



GLOW

EDUCATOR GUIDE

ABOUT THE BOOK

It is the first week of seventh grade in coastal Florida, and a monster hurricane is building offshore. **Frano Dutka**, an irrepressible optimist, is convinced that Destiny has led him to Marshwood Middle School for a reason. **Cordelia Langley**, a fiercely rational science devotee, is certain that luck does not exist and that feelings are not facts. She is still reeling from her parents' divorce and her mother's move to New York.

When their teacher leads the class to a new aviary, Frano and Cordelia discover three abandoned bird chicks—chicks that, to their eyes alone, glow with an otherworldly light. Frano's research suggests the birds may be glow storks (*Mycteria lumen*), a species believed extinct for fifty years. Cordelia demands proof.

As Hurricane Luke strengthens, Frano and Cordelia race to protect the birds and navigate their own private storms: Frano's father sinking into

depression, and Cordelia's growing isolation. The hurricane strikes. In its aftermath, they must decide whether to keep the birds safe in captivity or trust them—and themselves—to an uncertain sky.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Content Note: *Glow* portrays a parent's depression with care. Frano's father struggles to get out of bed and is reluctant to take his medication. Educators may wish to preview these passages.

Resilience, Recovery, and Mental Health

1. Frano's mother says his father will "bounce back, like usual." How does the meaning of "bouncing back" change over the course of the novel? Is bouncing back the same as recovery?
2. Why is the moment when Frano's father swallows his medication so important to the story? What has changed in his father, and what role does Frano play?
3. Cordelia describes herself as "freezing" at moments of emotional pain, like "a girl-shaped glacier." What triggers these episodes? How does she eventually begin to thaw?
4. The novel ends without confirming whether the birds reach Washington or whether Frano's father keeps taking his medication. Why might the author have chosen to leave these outcomes open?

Climate Change and Environmental Stewardship

5. A meteorologist explains that the rapid intensification Hurricane Luke undergoes "simply did not happen twenty years ago." How does the novel connect the hurricane to climate change without turning it into a lecture?
6. Cordelia is passionate about banning plastic, but her classmates prefer "baby steps." Who do you think is right? Is there a cost to demanding all-or-nothing change?
7. The glow storks' ancestral island, Isla de la Luz, has been drowned by rising seas. How does the loss of habitat for the birds mirror the threats to human communities in the novel?
8. By the end, Cordelia buys a plastic-wrapped cookie from the EcoSquad bake sale and rolls a recycling bin to the table. What does this moment say about compromise and how real change happens?

Friendship, Family, and Belonging

9. Frano immediately calls Cordelia his “mission” and pursues her friendship with unwavering energy. What does Frano see in Cordelia that she cannot yet see in herself?
10. Cordelia maintains a “vow of silence” toward her mother. Why? What is she protecting herself from, and what does the vow ultimately cost her?
11. Cordelia’s father calls her “one hundred percent selfish” for refusing to go to New York. Is he right? Is Cordelia selfish, scared, or something else entirely?
12. Frano and Cordelia are opposites in almost every way. What finally brings them together? What does their friendship suggest about what we need from the people closest to us?

Science, Belief, and Ways of Knowing

13. Frano believes in Destiny “with a capital D.” Cordelia believes that “feelings aren’t facts.” How does the novel treat these two worldviews? Does one win out?
14. Only Frano and Cordelia can see the birds’ glow, and no camera can capture it. What might the glow represent? Why is it important that it cannot be proven to others?
15. Ms. Ortiz dismisses Frano’s glow stork research with a “pity” tone. How does the novel portray the gap between what children know and what adults are willing to believe?
16. Wendy is described as a “statistical anomaly” by Cordelia, yet she plays a crucial role. What does Wendy suggest about the limits of data and categorization?

Finding Your Voice and Letting Go

17. Cordelia quits Green Club because no one would listen. By the end, Eloise’s bake sale supports the very cause Cordelia championed. What does Cordelia learn about how influence actually works?
18. The climactic decision—to open the cage—falls to Cordelia, the character who has spent the novel trying to keep things safe and controlled. Why is it important that she is the one who opens the door?
19. The novel’s final image is a single glowing feather left in the cage. Cordelia steps “into its light.” What does this ending mean to you? What is Cordelia stepping into?



A Note on the Book’s Themes

Glow is, at its heart, a book about what we do when the things we depend on—a parent’s steadiness, a familiar home, a stable climate—begin to shift beneath us. The dual narration gives readers two very different lenses on the same crisis: Frano’s faith in destiny and luck, and Cordelia’s insistence on facts and evidence. Neither worldview is presented as wrong. Instead, the novel suggests that resilience requires both—the courage to hope and the discipline to look clearly at what is real.

The glowing birds sit at the intersection of these perspectives. They are scientifically plausible (bioluminescence exists in nature) yet stubbornly unverifiable (no camera captures the glow). For Frano, the glow is a sign; for Cordelia, it is a problem to solve. For both, caring for the birds becomes the vehicle through which they learn to care for themselves and each other.

Climate change is woven throughout the novel not as a lecture but as weather, landscape, and lived consequence: the record-warm ocean temperatures fueling Hurricane Luke, the rising tides that drowned the storks’ ancestral island, the everyday plastic that Cordelia rails against.



Curriculum Connections

Glow aligns naturally with ELA, science, and social-emotional learning standards.

English Language Arts (Common Core)

RL.6-8.2 — Determine a theme and analyze its development. Track the parallel arcs of Frano’s optimism and Cordelia’s rationalism.

RL.6-8.3 — Analyze how story elements interact. Examine how the hurricane structures the plot and mirrors emotional arcs.

RL.6-8.6 — Analyze contrasting points of view. Compare Frano’s and Cordelia’s alternating chapters.

W.6-8.1 — Write arguments with evidence. Should the birds be kept in captivity or set free?

W.6-8.3 — Write narratives. Write a chapter from Wendy’s, Ms. Ortiz’s, or the mother bird’s perspective.

SL.6-8.1 — Collaborative discussions. Socratic seminar on any thematic question set above.

Next Generation Science Standards

MS-LS2-4 — Ecosystem changes affect populations. Habitat loss from rising seas drives species migration.

MS-LS4-4 — Natural selection and adaptation. Discuss bioluminescence as an evolved trait.

MS-ESS3-2 — Natural hazard forecasting. Hurricane tracking and storm surge prediction are integral to the plot.

MS-ESS3-5 — Evidence of climate change. Record ocean temperatures and intensifying storms are referenced.

Social-Emotional Learning (CASEL)

Self-Awareness: Cordelia’s “glacier” moments and Frano’s evolving understanding of depression.

Social Awareness: Frano’s empathy models perspective-taking across difference.

Relationship Skills: Friendship through disagreement, patience, and shared purpose.

Responsible Decision-Making: Releasing the birds requires weighing evidence, values, risk, and trust.



Vocabulary Worth Exploring

Bioluminescence : The production of light by living organisms. Explore real-world examples and debate whether the storks’ glow could be scientifically possible.

Cone of Concern: The forecast area for a hurricane’s center. A powerful metaphor for the uncertainty both characters face.

Storm Surge: An abnormal rise of water pushed ashore by a storm. Connects to king tides and sea level rise.

Aviary: An enclosed structure for keeping birds. Represents both safety and confinement in the novel.

Invasive Species: A non-native organism causing ecological harm. Cordelia’s desire to dissect a lionfish signals her need for order.

Taxonomy: The system for classifying organisms. The distinction between *Mycteria americana* and *Mycteria lumen* drives the plot.

Evacuation Zone: An area designated for mandatory departure. Explore how policies intersect with income and equity.

Depression (clinical): A medical condition affecting mood and daily functioning. Frano’s father’s portrayal offers an age-appropriate, destigmatizing look.



Extension Activities

1. “Draw What You Dream Of” — Art + Writing

Assign students Ms. Ortiz’s opening prompt: “Sketch what you hope for.” After sketching, write a short reflection. Revisit after finishing the book and compare “before” and “after” responses.

2. Hurricane Tracker — Cross-Curricular Science + ELA

Using NOAA data, track a real Category 4+ hurricane. Then write two journal entries—one from Frano’s perspective (hopeful) and one from Cordelia’s (data-driven).

3. The Captivity Debate — Persuasive Writing

Stage a formal debate: Should the storks be kept in captivity or released? Assign “Team Cordelia” or “Team Frano” regardless of opinion. Require text evidence and ethical argument.

4. Plastic Audit — Environmental Science + Civic Action

Conduct a one-day plastic audit of the school cafeteria. Compile data, create infographics, and draft a proposal for one realistic change.

5. The Missing Chapter — Creative Writing

Write a chapter from another character’s point of view: Wendy finding the mother bird, Ms. Ortiz’s private doubts, Cordelia’s mother in New York, or Frano’s father alone on the couch.

6. Mapping the Glow — Research + Geography

Research real species whose ranges have shifted due to climate change (puffins, pikas, Joshua trees). Map original and current ranges.

7. Light Language — STEM + Art

Design a bioluminescent communication system: fast pulses for danger, steady glow for calm, flashes for emergency. Present as illustrated diagrams or animations.

Further Reading & Resources

For Students

- Hatchet by Gary Paulsen — Survival, self-reliance, and the natural world.
- A Wolf Called Wander by Rosanne Parry — A young wolf’s migration journey.
- The One and Only Ivan by Katherine Applegate — Captivity, freedom, and what we owe other species.
- Flush by Carl Hiaasen — Environmental activism through a middle-grade Florida adventure.
- We Dream of Space by Erin Entrada Kelly — Three siblings, divergent perspectives, a shared crisis.
- Hurricane Child by Kheryn Callender — A hurricane, identity, and family on the U.S. Virgin Islands.

For Educators

- NOAA Hurricane Education — weather.gov/education
- National Audubon Society — audubon.org/conservation
- CASEL SEL Framework — casel.org
- NAMI — nami.org — Resources for discussing mental health with young people.

