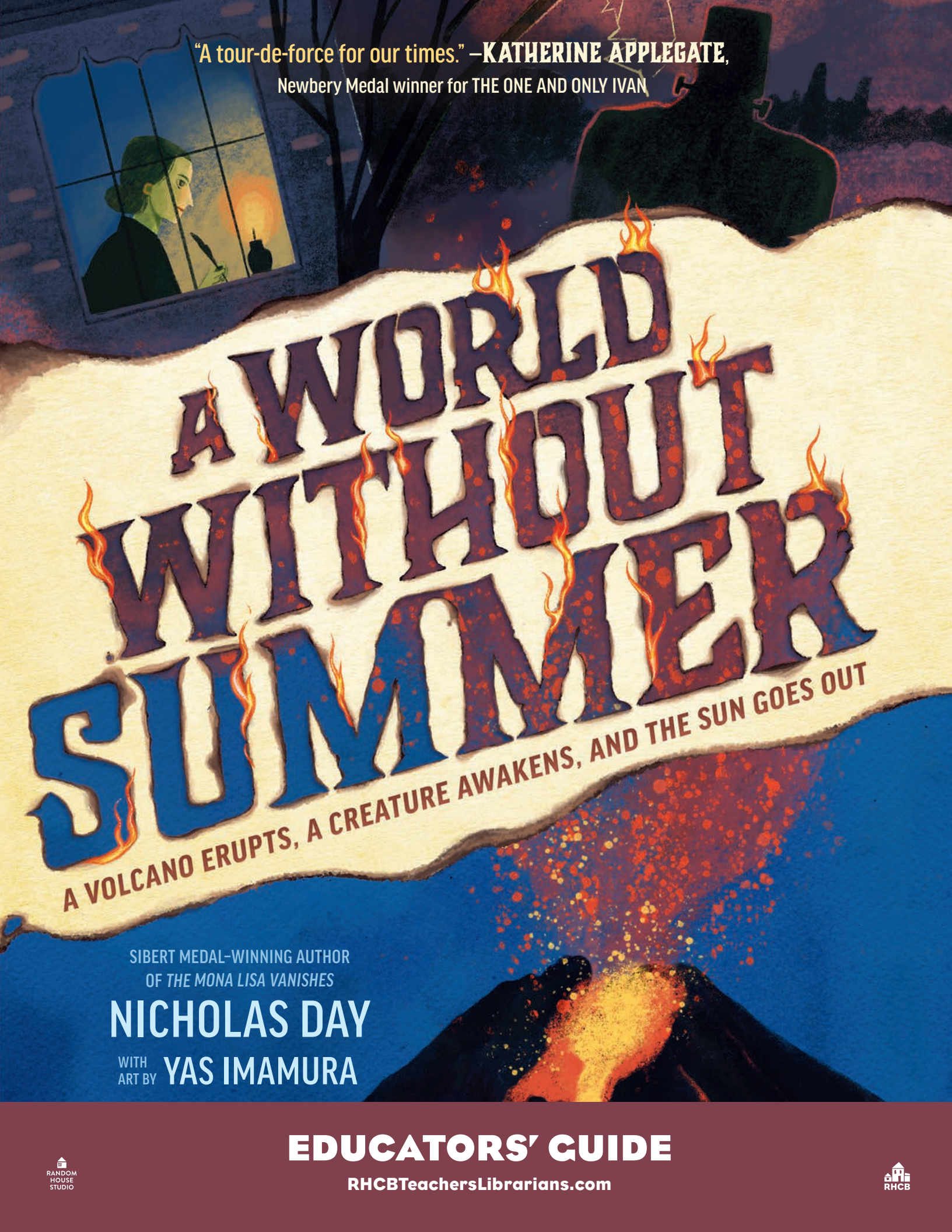


"A tour-de-force for our times." –KATHERINE APPLEGATE,
Newbery Medal winner for THE ONE AND ONLY IVAN



A WORLD WITHOUT SUMMER

A VOLCANO ERUPTS, A CREATURE AWAKENS, AND THE SUN GOES OUT

SIBERT MEDAL-WINNING AUTHOR
OF THE MONA LISA VANISHES

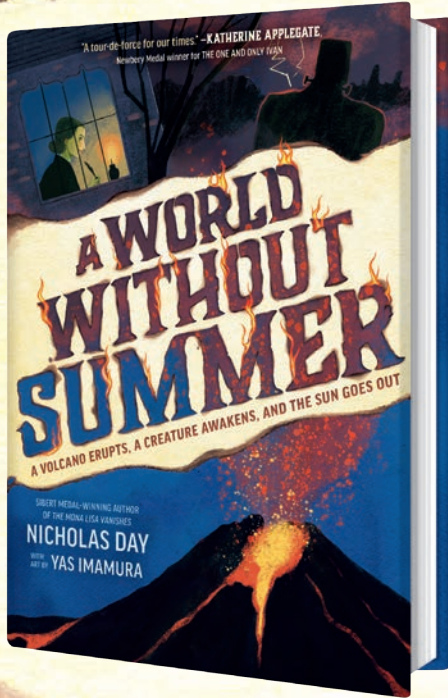
NICHOLAS DAY

WITH
ART BY **YAS IMAMURA**

EDUCATORS' GUIDE

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— ABOUT THE BOOK —



The world was upside down. The wind was fire. The sky was ash. The rain was rock.

A couple of hundred years ago, on a quiet Indonesian island, a volcano called Tambora erupted with a force and violence that changed history.

It tore apart the island, and in the months and years that followed, its fallout tore apart the world. The sun refused to shine; the rain refused to stop. Everything that everyone assumed would always be there—a world that made sense, a climate that made sense—was instantly gone.

From this riot of thunder and lightning, a young woman named Mary Shelley conceived of a scientist and his cursed creature. From the nightmare of Tambora, she wrote a nightmare of a book: *Frankenstein*—a terrifying reminder of how much damage we humans might do, without even realizing it.

This is the story of a volcano that changed the world and a creature that changed us.

Once upon a time, everything was different. And no one knew if it would ever be the same.

In this masterful work of middle-grade nonfiction, Nicholas Day, author of the Sibert Award-winning *The Mona Lisa Vanishes*, brings us a story taken from the archives but seemingly scripted for us today: a tale of climate change and human folly and hope—and what happens when the world suddenly goes wrong.

About the Author

Nicholas Day is the author of *The Mona Lisa Vanishes*, winner of the Robert F. Sibert Award and the Boston Globe–Horn Book Award for Nonfiction. He is also the author of the picture book *Nothing*, which received three starred reviews, and the adult narrative nonfiction title *Baby Meets World*. He has written regularly for *Slate*; his work has also appeared in *The Atlantic*, *The New York Times*, and *The Washington Post*, among other publications. Visit him online at bynicholasday.com and on Instagram at [@bynicholasday](https://www.instagram.com/bynicholasday).



About the Illustrator

Yas Imamura is an Asian American illustrator living in Portland, Oregon. Her works include collaborations with Anthropologie and Sanrio, as well as her growing list of children's books, including *Love in the Library* by Maggie Tokuda-Hall, which received four starred reviews. Her preferred materials are gouache and watercolor, and she often finds herself drawn to projects that are playful, mysterious, and a little offbeat. Visit Yas Imamura on Instagram at [@yas.illustration](https://www.instagram.com/yas.illustration).



— PRE-READING ACTIVITIES —

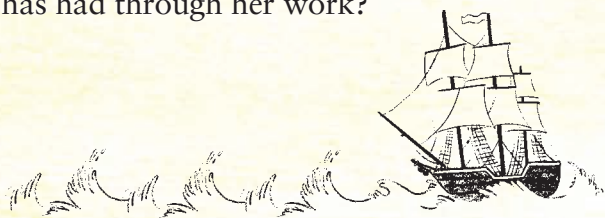
1. What do you already know about volcanoes and notable volcanic eruptions? Have you ever heard of Tambora? What about Mary Shelley and her book *Frankenstein*? What questions do you have about these topics before you begin reading this book?
2. This book has a somewhat cryptic subtitle: *A Volcano Erupts, a Creature Awakens, and the Sun Goes Out*. What predictions can you make about this book based on its subtitle? Which of the three topics intrigues you the most, and why?
3. Jacket art and interior illustrations for this book were created by Yas Imamura. What clues does the cover of this book—including its font choice and the featured images—offer us about the story?
4. Take a look at the synopsis of the book on the inside flap of the front cover. What questions does that summary raise for you before you begin reading?
5. Scan the table of contents. There are some very creative chapter titles here, such as “Snow and Scandal” and “How to Make a Man into a Horse.” What predictions do you have about the book based on the chapter titles?
6. The book you are about to read is true; these events really happened. Talk about nonfiction, and distinguish it from fiction writing. Nonfiction books often include features you might not find in a fiction book, such as an index and source notes. Grown-ups, share the purpose of these elements with students in advance of reading so they are aware of the resources and can access them while reading this book.
7. Create a graphic organizer with the headers *Connect*, *Extend*, and *Challenge*. As you’re reading, keep track of connections you can make to the information (such as other books you’ve read on these topics, video games you’re reminded of, etc.); new ideas you gain while reading that broaden your thinking about this topic; and questions you’re puzzling over while reading. The goal is to connect this to prior knowledge, actively process the information you’re taking in while reading, and synthesize the material upon the book’s completion.



READING ACTIVITIES — AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS —

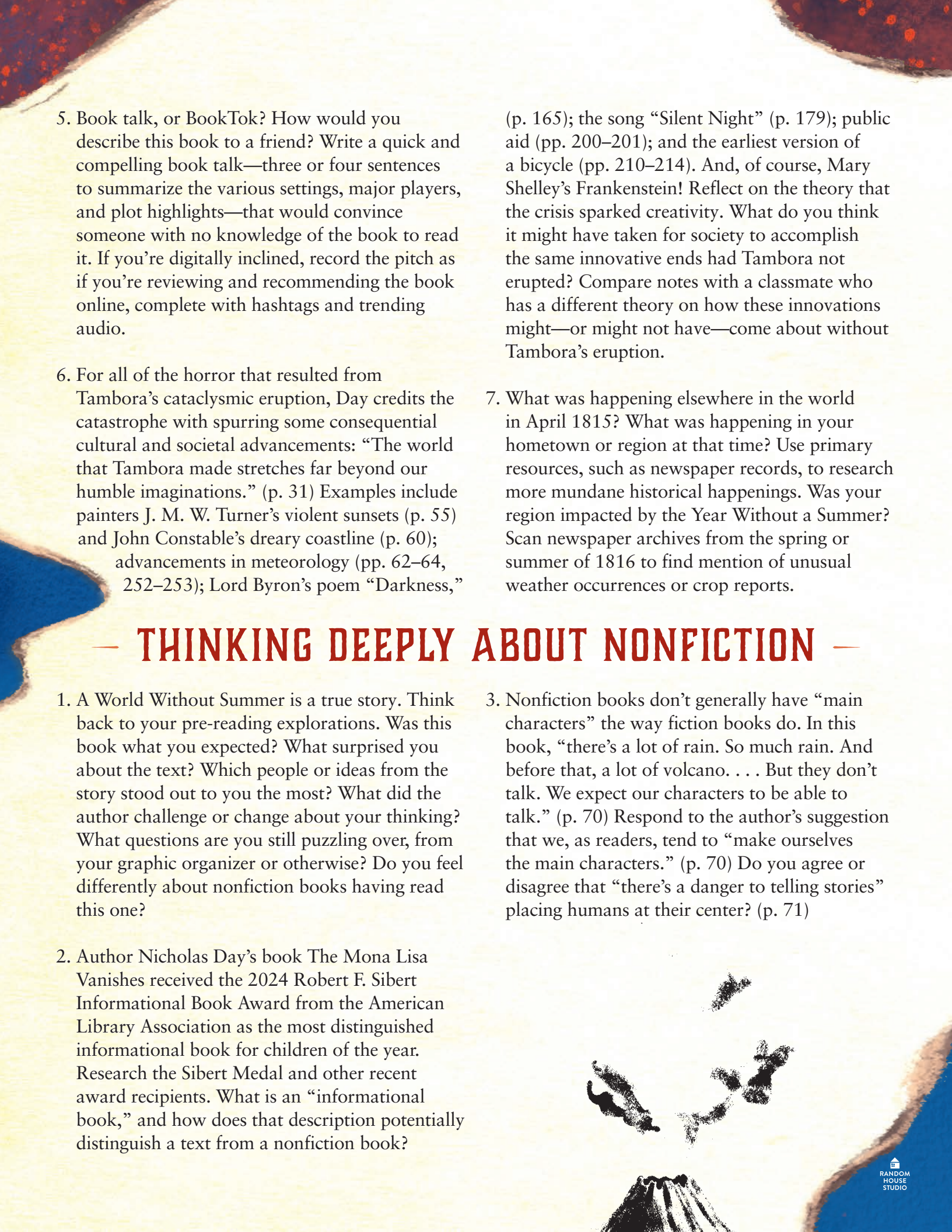
1. Our story begins in the archipelago of Indonesia. What is an archipelago? Find Indonesia on a map, then locate the island Sumbawa, home of Mount Tambora. Now find a map that shows Indonesia relative to its tectonic plates, and identify the Ring of Fire. Research the Ring of Fire and its geographic and geological significance. Keep Tambora's location within this volatile basin in mind as you read the book.
2. Illustrator Yas Imamura used digital brushes and gouache to create artwork that appears throughout the book. What are these materials—digital brushes and gouache? Sometimes nonfiction books will include photographs or other primary visual resources. Why might this particular story rely on original artwork? What does the artwork signal to you as you're reading? How does this specific artwork support Nicholas Day's storytelling?
3. Create a timeline and update it with major events and significant dates as you are reading. Clearly we'll note April 10, 1815, as a bold entry! What other notable events will you add to your timeline? Feel free to work as a class on a larger timeline, and consider including sketches with visual representations of the events you include.
4. Early in the book, author Nicholas Day introduces us to the phrase "climate shock—a sudden, terrifying shift in the seasons." (p. 2) Is this a term you're familiar with? Can you think of recent examples of climate shocks, such as prolonged drought in the Horn of Africa or California's forest fires, environmental events that bring "the chaos, the uncertainty, the fear" (p. 2) like that which followed Tambora's eruption? As you're reading, keep a list of questions you have about climate shock and work with a trusted adult to find reliable sources for climate science information to answer those questions.
5. This book starts with Tambora's eruption, then weaves the stories of Mary Shelley and the weather-related catastrophes of the Year Without a Summer. Discuss the author's choice of verb tense (see pp. 1, 38, and 260, for example), the narrative flow of *A World Without Summer*, and the use of multiple plot threads to advance the overarching theme. Is this the first book you've read that connects seemingly disparate elements into one tight story, or can you think of others? What effect does it have on you as a reader to piece together multiple events occurring in different places at the same time?
6. Which unillustrated scene of the story is so cinematic you can picture it in your mind as you're reading? Create a four-panel comic rendering of that moment from the story in a graphic novel format.
7. Author Nicholas Day's writing style is distinctive—it's concise yet floridly descriptive, sardonic but still collegial, frank and informative, and occasionally grim. How did the narrative voice make you feel as you read this book? Create a collage or a playlist inspired by the book's tone and pace.
8. "The event is local, but the effects are global." (p. 46) Still, it took months for word of Tambora's eruption to reach the United States press, and even then, coverage was scant. (p. 83) In our modern era, with a twenty-four-hour news cycle, how might word of such an eruption spread today, via either traditional or social media? Write an Associated Press-style report (include the five W's: who, what, when, where, and why) announcing the catastrophe, or create a digital post, video, or meme that shares news of Tambora's 1815 eruption. How does your knowledge impact your reporting? "How do you tell a story when the people in the story don't know what's happening?" (p. 38)

9. Through her writing, Mary Shelley was grappling with monumental questions about scientific curiosity, blind ambition, and the fundamental nature of humanity. If you haven't read *Frankenstein*, are you familiar with any parodies or satires of the story, or modern cultural references to the monster? Imagine that Mary Shelley is a neighbor who has invited you over to chat. What questions do you have for her? What would you tell Mary about the lasting impact she has had through her work?
10. The devastating eruption of Tambora is the initial natural disaster mentioned in this story, but there are others, including a tsunami (p. 29), floods (p. 114), and drought (p. 112). No matter where you live, you're likely to be vulnerable to some natural weather-related phenomenon. What are the inherent or human-made risks of your geographic area? What steps can you take to prepare for this natural disaster? What steps might you take as a community to mitigate its effects? Climate crisis is stressful. What are some coping strategies you might employ to find reassurance when you're feeling scared, angry, or overwhelmed about climate change?



— POST-READING QUESTIONS —

1. Again, find Sumbawa, Indonesia, on a map. If you wanted to visit Sumbawa today, how would you get there? What about Lake Geneva? Pretend to be a travel agent planning a trip for clients from your hometown to one of those places. What modes of transportation would you recommend? What cities might they stop in along the way? What tourist attractions might they visit nearby? What local delicacies should your clients sample while traveling? What languages will be spoken at the destination? Are there local customs they should be aware of and sensitive to?
2. Have you ever heard of the butterfly effect, the idea that a small change in one system can have a big impact in another, seemingly unrelated area? Research the butterfly effect as it relates to weather predictions and discuss how you might apply the theory to volcanic eruptions. Those particularly interested in patterns within complex and sensitive systems may enjoy additional research on the mathematical field of chaos theory.
3. For such a deeply impactful event, the eruption of Tambora is relatively unknown among
- notable volcanic disasters. Research a volcanic eruption of your choice—perhaps Mount Vesuvius, Mount St. Helens, or another eruption mentioned in the book, like Laki (pp. 103–106)—and compare the details and impact of that event to what you've learned about the eruption of Tambora. Create a Venn diagram to visualize the similarities and differences between your chosen volcano and Tambora. With an adult, consult the Smithsonian Institution's Global Volcanism Program and the U.S. Geological Survey's data reports online to track current volcanic activity.
4. As a group, brainstorm a list of questions you might ask if you were interviewing the raja, one of the few survivors of Tambora's eruption. Pair up and take turns being the interviewer and the interviewee. Because we have only "a summary recorded months later by a British representative," (p. 24) you'll likely be inferring your answers based on what you've learned from the book. Proceed with respect and caution: "This is a book about what we know, and only what we know. There is no imagination here." (p. 25)

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5. Book talk, or BookTok? How would you describe this book to a friend? Write a quick and compelling book talk—three or four sentences to summarize the various settings, major players, and plot highlights—that would convince someone with no knowledge of the book to read it. If you're digitally inclined, record the pitch as if you're reviewing and recommending the book online, complete with hashtags and trending audio.
6. For all of the horror that resulted from Tambora's cataclysmic eruption, Day credits the catastrophe with spurring some consequential cultural and societal advancements: "The world that Tambora made stretches far beyond our humble imaginations." (p. 31) Examples include painters J. M. W. Turner's violent sunsets (p. 55) and John Constable's dreary coastline (p. 60); advancements in meteorology (pp. 62–64, 252–253); Lord Byron's poem "Darkness," (p. 165); the song "Silent Night" (p. 179); public aid (pp. 200–201); and the earliest version of a bicycle (pp. 210–214). And, of course, Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*! Reflect on the theory that the crisis sparked creativity. What do you think it might have taken for society to accomplish the same innovative ends had Tambora not erupted? Compare notes with a classmate who has a different theory on how these innovations might—or might not have—come about without Tambora's eruption.
7. What was happening elsewhere in the world in April 1815? What was happening in your hometown or region at that time? Use primary resources, such as newspaper records, to research more mundane historical happenings. Was your region impacted by the Year Without a Summer? Scan newspaper archives from the spring or summer of 1816 to find mention of unusual weather occurrences or crop reports.

— THINKING DEEPLY ABOUT NONFICTION —

1. *A World Without Summer* is a true story. Think back to your pre-reading explorations. Was this book what you expected? What surprised you about the text? Which people or ideas from the story stood out to you the most? What did the author challenge or change about your thinking? What questions are you still puzzling over, from your graphic organizer or otherwise? Do you feel differently about nonfiction books having read this one?
2. Author Nicholas Day's book *The Mona Lisa Vanishes* received the 2024 Robert F. Sibert Informational Book Award from the American Library Association as the most distinguished informational book for children of the year. Research the Sibert Medal and other recent award recipients. What is an "informational book," and how does that description potentially distinguish a text from a nonfiction book?
3. Nonfiction books don't generally have "main characters" the way fiction books do. In this book, "there's a lot of rain. So much rain. And before that, a lot of volcano. . . . But they don't talk. We expect our characters to be able to talk." (p. 70) Respond to the author's suggestion that we, as readers, tend to "make ourselves the main characters." (p. 70) Do you agree or disagree that "there's a danger to telling stories" placing humans at their center? (p. 71)

4. “When the weather went awry,” paranoia and panic set in globally, and “theories driven by fear, not logic” ran rampant. (p. 98) Many explanations were seized upon to explain the wild weather, most of them wrong. (pp. 93–102, 128) To be fair, the evidence that was available at the time was subject to interpretation, “and the whole notion of expertise was still being worked out.” (p. 107) But, decades prior, “Benjamin Franklin had connected volcanoes with climate change. No one paid any attention.” (pp. 105–106) Why are some people, even today, skeptical of or loath to credit scientific experts? What is the difference between misinformation and disinformation? What are their risks? What are your responsibilities in identifying and responding to each?
5. Picture books can be a terrific complement for nonfiction units, particularly for older readers. Offer a picture book on topics adjacent to *A World Without Summer*, potentially including *She Made a Monster: How Mary Shelley Created Frankenstein* (Fulton & Sala, 2018); *The Running Machine* (Negley, 2024); and *Volcano Atlas* (Jackson & Lee, 2024).
6. Accounts of Tambora’s eruption are limited; roughly “twelve thousand individuals in [the immediate area] at the time of the eruption . . . only five or six survive.” (p. 24) How are we to interpret history when those who directly experience it cannot tell their stories? Whose voices are present here? Whose voices are missing? Think about the raja and his family, and about sailors on the *Benares*, but also think about potential biases a colonial British officer like Sir Stamford Raffles might lend his account (pp. 12–13). As Day notes, history is “tilted in favor of who wrote what down where and whose writings were preserved.” (p. 112) How do we reconcile a lens of bias or limited voices when informing our modern understanding of history?
7. Author Nicholas Day acknowledges the risk that we, as nonfiction readers, might become inured to the tragedies of Tambora, having read extensively of its consequences. (pp. 192–193) “It’s easy to stop noticing the badness.” (p. 193) Respond to the theory that the more we hear about a topic, “the less shocking it may feel.” (p. 192) Can you think of examples of this beyond the current climate crisis? How do we balance paying attention to “an exhausting litany of bad news” (p. 193) with protecting our mental health?

Educators’ Guide by Kit Ballenger

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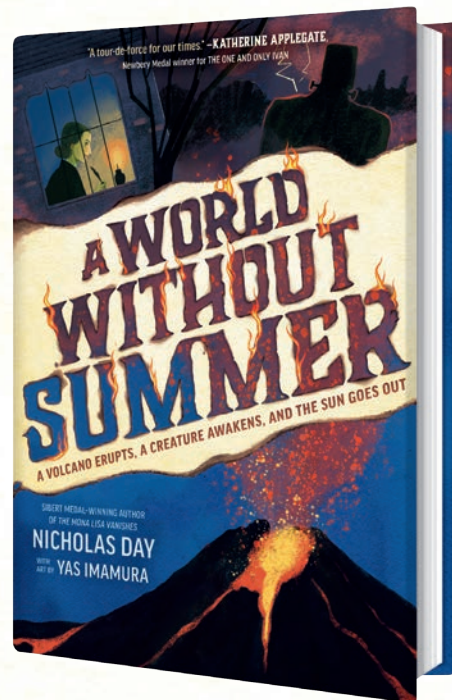
— PRAISE FOR — A WORLD WITHOUT SUMMER

★ “A multifaceted narrative that illustrates how natural disasters affect climate change.”

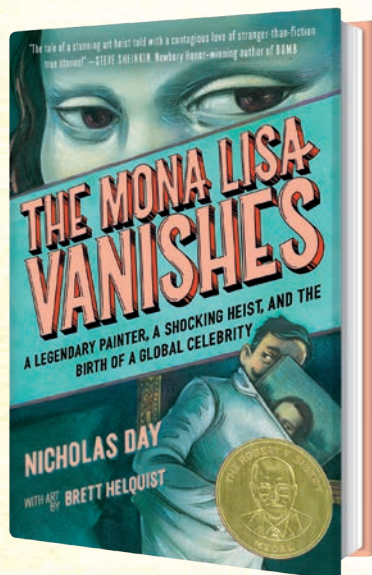
—*Publishers Weekly*, starred review

“A cautionary tale of what we will all face, climate-wise, if we don’t heed the warning signs.”

—*Kirkus Reviews*



— ALSO BY — NICHOLAS DAY



★ “A multistranded yarn skillfully laid out.”

—*Kirkus Reviews*, starred review

★ “Wildly entertaining.” —*Publishers Weekly*, starred review

★ “Engaging.” —*Booklist*, starred review

“An intriguing exploration of a significant yet little-known event.”

—*School Library Journal*

“Excellent.” —*The Horn Book*

“[A] bit of historical fun.” —*The Bulletin*

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