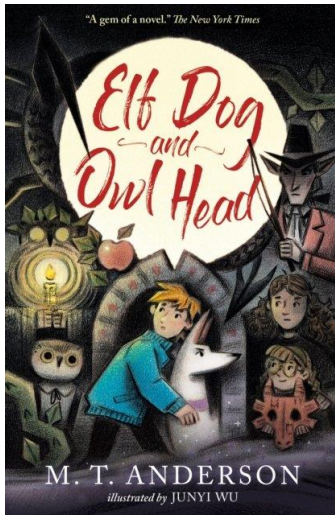


Berkshire Book Award 2025: Shortlisted title

Elf Dog and Owl Head by M.T. Anderson and Junyi Wu (Illustrator)

A magical adventure about a boy and his dog—or a dog and her boy—and a forest of wonders hidden in plain sight.



Clay has had his fill of home life. A global plague has brought the world to a screeching halt, and with little to look forward to but a summer of video-calling friends, vying with annoying sisters for the family computer, and tuning out his parents' financial worries, he's only too happy to retreat to the woods. From the moment the elegant little dog with the ornate collar appears like an apparition among the trees, Clay sees something uncanny in her. With this mysterious Elphinore as guide, he'll glimpse ancient secrets folded all but invisibly into the forest. Each day the dog leads Clay down paths he never knew existed, deeper into the unknown.

But they aren't alone in their surreal adventures. There are traps and terrors in the woods, too, and if Clay isn't careful, he might stray off the path and lose his way forever.

Discussion Questions

- What did you think of the decision to open the story Under the Mountain? How do you think your view of the characters would have changed if the opening perspective had been of Clay's home, or Owl Head's?
- Do you feel the illustrations compliment the story? Why/ why not? Would you have chosen a different art style? If so, what and why?
- In chapter 13, DiRossi meets Vud, what do you think of their relationship?
- On page 148 DiRossi says unique phrases such as: "Laughter is the sound you make when you're trying to hide choking on tears." Or "The river of time! It flows so fast. The current is without mercy." What do you think she means? Can you make up any of your own unique phrases?
- Which of the siblings do you relate to more? What did you like most or least about the changing family dynamics?
- Where do you think Elphinore truly belongs? Why? What makes a home?

Further resources can be found at:

- <https://media.btsb.com/TitleLessonPlans/4467.pdf>
- <https://school.teachingbooks.net/tb.cgi?tid=87920>