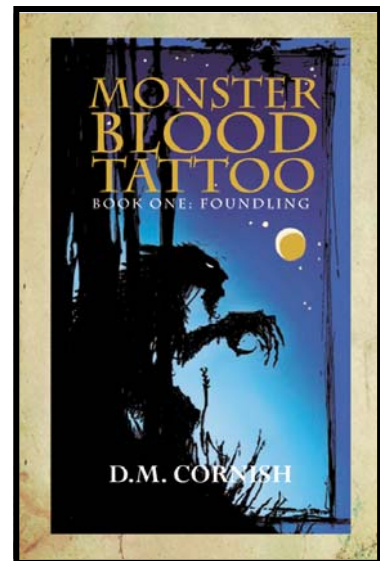


# TEACHER'S BOOK NOTES

## Monster Blood Tattoo

### Book One: Foundling

Written by D.M Cornish



### Synopsis

In the city of Boschenberg lives a small boy, a foundling called Rossamünd who is waiting to be selected for a useful occupation. His home is Madam Opera's Estimable Marine Society for Foundling Boys and Girls, and he lives there with other orphans being educated for a lowly post in the Boschenberg navy. Rossamünd is finally selected to serve with the Lamplighters, and his journey to the place where he is to take up his first employment is told in *Foundling*. He is escorted to the wharf at Boschenberg by the mysterious Sebastipole, but in the fog he loses his way and boards the wrong vessel. A passenger on the sinister craft, the *Hogshead*, and in the power of its criminal captain, Poundinch, Rossamünd soon fears for his life. Rossamünd sees monsters on the bank from the boat. In the world of *Monster Blood Tattoo*, keeping the monsters at bay involves teratologists - monster-hunters - patrolling the wildlands, dealing with the monsters for a fee. When he at last escapes from the *Hogshead*, Rossamünd meets an elegant woman called Europe who is a fulgar, one of the supreme monster-hunters. She has the power to generate powerful surges of electricity and to release it by the touch of her hand. Rossamünd soon discovers the fulgar's weakness, though, and their relationship develops in a mood of mutual distrust as they make their way towards Winstermill and the home of the Lamplighters.

*Foundling* introduces readers to a vividly imagined world that is unlike any other. Thirteen years in the making, it existed in the notebooks and the imagination of author/illustrator D.M. Cornish until 2004, when he began to translate his ideas and character sketches into a story. Already an

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illustrator of children's picture books, Cornish has distilled a lifelong passion for fantasy into the *Monster Blood Tattoo* series. The narrative is supported by illustrated appendixes and maps and a painstakingly detailed catalogue of the history and culture of the Half-Continent in the form of the 'Explicarium', which occupies almost a third of the volume.

## Writing Style

Written in a style that has already been likened to that of Charles Dickens by early reviewers of the book, *Foundling* embodies the customs and manners of the Half-Continent. Its strongly drawn characters make a bold impact, and are larger than life. Richly descriptive, the language consists of many coined words that sound both strange and familiar.

## Points for discussion

- D.M.Cornish found that, in describing the characters in *Foundling*, drawing them first gave him a better understanding. These drawings appear as full-page illustrations throughout the book. A discussion could be based on the question 'Which of these drawings best expresses for you the essential nature of a character?'
- When Sallow says to Rossamünd (page 206) that it must be amazing to be the factotum of the Branden Rose, why does she think this way? What is a factotum, and do they still exist?
- The Explicarium provides more detailed information about the world of the Half-Continent. Choose one entry for close reading and discuss how this information has expanded the reader's understanding of this fantasy world.
- The author spent thirteen years illustrating and describing his world. How important might have been the maps to his understanding of this world? Students might be interested to create and illustrate a map of their own imagining.
- Ask students to make a list of words that they understand without reference to the Explicarium. See if they can discover the origin of these words.
- In the Half-Continent a 'sedorner' is a monster-lover. This is a coined word. Discuss how the word evokes this meaning. Is it difficult to invent a word? When does it become part of everyday language?