

# The Upside Down River

Tomek's  
Journey

Jean-Claude Mourlevat



# ABOUT THE BOOK

## ***The Upside Down River: Tomek's Journey***

by Jean-Claude Mourlevat, translated by Ros Schwartz

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Tomek lives a quiet life running his late parents' village store, which has everything you could ever need, and more. Then one day a girl visits. She asks Tomek if he sells something he's never heard of before: a drop of water from the magical River Qjar, which flows back to front and upside down. When he admits he has none, she slips away.

Tomek is desperate to follow the mysterious girl, and so he sets out on an incredible adventure. To find the upside down river, he must journey through strange and wondrous places: the Forest of Oblivion where monstrous bears roam, a meadow of deadly scented flowers, a long-hidden island cursed by a witch, and beyond . . .

# ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jean-Claude Mourlevat was born in Ambert, Auvergne in 1952 in a farming family. He studied in Strasbourg, Toulouse, Bonn and Paris, and worked as a German teacher in college before becoming an actor. He performed as the clown character Guedoulde in a show that toured France and internationally and has also staged works by Brecht, Cocteau and Shakespeare. Jean-Claude Mourlevat turned to writing for children in the late 1990s and has since published numerous books for young readers and won several awards including the Prix des Incorruptibles and the Sorcières Prix. In 2021 he was given the Astrid Lindgren Memorial Award. He lives near Saint-Étienne, with his wife and their two children.

# ALSO BY JEAN-CLAUDE MOURLEVAT

## **Jefferson**

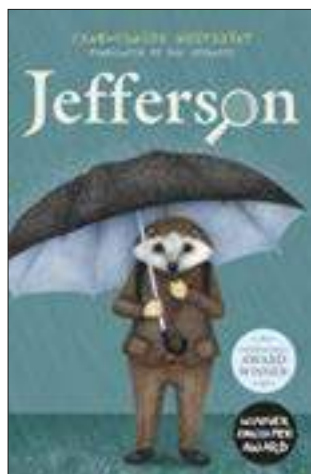
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## **The Upside Down River: Hannah's Journey**

Translated by Ros Schwartz


ISBN 9781839131998





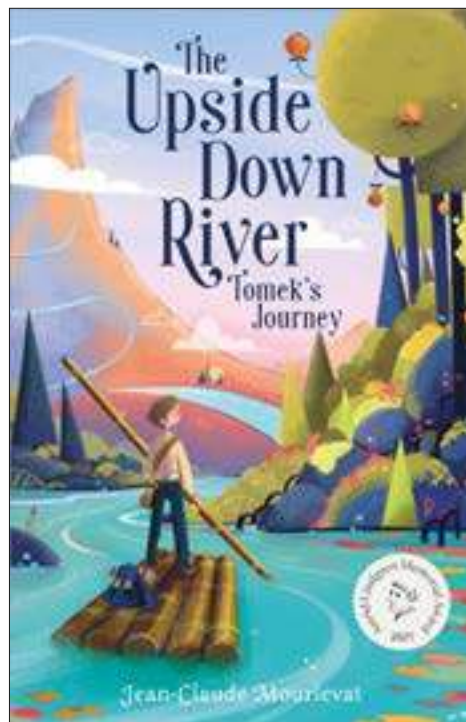


## Discussion Questions

1. Tomek's grocer's shop sells everything you could ever want or need. With your group, think of ten things you think could be kept in the drawers and on the shelves of the shop. The more unusual, the better!
  2. Tomek decides to go on a journey which could be difficult and even dangerous, against the advice of Grandfather Isham. Discuss the different reasons why he is so sure he wants to go on this adventure.
  3. Read **pages 20 to 21** again to see what Tomek packs to go on his journey. What would be on your list of things if you were going on an adventure like this and why?
  4. Look back at **pages 31 to 35**. Marie explains why the Forest of Oblivion has that name. Try imagining another place which has something magical about it which changes how you think or feel when you go there. Describe it to the rest of the group.
  5. The perfume makers wake Tomek up with some special Awakening Words from a book. Choose a favourite book of yours and find a phrase you think might be special enough to wake you if you were sent into a magical sleep. Why do you like this phrase so much?
  6. The perfume makers create incredible scents which makes anyone who smells them think of very particular things, such as First Raindrops on a Pond and Wedding on the Hill. With your group, imagine some scents you would like to smell – they could be of happy memories or an amazing adventure you wish you could experience.
  7. Reread **pages 98 to 102**, about the captain Bastibalagom's story. What do you think about the young Bastibal's choices? Do you think his papa would have forgiven him if he had jumped down from that tree?
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## Discussion Questions

8. Trying to escape the island, Tomek faces the terrifying witch who is keeping everyone under a curse. In your groups, discuss a time when you had to be brave like Tomek and how you felt before and after.
9. Read **page 148** again. If you had a chance to drink the magical waters from the River Qjar at the top of the Sacred Mountain, and so live for ever, would you? Discuss your reasons for your choice.
10. Imagine you are Tomek, journeying home from the Sacred Mountain, and you get the chance to send another note to Grandfather Isham. Write a letter, describing all the strange and wondrous things you've experienced.



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