

FANTASY READING GROUP GUIDE

Chronicles of Ancient Darkness #1: Wolf Brother
by Michelle Paver

Septimus Heap Book One: Magyk
by Angie Sage

The Wizard Test
by Hilari Bell

Introduction

Fantasy conjures up visions of magic, wizards, imaginary places, knights on quests, and princesses in need of rescuing—in other words, elements, happenings, and settings that are not possible in our world, as we know it. Perhaps that is why readers enjoy fantasy—both to escape and to find themselves. The reader can become the wizard who vanquishes the dragon, leaving the problems of the real world behind. But the reader can also relate to the trials that fantasy characters must endure before they succeed and, perhaps, even use some of these strategies to deal with real-life problems.

The Chronicles of Ancient Darkness #1: *Wolf Brother*
by Michelle Paver

About the Book

After his father is killed by a demon-possessed bear, Torak is left alone in the ancient Forest to find his way to the Mountain to ask the World Spirit for help. Captured by the Raven Clan, Torak learns about his father's past and why the Soul-Eater created the demon bear. Led by his guide, a young orphaned wolf, and with the aid of a young woman who helps him escape from the Raven Clan, Torak seeks to fulfill the promise he made to his father—that he would find the Mountain, or die trying. During their arduous journey to the Mountain, Torak must locate the three most powerful pieces of the Nanuak in order to gain the World Spirit's help. Only then will it be possible to vanquish the demon bear, but Torak's battle with evil is far from over.

Pre-reading Activity

Create packets with information about prehistoric clans from different continents. Divide the class into small groups and assign each a prehistoric clan to research. With the help of the packets, ask students to research the traditions and culture of their clan. What is the hierarchy within the clan? How is their culture different or similar to cultures in today's world?

Discussion Questions

1. Why is Torak so upset and bewildered by his dying father's insistence that he swear to find the Mountain of the World Spirit (pp. 7–8)? Does Torak understand why his father has asked him to find a mountain that he thought was imaginary?
2. What does Torak's vision, when he finds the lone wolf cub, have to do with his father's prediction that Torak's guide will find him (p. 19)? Do you think Torak has any idea at this point what his connection is with Wolf?
3. Wolf calls Torak a Tall Tailless and considers him a pack-brother. Why doesn't Wolf respond in a similar manner to Renn? Does Wolf's opinion of the female tailless change with time? If so, why?
4. What does Torak do to stop the fight with Hord? Why does this self-protective action change the way Fin-Kedinn views Torak (pp. 78–84)? What do the legends say and how does Torak's action foretell of his identity? Why doesn't Torak know about the Clan legends that are so familiar to the rest of the people? Do you think Torak's lack of knowledge helps or hinders him in his quest?
5. Hord tells Torak about his time with the Red Deer Clan and what he knows about the demon bear (pp. 90–91). How does Hord's involvement with the demon bear's creation relate to his overpowering need to be the one who saves the Clans? Do you think Hord can think rationally, based on what he knows and has seen?
6. Torak escapes from captivity because he is helped by one of the Raven Clan (pp. 110–113). Why does Renn help Torak? What does she know about Torak's quest to find the Mountain of the World Spirit and the future of their people? If you had been in Renn's place, knowing what she knows, would you have gone with Torak on his quest?
7. Who is the Walker and why do you think he does not refer to himself as "I"? What role does he play in helping Torak on his search for the Nanuak (pp. 163–171)? Do you think Torak's father knew the Walker? If so, what was their relationship and how does it affect Torak's quest?
8. When Torak and Renn are caught in the snowstorm, he must decide between protecting the Nanuak and risking it to save Renn. Do you think he made the right decision? How does Renn feel about his decision (p. 237)? What would you have done in Torak's place?
9. How do the Soul-Eaters relate to the crippled man who created the demon bear (pp. 266–267)? Are they part of the reason why Torak's father kept him away from the Clans? Whom was he trying to protect Torak from? Do you think Torak's father made the right decision?
10. In the end . . . the World Spirit destroys the demon bear. In return, does the Spirit receive the payment it wants? Does this mean the terror is over and the Clans can live in peace and harmony? Do you think Torak's quest has come to an end? If not, what is he seeking and what or who do you think he will battle next?

Visit www.wolfbrother.com to learn more about this exciting series!

Septimus Heap Book One: Magyk

By Angie Sage

About the Book

On the same night that Silas Heap's seventh son, Septimus, is pronounced dead at birth, Silas comes across an abandoned baby in the Forest. The Heap family takes her in to raise as their own, unaware that is the Royal Princess. Ten years later, the Supreme Custodian, who has been searching for the baby now named Jenna, and his hired Assassin have discovered her whereabouts. To save Jenna's life, the Heaps must take the Princess deep into the marshes to hide. Escaping with the Heaps are Marcia, the ousted ExtraOrdinary Wizard, and Boy 412, an unwilling participant from the Young Army. But fate has placed Boy 412 with the fleeing wizards for a reason.

Pre-reading Activity

Discuss how a book's cover art may predict the story or how it may be misleading. Examine the cover of *Magyk* and discuss the symbols and other illustrations featured. Have students write a description of what these items may represent.

Discussion Questions

1. Marcia, the ExtraOrdinary Wizard, leaves a baby girl in the Forest for Silas Heap to find. Why do you think Marcia chooses Silas as the wizard to raise this child? Is there something unique about Silas or his family that causes her to make this decision?
2. A hired Assassin discovers what the Princess looks like and where she has been living. If you accidentally discovered Jenna's true identity, would you tell anyone? If so, which character in *Magyk* would you confide your knowledge to and why?
3. DomDaniel thinks his inept Apprentice is important in a grandiose plan to regain his position as the ExtraOrdinary Wizard. What does DomDaniel think he knows about the Apprentice that makes this boy valuable to his plans? Do you think DomDaniel is correct in his assumption? If you knew the Apprentice's identity, would you tell him or his Master?
4. Jenna wants to know what happened when DomDaniel climbed the Wizard Tower and "disappeared." Why do people, even the wizards, think he is gone? Would you have believed his disappearance if you had seen what Alther Mella did from atop the tower?
5. While walking through the marsh, Silas falls and is quickly pulled down into the bog. If you were Silas and knew what was down under the mud yanking on your hair, would you have panicked? What do you think would have happened if the Boggart hadn't used his unique method to release Silas?
6. When Boy 412 gets lost in the marsh fog, he falls headfirst down a hole and finds a mysterious object at the bottom. Does he share his discovery with anyone else, or even the fact that he has found a secret place? Why do you think he makes the choice he does?

7. If you found a Magyk book, what kinds of things might you find in the pockets? If you *made* a Magyk book, what types of items would you put in the pockets to imprint your spells?
8. When Simon, the eldest Heap son, disappears, Silas is frantic. Where is Simon and what does the Supreme Custodian offer him? Where you surprised by Simon's response? How would you have reacted in Simon's place, considering his role in the Heap family?
9. Silas asks Morwenna, a Wendron Witch, to help him find Simon. Why does Morwenna agree to help? If you were in her place, would you have felt a debt to Silas? Is Sarah rightfully bewildered by Morwenna's comment about the other *three* Heap children who are not present? Does Morwenna know something Sarah doesn't?
10. Boy 412 agrees to become Marcia's Apprentice and is told that, in return for his consent, he can make a request of her. What does he request of the reinstated ExtraOrdinary Wizard? Do you think the answer will change his life? If you could place a different *Magyk* character in Boy 412's place, who would it be and what would you have him or her ask for?

Visit www.septimusheap.com to learn more about this exciting series!

The Wizard Test

by Hilari Bell

About the Book

On his fourteenth birthday, Dayven passes the wizard test, but he swore to his mother on her deathbed that he would not become a wizard. Nevertheless, at the request of the Lordowner, Dayven agrees to become a wizard apprentice to spy on the wizards. He is apprenticed to Reddick, an eccentric wizard who takes him into the city of the enemy, the Cenzar, where Dayven becomes friends with a young Cenzar soldier. Surprised by the joy he feels while using his powers, Dayven is caught between the soldiering career his mother chose for him and the destiny his healing powers demand of him. Dayven must choose between what he swore he would do and what his heart tells him is right.

Pre-reading Activity

Brainstorm for ideas that describe how a wizard might look and act. How does he or she dress? What might you find in the pockets of a wizard's robe? How do you recognize a wizard? Ask students to create a wizard description, listing attributes for comparison with the actual wizards in *The Wizard Test*.

Discussion Questions

1. Dayven becomes very angry when he hears the whispers of "wizard born." Why does this two-word whisper elicit such a strong response in Dayven? If you were in Dayven's place, would you be afraid of what "wizard born" might mean when you turned fourteen? Why or why not?

2. No one speaks of what happens during the wizard test, so Dayven is unprepared for what occurs. How does he react to the “show” the wizard puts on for his benefit? Would you have been able to recognize the “real” magic that occurred?
3. Dayven is taken aback when Lord Enar asks him how he feels about his father’s death. Why does Lord Enar ask this pointed question before he tells Dayven what he wants him to do? How would you have reacted in Dayven’s place?
4. Dayven fears he will break his promise to his mother if he becomes a wizard apprentice. What was his promise? Do you think it is possible to be an apprentice to a wizard and not break such a promise, considering what Master Senna says about knowing magic (p. 26)?
5. Dayven is assigned as an apprentice to Reddick, a quite unique wizard. Consider your initial responses to the Pre-reading Activity. Does Reddick fit your description? Why or why not?
6. Dayven is able to see his cousin, Soren, in his visions but not Vadeen (pp. 120–122). What does Reddick tell Dayven about the use of visions? Would you like to have Dayven’s power of vision? If so, who do you think is the first person who would appear in your inner vision and why?
7. When Dayven uses his magic to heal a dying mare, Vadeen tells him that it must be wonderful to be a wizard. Why does Dayven respond with “It *would* be” (p. 127)? Do you think he can control whether or not he is a wizard? Would it be right for him to deny his gift?
8. After his travels with Reddick, Dayven has a much broader picture of the war between the Tharn and Cenzar. How does Dayven justify betraying his people while still wanting to be a Tharn Guardian (pp. 150–151)? Do you agree with his reasoning? Would you have made a similar decision?
9. In his reporting to the Lordowner, do you think Dayven stays “within the technical definition of honor”? With the broader view of the war and its effects in mind, do you think he truly is betraying the Tharn (pp. 155–156)? Would the Lordowner agree with Dayven’s broader view of the war? Why or why not?
10. Dayven quietly uses his magic to heal the wounded soldiers. How does he react when the surgeon says magic cannot be used to heal the enemy, including the severely wounded Vadeen (pp. 162–165)? What does Dayven do and how does it change his destiny? Do you think Dayven, knowing what he does about the war and who he has become, has any other option?

About the Authors

Michelle Paver

Since the age of ten, Michelle Paver has dreamed about running with the wild wolves in the prehistoric forest. Writing *The Chronicles of Ancient Darkness* series has been a way for her to fulfill this dream. To research *Wolf Brother*, Michelle traveled through the forests of northern Finland and Lapland; slept on reindeer skins; ate lichens, forest berries, and pine resin (Stone Age chewing gum); and peered into the

mouth of a very large brown bear. Born in Malawi, she moved to England as a young girl. She is the author of several adult novels, and this is her first children's book.

Angie Sage

Angie Sage was born in London and grew up in the Thames Valley, London, and Kent. As a child she loved reading and would often escape to the orchards at the back of the house with a book. She particularly liked E. Nesbit's and Elizabeth Gouge's books. Her father worked in publishing and would bring back wonderful "dummy" books, beautifully bound blank pages that she would fill with pictures and stories. She has written about a dozen books for younger readers and illustrated quite a few too, but *Septimus Heap* is her first novel.

She has two daughters, Laurie and Lois, who are grown up now but still give her lots of ideas. She lives in Cornwall, which is itself a Magykal place.

Hilari Bell

Hilari Bell lives in her hometown of Denver, Colorado. Her favorite books are fantasy, science fiction, and mystery—all ingredients for a great story. Her novels for children include *The Goblin Wood* and *A Matter of Profit*. You can visit Hilari Bell online at www.sfga.org/members/bell.

Chronicles of Ancient Darkness #1:

Wolf Brother

By Michelle Paver

Tr 0-06-072825-6 • \$16.99

Lb 0-06-072826-4 • \$17.89

CD 0-06-075838-4 • \$27.95

Ages: 10 up • Grades: 5 up

Septimus Heap

Book One: Magyk

By Angie Sage

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Lb 0-06-057732-0 • \$17.89 (\$24.89)

CD 0-06-076083-4 • \$27.95 (\$39.95)

Ages: 9 up • Grades: 4 up

Katherine Tegen Books

The Wizard Test

By Hilari Bell

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Ages: 10 up • Grades: 5 up

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