

ERIN ENTRADA KELLY

EDUCATOR'S GUIDE

Includes discussion questions, extension activities, and reproducible activities.

 **Greenwillow Books**
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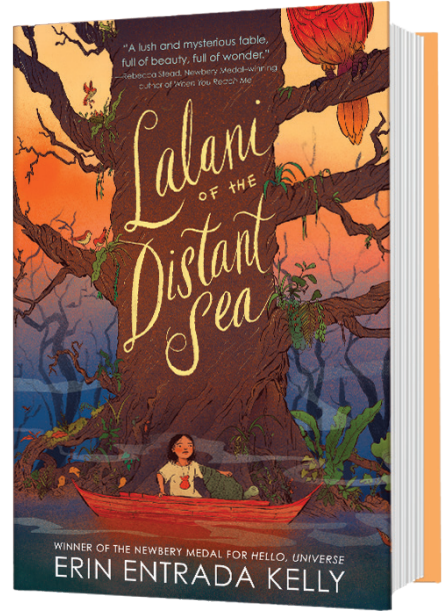
Jacket art and illustrations by Lian Cho

ABOUT THE BOOK

Life is difficult on the island of Sanlagita. To the west looms a vengeful mountain, one that threatens to collapse and bury the village at any moment. To the north, a dangerous fog swallows sailors who dare to venture out looking for a more hospitable land. The women live in fear of the deadly mender's disease, spread by the sharp needles they use to repair the men's fishing nets. And what does the future hold for young girls? Mending and more mending.

When Lalani Sarita's mother pricks her finger and falls ill, she gives twelve-year-old Lalani an impossible task—leave Sanlagita and find the riches of the legendary Mount Isa, which towers on an island to the north. But generations of men and boys have died on the same quest—how can a timid young girl survive the epic tests of the archipelago? And how will she manage without Veyda, her best friend?

Newbery Medalist Erin Entrada Kelly's debut fantasy novel is a gorgeous, literary adventure about bravery, friendship, self-reliance, and the choice between accepting fate or forging your own path.



Grades 3—7

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



New York Times–bestselling author Erin Entrada Kelly was awarded the Newbery Medal for *Hello, Universe*. She grew up in Lake Charles, Louisiana, and now lives in Delaware. She is a professor of children's literature in the graduate fiction and publishing programs at Rosemont College, where she earned her MFA. Her short fiction has been nominated for the Philippines Free Press Literary Award for Short Fiction and the Pushcart Prize. Erin Entrada Kelly's debut novel, *Blackbird Fly*, was a Kirkus Best Book, a School Library Journal Best Book, an ALSC Notable Book, and an Asian/Pacific American Literature Honor Book. She is also the author of *The Land of Forgotten Girls*, winner of the Asian/Pacific American Award for Literature, and *You Go First*, a Spring 2018 Indie Next Pick. The author's mother was the first in her family to immigrate to the United States from the Philippines, and she now lives in Cebu.

Author photo courtesy of Laurence Kesterson

PRAISE FOR *LALANI OF THE DISTANT SEA*

- ★ “Fast-paced and full of wonder, this is a powerful, gripping must-read.”
—*Kirkus Reviews* (starred review)
- ★ “[A] triumphant tale about fighting for the people one loves and staying true to oneself.”
—*Publishers Weekly* (starred review)
- ★ “Inspired by Filipino folklore, Newbery Medal-winner Kelly has woven her narrative with a mythology that is rich and delicious.”
—*Booklist* (starred review)
- ★ “Kelly’s beautifully rendered novel leaves readers with much to ponder.”
—*School Library Journal* (starred review)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Discuss the opening of the book with its map, picture of Lalani, and two pages of text. What does the map tell you about the story to come? What can you guess about Lalani's character based solely on her portrait? What do the two pages suggest about the plot, setting, and characters? Why do you think the author started this way instead of beginning with the first chapter?
2. Describe Lalani's life and personality in the early chapters. Discuss how she changes during the course of the novel. What causes her to change? What motivates her on her most dangerous adventures?
3. What can you tell about Lalani and Veyda from their friendship? What is Veyda like and what is her family situation? What are her hopes for the future? Why is it hard for her to pursue her interest in plants and healing? Discuss the statement: "Veyda lived in a world of truth, and she believed in it fiercely" (p. 125).
4. Hetsbi also appears early in the story and grows up a lot by the end of the book. What are some words that describe his character throughout the story? How do other boys treat him, and why? Why do the Pasa brothers urge him to kill a paahalusk, and how does Hetsbi respond?
5. How are men and women treated differently in Sanlagita? Why do Lalani and Veyda find this frustrating? Give examples of some ways in which Lalani's stepfather, stepbrother, and the Pasa brothers treat women and girls poorly. Discuss this quote: "There was no word for boys who weren't attractive," although there was the word *sahyoon* for girls (p. 133).
6. In what ways is Cade different from the Pasa brothers in his treatment of Lalani and Hetsbi? How would you describe Cade's character? What are some of the challenges that he faces and what are some of the good things that he does? What role does his brother, Esdel, play in the story?
7. Explain why Lalani climbs Mount Kahna, and talk about what happens to her there. How does Ellseth look and act? What is his history? How did he end up without eyes? Explain how he comes to give Lalani a wish, what she asks for, and the reason for her choice.
8. How do the villagers feel when it starts to rain? What difference do they expect the rain to make in their lives? What are the consequences when the rain doesn't stop? How does Lalani feel about her wish and what does she do to make things better? Why do you think Ellseth chose to deceive her?
9. Talk about the role of the menyoro in the village. Why is it always a man? Discuss Veyda's comment: "The menyoro's only interested in two things—being adored and being obeyed. And it seems you don't need knowledge for people to do either of those. You just need the right words" (p. 64). What happens to that menyoro?
10. What inspires Lalani to leave the island to try to find Mount Isa? How does she go about it? What setbacks does she face on her sea journey and what help does she get along the way? Discuss the role of the paahalusk and what Lalani later learns about why it helped her.
11. On Isa, Lalani encounters Usoa. Describe Usoa's appearance and personality. What happened to Usoa's mother? What is Usoa's goal in life and how does she pursue it? How does she help Lalani? Why do you think she gives that help? Recap the encounters between Bai-Vinca, Usoa, and Lalani. Why is Bai-Vinca so angry?
12. Explain what you think Lalani's mother means when she says, "The only way out is through" (p. 260). Why does Lalani think about that advice when she is traveling through the island with Usoa? Discuss some creatures and challenges they encounter on the journey besides Bai-Vinca, and how they deal with them.

- 13.** Why does Drum, Lalani’s stepfather, want to be the new menyoro? Describe the ceremony in which male villagers can cast a vote. Why does Hetsbi vote for Drum? How do Hetsbi and others trick Drum and Kul into leaving the island? How does the trick take advantage of Drum’s pride and self-image?
- 14.** Veyda’s mother comforts Lalani and Veyda one night by saying, “Sometimes you must feel pain . . . But when you tire from it, tell yourself: I will be okay. I will survive. Even if you don’t believe it. Eventually, you will. Because it was never a lie to begin with. You will. We all will” (p. 83). Discuss how her words relate to Lalani’s life and journey.
- 15.** Throughout the book there are pages with illustrations and stories of different creatures. How do these relate to the plot and to the chapters that precede or follow them? Why do you think they are illustrated? What do the pictures add? Analyze the narrative voice in these sections and discuss how it differs from the rest of the chapters.

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

Just Imagine. Ask students to choose one of the magical creatures and write a first-person story in which the student encounters the creature. The story should be based on the information given in *Lalani of the Distant Sea*, but they can also use their imaginations or research about Filipino folklore to add to the portrait of the creature. The plot should include overcoming obstacles and reaching a final goal.

Listen to the Voices. Have small groups of students choose favorite scenes that contain both dialogue and action. They should convert the scene into all dialogue, with a narrator to supply an introduction, background information, and transitions. The small groups should practice their scene and then perform it for their classmates by reading from scripts.

Book a Trip! Some travelers who enjoy danger might like to visit Sanlagita and Mount Isa. Invite students to create an illustrated travel brochure about those destinations. It should promote the attractions of each place but also note the possible hazards. The brochure should incorporate pictures as well as travel tips, such as what to pack and advice about food and weather.

Equal Rights for All. One of the downsides of Lalani’s life is the limited options for and negative attitudes toward women and girls. Ask students to list examples of injustice toward girls and women from the book. Then, have them come up with a ten-point plan of how to improve things on the island. They should note if any of their ideas appear in the last chapter of the book.

An Emoji for That Quote. Emojis are popular shorthand for expressing emotion. Brainstorm with students to create a bulletin board with emojis that show a range of feelings. Then ask each student to find three passages from the novel in which one of the emotions is expressed, or which evoked that emotion in them as a reader. The student should copy the passage, note the page number on it, and post it under that emotion on the bulletin board.



CHARACTER MOTIVATION CHART

INSTRUCTIONS: In order for a story to be believable, the reader must understand not just what a character does, but why they do it. Choose important actions of characters in the book and explain what motivated them and how you know.

CHARACTER	ACTION	MOTIVATION	YOUR REASONING
Name of the character	What did the character do?	Why did he or she do it?	How do you know the motivation?

CHARACTER/CREATURE PROFILE



NAME: _____

DESCRIPTION: _____

HABITAT/LOCATION: _____

POWERS (MAGICAL OR OTHER): _____

OTHER CHARACTERISTICS: _____