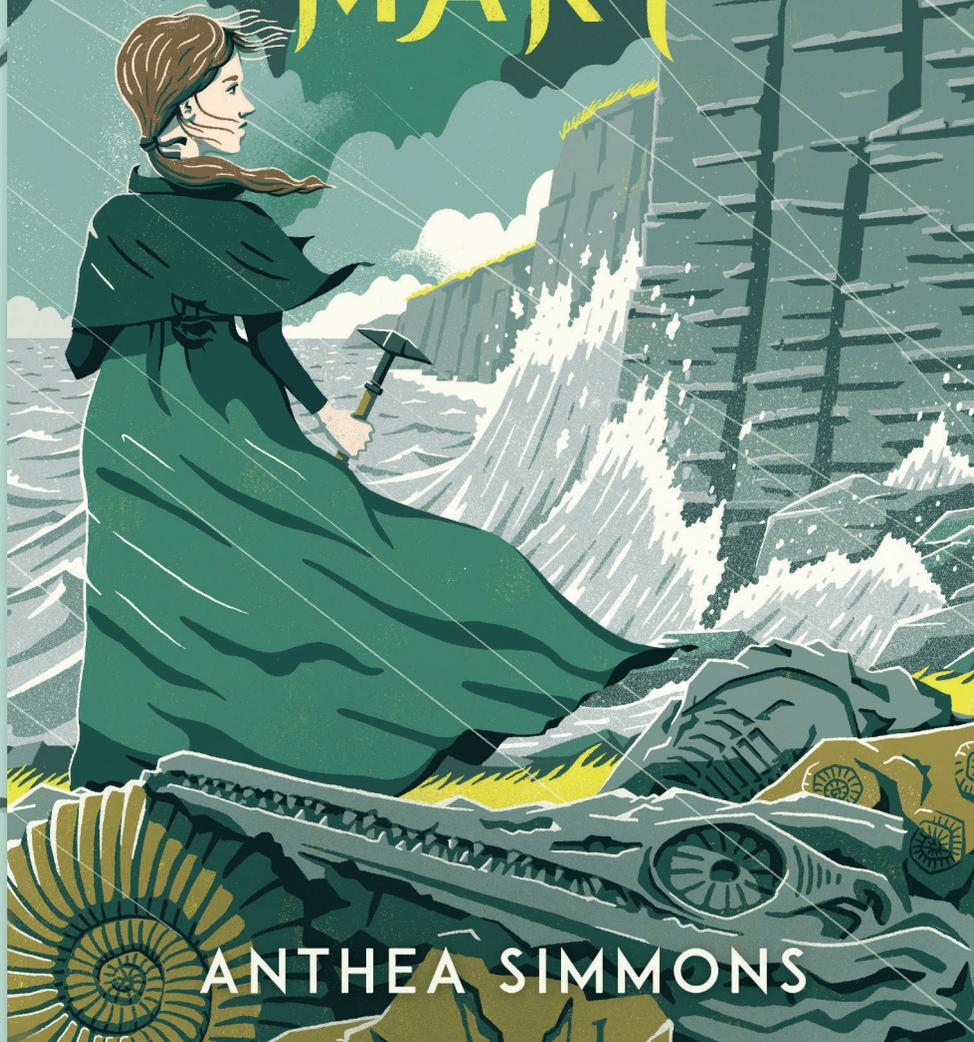


'An intriguing insight into a fascinating figure from history:  
Mary is a bold, brilliant and truly inspiring heroine'  
KATHERINE WOODFINE

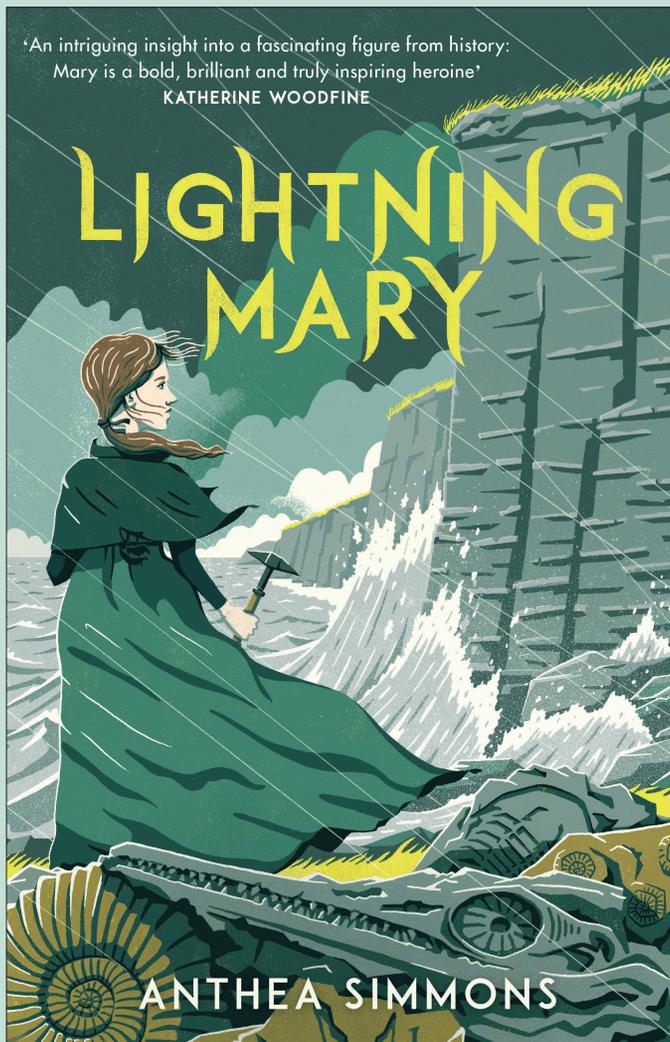
# LIGHTNING MARY



ANTHEA SIMMONS

READING GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

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## LIGHTNING MARY

by Anthea Simmons

Published by Andersen Press

### ABOUT THE BOOK:

One stormy night, lightning strikes a group of women with a baby sheltering under a tree. Only the baby survives: her name is Mary Anning.

Growing up on the wild Dorset coast, Mary follows after her father in the perilous hunt for valuable fossils uncovered by waves and landslips: ancient creatures, turned to stone. Yet tragedy and despair are never far away. As a girl fighting to fulfil her dream of becoming a scientist, everything is against Mary. But Mary hasn't survived the lightning strike for nothing. Soon she'll make her greatest discovery of all...

*'Mary is a bold, brilliant and truly inspiring heroine'*  
Katherine Woodfine

*'Riveting and evocative. Inspirational for budding scientists'* STEMettes

*'A brilliant read'* BookTrust

### DISCUSSION GUIDE:

'All I know is, something lit a fire in my being and it wasn't the lightning...' Mary has a single-minded passion for finding fossils. Discuss how this affects Mary's relationships with the other characters – especially with her father, mother, Henry and Elizabeth.

'Is that all the life I have before me?' As a girl, Mary is often told that her life's purpose will be to marry and have children. In what ways have things changed for girls now? In what ways do you think things have stayed the same?

'All that sorrow comes flooding over us, all of a sudden.' Discuss the theme of grief in *Lightning Mary*.

'I do not like chaos and I do not like to feel that anyone has power over me.' Mary has strong feelings, but she often struggles to express her emotions. In what ways does her nature cause her problems? Does it ever help her too?

'You have been a friend to me. Mark my words, you will be a famous scientist one day.' Henry De la Beche was a friend of Mary Anning's in real life. How does Henry encourage and support Mary's ambitions?

'People like me don't make fortunes. Fortunes aren't made. They are given to rich folk by their parents.' Discuss the theme of class and money in *Lightning Mary*. Do you think things have entirely changed since the nineteenth century?

Mary Anning lived in the first half of the nineteenth century, when many major changes were happening in the world – scientific discoveries, cultural and social progress, and military upheaval. Find out more about the major events of this period – how were things different by the time of Mary's death in 1847?

Mary Anning made several important discoveries on the Jurassic coast, including the ichthyosaur featured in the book and a complete plesiosaur skeleton later on in her life. What does the story and the information at the end tell you about why these fossils are important to scientists today? To further your research, you could look up 'evolution' and 'natural selection'.

Choose a famous scientist from history and find out about their early life and discoveries. Write a short piece from their perspective just after they have made their greatest discovery. Think about how they might feel and what they may hope for their discovery or invention.

#### OTHER BOOKS ABOUT INSPIRING WOMEN:

