**The Impossible Quest**

**Book 1: Escape from Wolfhaven Castle**

**Teacher Notes**

**Telling the Story**

* Construct character profiles for the four main characters:
  + Tom
  + Elanor
  + Quinn
  + Sebastian.

In your profiles, consider the things that have influenced each character; for example, how they grew up, what family members they have (if any), what role they play in Wolfhaven Castle.

* Each chapter in *Escape from Wolfhaven Castle* is told from the perspective of one of the four main characters. What effect does this have on the story? Do you feel an equal connection to all four characters? Why/why not? How does the shifting perspective help you understand each of the four main characters?
* What makes *The Impossible Quest* a fantasy story? Discuss the fantasy genre as a class, and try to list the features that make up a fantasy story. How many of these features can be found in *Escape from Wolfhaven Castle*?
* *The Impossible Quest* is a fantasy story with a medieval setting. This is a setting commonly used in many fantasy stories, such as *The Lord of the Rings* and *The Chronicles of Narnia*. Why do you think it is such a commonly used setting? What aspects of medieval life lend themselves well to a fantasy setting? What other settings can be used in a fantasy story?
* Compare male and female roles in *Escape from Wolfhaven Castle*. How are the four main characters different to one another? What is expected of each of them? Is this linked to their gender? Is this linked to their social class? How has their quest challenged these roles? How do you think they will change as the quest continues? Now take a wider view of the story and consider the secondary characters such as Lord Mortlake, Lord Wolfang, Sir Kevyn, Mistress Pippin, Arwen and Lady Mortlake. How are their roles defined by their gender and social class?
* Does the story of *The Impossible Quest* sound familiar? Have you heard a version or versions of it elsewhere? For example, think about some of the fairy tales you know. Recurring stories are known as ‘motifs’. Motifs from mythology, fairy tale and legend have a tendency to crop up again and again throughout history. Why do you think this is the case? What other examples of motifs can you think of that can be frequently found in different stories throughout history? Why do you think these particular motifs are repeated? Do they still resonate today? Why/why not?

Some examples of motifs include:

* + The hero’s journey
  + The helpful guide or mentor
  + The quest
  + The prophecy
  + The person or place that must be saved
  + The mighty enemy who cannot be beaten
  + The simple hero who succeeds where others fail.
* What role does storytelling have in the book? The Grand Teller holds a position of power at Wolfhaven Castle. What does this suggest about the importance of telling and remembering stories? Before the invention of writing, human cultural history was spread via oral storytelling. Myths, legends and fairy tales were shared by storytellers and audiences much like the scene at the Midsummer Feast in chapter 5 of the book. What are some of the advantages of oral storytelling over written? What are some of the disadvantages? Which do you prefer? Why?
* How do you imagine a unicorn looks? Read the description of the unicorn in chapter 18. Is this how you imagined it? If not, how is it different? Is it important for imaginary creatures to always look a certain way? Why/why not? What does medieval mythology tell us about unicorns?
* The unicorn is only one mythological/fantasy creature mentioned in the book. The griffin, dragon and sea serpent are all creatures from fantasy, but in the Middle Ages, they were thought to be very real. What other mythological creatures can you think of? Some examples include the phoenix, fairies, flying horse/Pegasus, elves, mermaids, basilisk, cockatrice, giants, pixies, dwarves, goblins and centaurs. Pick one such creature and research it further. What are the stories told about your chosen creature? What powers and special properties was it supposed to have? Where was it supposed to live?
* The bog-men, on the other hand, are not creatures commonly found in mythology, although they in some ways resemble ghouls and banshees. How effective are these creatures as villains? How does the author convey a sense of fear with these creatures without the need for pictures?
* Does *Escape from Wolfhaven Castle* end with a cliffhanger? Why/why not? What is a cliffhanger? What purpose does it serve in a narrative? Are types of cliffhangers more or less effective than others? Why? What stops a cliffhanger from looking like the story simply hasn’t been finished? Write a short story (no more than 1000 words) and end it with a cliffhanger. What do you need to take into account to construct an effective cliffhanger?

**Riddle Me This**

Quinn likes to think in riddles. How good are you at riddles and brain-teasers yourself? Try to solve the following brainteasers:

* + It walks on four legs in the morning, two legs at noon and three legs in the evening. What is it?

**Answer:** A person. Crawls on all fours as a baby, walks on two legs as an adult and uses two legs and a cane when elderly.

* + I am the beginning of the end, and the end of time and space. I am essential to creation, and I surround every place. What am I?

**Answer:** The letter E. End, timE, spacE, Every place.

* + What always runs but never walks, often murmurs, never talks, has a bed but never sleeps, has a mouth but never eats?

**Answer:** A river.

* + I never was, am always to be.

No one ever saw me, nor ever will.

And yet I am the confidence of all,

To live and breathe on this terrestrial ball.

What am I?

**Answer:** Tomorrow/the future.

* + What is in seasons, seconds, centuries and minutes but not in decades, years or days?

**Answer:** The letter N.

* + Until I am measured

I am not known,

Yet how you miss me

When I have flown.

**Answer:** Time.

* + Lighter than what

I am made of,

More of me is hidden

Than is seen.

**Answer:** An iceberg.

* + Each morning I appear

To lie at your feet,

All day I will follow

No matter how fast you run,

Yet I nearly perish

In the midday sun.

**Answer:** A shadow.

* + What is a word made up of 4 letters, yet is also made up of 3. Sometimes is written with 9 letters, and then with 4. Rarely consists of 6, and never is written with 5.

**Answer:** Correct! The word 'what' has 4 letters in it, 'yet' has three, 'sometimes' has 9, 'then' has 4, 'rarely' has 6, and 'never' has 5.

* + I stare at you, you stare at me.

I have three eyes, yet can't see.

Every time I blink, I give you commands.

You do as you are told, with your feet and hands.  
**Answer:** A traffic light.

* + There is an ancient invention still used in some parts of the world today that allows people to see through walls. What is it?

**Answer:** A window.

Try writing your own riddles and have your classmates solve them. You can find more riddles at the following websites:

* <http://brainden.com/logic-riddles.htm>
* <http://kids.niehs.nih.gov/games/riddles/index.htm>
* <http://thinks.com/riddles/a1-riddles.htm>.

**The Middle Ages**

* Read the description of Wolfhaven Castle in chapter one, and then do some more research into castles. Castles such as those that Wolfhaven is based on were not just military forts—they housed entire populations. What are some features of castles (eg. the keep, the bailey, the motte)? What were some other defensive features of castles? How were castles strategically located? How and why were they sometimes decorated? How did the design of castles change over history and across different countries?
* In small groups, pick one of the following famous castles to research. When was it built? Who built it? Who lived in it? What was its purpose (eg. a house, a defensive outpost, a royal residence)? What important historical events happened in or around it? What makes it remarkable? What state is it in today?
  + Alcázar of Segovia, Spain
  + Alnwick Castle, United Kingdom
  + Arundel Castle, United Kingdom
  + Belvoir Castle, Israel
  + Berkeley Castle, United Kingdom
  + Blarney Castle, Ireland
  + Bojnice Castle, Slovakia
  + Bran Castle, Romania
  + Burg Hochosterwitz, Austria
  + Burg Hohenzollern, Germany
  + Caernarfon Castle, United Kingdom
  + Castel del Monte, Italy
  + Castel Nuovo, Italy
  + Castel Sant Angelo, Italy
  + Castelo de Guimarães, Portugal
  + Castelo de São Jorge, Portuga
  + Castillo de Coca, Spain
  + Castillo de La Mota, Spain
  + Castle Keep, United Kingdom
  + Château Comptal de Carcassonne, France
  + Château de Chambord, France
  + Château de Chillon, Switzerland
  + Château Gaillard, France
  + Château de Monstegur, France
  + Dover Castle, United Kingdom
  + Edinburgh Castle, United Kingdom
  + Fénis Castle, Italy
  + Königsberger Schloss, Germany
  + Krak des Chevaliers, Syria
  + Kronborg, Denmark
  + Leeds Castle, United Kingdom
  + Malbork Castle, Poland
  + Neuschwanstein, Germany
  + Prague Castle, Czech Republic
  + Tower of London, United Kingdom
  + Windsor Castle, United Kingdom.
* In small groups of two or three, design the perfect castle, taking into consideration accommodation, defense and decoration.
* The characters in *Escape from Wolfhaven Castle* strongly resemble real people living in medieval Western Europe. In pairs, pick one of the following topics and research the society and culture during the Middle Ages in Western Europe:
  + Class systems (eg. What was the feudal system? What classes were there? How easy was it to change the class you were born into? How was each class of society dependent upon the others?)
  + The roles of men and women
  + Family life
  + Health and medicine
  + Food
  + Religion
  + Music and entertainment.

Present your findings on a poster to the class.

* Sebastian is a squire at Wolfhaven Castle, and lives away from his family. What was a squire? How old were squires? Why were young boys sent away from home to become squires? What were their duties? What could they expect to become after being a squire?
* The tell-stones used by the Grand Teller and later by Quinn are a type of fortune-telling known as cleromancy (the casting of stones). There are many other kinds of fortune-telling, and many of them were made popular during the Dark and Middle Ages. What others can you discover? Some examples include astrology, taromancy (tarot cards), and scrying. Why do you think fortune-telling has been and continues to be popular? For example, in some Asian cultures, people will consult an astrologer before major life events such as marriage or starting a new business.
* Design twelve of your own tell-stones. What images will you use on them, and what will these symbolise?

**Medieval Heraldry**

In medieval Europe, heraldry provided information about a person’s ranks and achievements. Noble families would design shields and crests that described their domains, origins and deeds based on particular symbols, sigils, shapes and colours. The sigil of Wolfhaven, for example, is a wolf’s head, which symbolises valour and guardianship. Here are the meanings of some shield designs:

Colours:

Eager to serve one’s country, warrior.

Steadfastness, truth, strength, loyalty.

Grief, resistance, constancy.

Freedom, beauty, joy, health, hope.

Majesty, justice, sovereignty (note: purple was usually the colour reserved for royalty).

Worthy ambition.

Patience in battle, victorious.

Understanding, respect, virtue, generosity.

Peace, sincerity, wisdom, innocence, joy.

Dividers:

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Bend |  | Defense, protection | Canton |  | Honour |
| Chevron |  | Protection, faithful service | Saltire |  | Protection, resolution, resolve |
| Chief |  | Rule, authority | Pale |  | Military strength and bravery |
| Cross |  | Faith, protection | Pile |  | Builder, strength |
| Fess |  | Military honour |

Heraldic Lines:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Fire |  | Earth and land |
|  | Water |  | Sea, water |
|  | Walls of a fortress or city, fire |  | Clouds, air |
|  | Fame and glory |  | Difficulties have been faced |

Symbols and Sigils:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Symbol:** | **Suggested Meanings:** |
| Acacia Branch | Eternal and affectionate remembrance both for the living and the dead |
| Acorn | Life, fertility, immortality and perseverance |
| Anchor | Steadfastness and stability. In seafaring nations, the anchor is a symbol of good luck, of safety, and of security |
| Antelope | Represents action, agility and sacrifice |
| Antlers | Strength and fortitude |
| Anvil | Honour and strength |
| Battle-Axe | Execution of military duty |
| Beacon | One who is watchful (the modern symbol for this would be a lighthouse) |
| Bear | Great warrior |
| Bee | Steadfastness, hard-working and obedience |
| Boar | Strength, courage, and ferocity |
| Book | Wisdom and learning |
| Bow and Arrow | Resolved to persevere in the hazards of battle |
| Bridge | Patience and stability, wisdom |
| Buckle | Victory and loyalty |
| Bull | Valour, a fiery temperament, and dedicated father. |
| Bushel of Hay | The harvest of one's hopes, hospitality and prosperity |
| Castle | Grandeur and society, faithfulness to the king/queen |
| Cinquefoil | A five-leafed flower signifying hope and joy |
| Cockatrice | Terror to all beholders |
| Coot | Uses strategy rather than confrontation to achieve success |
| Crane | Long life, fidelity, grace, prosperity and peace |
| Crescent | Enlightened and honoured, hope and greater glory |
| Dagger | Power, justice, valour and military honour |
| Dolphin | Charity and affection towards children and family |
| Dragon | Eternal change, discovery of hidden treasures and the protector of all you possess |
| Eagle | Nobility, a person of action, lofty spirit, power and sovereignty, courage, freedom, and immortality |
| Elephant | Great strength, greater wit and greatest ambition |
| Fox | Wisdom and wit |
| Greyhound | Majesty, courage, vigilance, swiftness and loyalty |
| Goat | One who wins through politics and wit rather than war and confrontation; perseverance and vitality |
| Griffin | Swiftness, strength, intelligence, valour, vigilance and death-defying bravery |
| Holly | Truth |
| Horse | Strength, loyalty, devotion, warrior spirit, bravery and courage |
| Laurel Branch | Peace and quietness |
| Leopard | brave and generous warriors who have performed boldly with force, courage and promptness |
| Lion | Majesty, strength, and justice, military might and deathless courage |
| Mermaid | Eloquence, enlightenment and a safe voyage. |
| Peacock | The soul, beauty, power and knowledge |
| Pegasus | Poetic genius, inspiration, vision and refinement |
| Pheasant | An alert person of many resources |
| Phoenix | The rising and setting of the sun, immortality, resurrection, and life after death |
| Plume (Feather) | Willing obedience and serenity |
| Portcullis | Security and protection. |
| Raven | Initiation, protection, and prophecy |
| Rose | Motherhood, protection and purity |
| Scales | Justice, order and balance |
| Sceptre | Kingship and royalty |
| Scythe | Hope of a fruitful harvest. |
| Serpent | Wisdom, cunning and sagacity. |
| Shamrock (Trefoil) | Omnipotence, providence and perpetuity; good fortune and luck. Also the national symbol of Ireland |
| Spider | Tenacity, heedfulness, and cunning |
| Stag | Wisdom, regeneration and growth |
| Star | Truth, the spirit, hope and constancy |
| Stork | Immortality and longevity, vigilance, contemplation, prudence, piety, meditation and chastity |
| Sun | Power, glory, illumination, vitality, and the source of life on earth |
| Swan | Chivalry, music and poetry |
| Sword | Chivalry, power, protection, authority, strength, and courage |
| Thistle | Independence, strength, protection and healing |
| Tiger | Royalty, power and fearlessness. |
| Torch | Illumination, enlightenment, and guidance; often referred to as the torch of learning |
| Tortoise | Longevity, patience, practicality, strength and time |
| Unicorn | Innocence and purity |
| Vulture | Heaven and earth, spirit and matter, good and evil, a guardian and an avenger |
| Willow Tree | Beauty, grace, endurance and strength |
| Wolf | Strength, intelligence, guardianship and valour |

Design your own heraldic shield using the template below, or design one for your family. Think about where you’re from (eg. do you live near the ocean or in a big city), your chief characteristics (eg. you might be really funny or very brave) and some of the notable achievements you’ve made (eg. you might be very good at sport, or an excellent student), and think about what symbols would best represent you or your family. You might want to use real symbols from medieval heraldry such as the ones listed here; you can find more at:

* http://www.themedievalclassroom.com.au/?page\_id=1081
* <http://www.familytreesandcrests.com/heraldry-symbols.htm>