



# WILDWOOD IMPERIUM

written by  
COLIN MELOY

with illustrations by  
CARSON ELLIS

## DISCUSSION GUIDE

## ABOUT THE BOOK

A young girl in South Wood comes under the spell of a disembodied spirit, gathering relics for the spirit's return to power and vengeance. Prue and Curtis meet their greatest challenges yet as they try to fulfill the prophecies of the Council Tree and rescue the bandits who have been tricked into submission. Meanwhile, Rachel and Elsie are aided by a group of saboteurs in the daring rescue of their captured friends. In this action-packed third book in the Wildwood Chronicles, these story threads are interwoven in surprising ways.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

### KEY IDEAS AND DETAILS

1. Why does Zita perform the ritual to call the Verdant Empress? Why do her friends run away? What connection does she feel to the Empress? When does she realize she has made a mistake? *CCSS.5-8.RL.1*
2. Why does Prue return to the South Wood? Why does she hide Esben before she goes to the Mansion? What differences does she notice from her last visit? When does she understand that dangerous changes have happened in the South Wood since she has been away? *CCSS.5-8.RL.1*
3. Determine an important theme in the story and list the details in the plot through which this main idea is carried out. You might choose the theme of journeys or trust or abuse of power, or one that you identify yourself. Which characters are the most important ones in developing the theme you chose? *CCSS.5-8.RL.2*
4. Who are the Chapeaux Noirs? Why are they fighting against Wigman? Why is it so hard for the children to trust them at first? Why do they agree to help Rachel, Elsie, and the other children rescue Martha and Carol Grod from the tower? *CCSS.5-8.RL.3*
5. Compare the various settings in the story and explain how they interact with each other: the Industrial Wastes, the Wildwood, the North Wood, the South Wood, the city of Portland. What characteristics of these places remind you of places you know? *CCSS.5-8.RL.3*
6. How have Curtis, Prue, Rachel, Elsie, and Zita changed since their adventures began? Which of the adult characters have changed from the way they were when they were first introduced? What factors contribute to those changes? Which characters do you think experience the most growth in the course of this story? *CCSS.5-8.RL.3*

### CRAFT AND STRUCTURE

7. Discuss the meaning of the phrase "Good fences make good neighbors" (p. 89). How does this phrase reflect what has happened in the South Wood since the Bicycle Revolution? Why did suspicions continue to grow after the Revolution? *CCSS.5-8.RL.4*
8. What does Jacques mean when he says he had an "epiphany" (p. 115)? What other characters in the story have what might be described as an epiphany? How do these realizations by different characters affect the course of the story? *CCSS.5-8.RL.4*
9. What does Seamus mean when he says "Organization is the bandit's best ally" (p. 427)? Describe how this phrase helps him keep up Prue's spirits on the Crag. How does this phrase apply to other parts of the story when characters are faced with seemingly impossible odds? *CCSS.5-8.RL.4*
10. Discuss the importance of the trees that represent different parts of the Impassable Wilderness—the Blighted Tree, the Ossuary Tree, and the Council Tree. How do these three interact to keep the land intact? Is one more important than the other? Why does the Verdant Empress try to destroy them? *CCSS.5-8.RL.5*
11. Compare the points of view of Wigman and the Chapeaux Noirs. Compare the actions of the Synod in the South and the Mystics in the North. Compare the work of the saboteurs in the Industrial Wastes and the bandits in the Wildwood. How are each of these alike and how are they different? How did each of these groups develop their unique point of view? *CCSS.5-8.RL.6*

Continued on the next page.



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12. Why does Alexei not want to be brought back to life? What is the effect he has on the humans he comes into contact with, and how does he react to them? What is his effect on the Verdant Empress? Why does he make the decision he does at the end? Discuss the meaning of the title *Wildwood Imperium*. *CCSS.5-8.RL.6; CCSS.5-8.RL.5*

## ACTIVITIES: INTEGRATION OF KNOWLEDGE AND IDEAS

- WORD POWER.** You will encounter words in this story that may be unfamiliar to you. Understanding the meaning of these words will aid your understanding of the story. Look up unusual words and phrases as you read, such as: Titan of Industry, epiphany, guillotine, vigilantism, verboten, fascist, junta, saboteur, serendipitous, undaunted, automaton, umbrage, despotic, theocrat, behemoth. Make your own list of new words you find and their definitions. *CCSS.5-8.RL.4*
- WORLDS WITHIN WORLDS.** Curtis uses his knowledge of the Ewoks in the Star Wars movies to re-create his own version of the bandits' hideout. Look up information about the Ewok world if you are not familiar with it, and compare the way they live to the hideout that Curtis and Septimus create. *CCSS.5-8.RL.9*
- REACHING INTO THE REAL WORLD.** Draw a rough map of the city of Portland, Oregon, and the Willamette River based on your own research about the city and the area around it. Determine on your map where the Impassable Wilderness would be located and include on your map the different sections of the I.W. that are described in the story. Explain how the illustrations in the book help you to visualize the action, setting, and characters in the story. *CCSS.5-8.RL.7*
- THE MYSTERY OF MÖBIUS.** Look up information about the German mathematician August Ferdinand Möbius. Learn how to create the Möbius strip. What are some of the uses for this concept? Why do you think it is so difficult to create the machine cog, and how is it possible for Esben and Carol Grod to work on it together so successfully? *CCSS.5-8.RL.9*



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR AND ILLUSTRATOR

Colin Meloy once wrote Ray Bradbury a letter, informing him that he “considered himself an author too.” He was ten. Since then, Colin has gone on to be the singer and songwriter for the band the Decemberists, where he channels all of his weird ideas into weird songs. With the *Wildwood Chronicles*, he is now channeling those ideas into novels. [www.colinmeloy.com](http://www.colinmeloy.com)

As a kid, Carson Ellis loved exploring the woods, drawing, and nursing wounded animals back to health. As an adult, little has changed—except she is now the acclaimed illustrator of several books for children, including Lemony Snicket's *The Composer Is Dead, Dillweed's Revenge* by Florence Parry Heide, and *The Mysterious Benedict Society* by Trenton Lee Stewart. [www.carsonellis.com](http://www.carsonellis.com)



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Questions and activities prepared by Connie Rockman, Youth Literature Consultant and adjunct professor of children's and young adult literature.

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GUIDED  
READING  
LEVEL  
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