
Topics to share when discussing Saving Wonder with young readers.

Spoiler warning! Some discussion questions refer to key elements in the book. Do not read if you do not want to find out what happens.

- After reading this book, do you think the power of Curley’s words was what saved the mountain?
- What words would you use to describe Curley? What about Papaw or Jules?
- What makes Curley a hero?
- Why is Curley so connected to his mountain?
- Throughout the novel, Curley describes his mountain and animals found in nature. Describe the significance of nature in this novel.
- Curley and his friends make a video to share online for the world to see. What are the consequences of and successes from sharing the video?
- At some points in the novel, Curley disagrees with the word Papaw gives him, but the words always seem to work their way into his actions. Think of one of these words and apply it to Curley or another character in the novel.
- The end of the novel leaves the story open. What do you think is next in store for Curley and Jules? What happens to the other characters in Wonder Gap?
- Curley has many good qualities, as do Jules and JD. What are some qualities you appreciate about your friends? Your teachers? What qualities—or ways of being in the world—do you choose to stand for? (i.e. kindness, persistence, making people laugh, curiosity)
- If you were tasked with picking a word to describe this book, what word would you use?
- Is there anything happening in your school, community, or the world right now that would inspire you to take a stand, like Curley did?
- Think about a place in nature you enjoy visiting. What makes it special to you?

Some discussion questions courtesy Mary Knight. Used with permission.

Go Further!
Ideas for extending the experience of reading Saving Wonder.

Educators: Every CTRO book may be used to support Ohio’s English Language Arts reading, writing, and speaking and listening standards. Other Learning Standards such as Geography: Human Systems (Grade 5) may also apply. Discussion questions and educational activities for Saving Wonder align with Learning Standards for Grades 3-6.

Librarians, parents, and others: These activities are also for library programs, family activities, and other projects. Learning Standards define what students should know and be able to do at each grade. For more information, see the Ohio Department of Education website, education.ohio.gov. From the Topics dropdown menu, click on “Learning in Ohio.”

- The effects of mountaintop mining on stream runoff can be explored with a science experiment. Students can create and compare mountaintop removal on two “mountains” they create using basic materials. For materials, steps, and further discussion: www.maryknightbooks.com/classroom-resources

More on the next page!
Go Further! (continued)

- Choose a word of the week for the classroom each week. Take student input or have the entire class vote on the word. Encourage students to use the word in both their verbal answers and written answers throughout the day. This could be beneficial for a journaling activity at the end of each week. Students can journal how often they used the word and what the word meant to them throughout the week. They can then guess what the word will be next week.

- Words are powerful, and we can celebrate them in many ways. Students can pick their favorite word from among Curley’s words and complete a number of activities. They can create an acrostic poem with the word; write a story about the word; draw what the word means to them; or use images printed from a website or cut from a magazine to paste within the letters of the word. Share the words in front of the class to see the different interpretations students bring to each word.

Explore More!
Additional ideas and resources to use with Saving Wonder.

Community Service Environmental Projects in Your Area
www.epa.gov/students/community-service-environmental-project-ideas-students-and-educators
The United States Environmental Protection Agency provides a list of local projects students can get involved in to help their community. The projects range from watershed projects to ways to reduce waste in schools. The ability to narrow search results by location is helpful in finding relevant projects.

Visit Appalachia
visitappalachia.com
The Appalachian region spans parts of Alabama, Georgia, Kentucky, Maryland, Mississippi, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, and all of West Virginia. There are various driving and hiking trails across the mountain region. The site provides an interactive map for you to see each driving route, fun facts, and pictures throughout the trail. The trips vary in time, length, and targeted theme.

Mountaintop Removal 101
appvoices.org/end-mountaintop-removal/mtr101
Appalachian Voices sponsors this website filled with information about the ways mountaintop removal affects mountains and surrounding areas. Plenty of maps, pictures, and diagrams show the areas affected and provide visuals about this issue. There are tabs to get involved and to read current news about the subject.

Kentucky Native American Heritage Commission
heritage.ky.gov/aa-na/Pages/na-commission.aspx
This state-level commission promotes the role and importance of Native American peoples through teacher education, media relations, and public education. The commission develops programs, events, and materials for and about Native American peoples, and works to ensure an accurate depiction of Native Americans. Resources including lesson plans and “Teaching About American Indians: Stereotypes and Contributions” (a downloadable guide for educators) are available here: heritage.ky.gov/aa-na-na/Pages/overview.aspx.