

A Curriculum Guide to

Five Kingdoms, Book Three: *Crystal Keepers*

By Brandon Mull



About the Book

Zeropolis is the most modern of the Five Kingdoms, with monorails, video games, and even Internet access to Earth. But for Cole, who was kidnapped from Earth, enemies await him at every turn. Fortunately, he also finds new allies in his fight for justice, such as Roulette and Trickster, who are teenage Crystal Keepers, and the older, brave Unseen. Together they hope to defeat the kingdom's tyrant while fighting off human-like power-grabbing computers. If only Cole could access his superpower! Instead he must rely on his fast reflexes, quick wit, and courage as he hurtles from one danger to the next.

Prereading Question

Is it ever right to use violence in trying to achieve worthy goals? What role, if any, should young people play in dangerous fights for justice?

Discussion Questions

Setting

The following questions contained in this section particularly address the following Common Core State Standards: (RL.4–7.1, 3)

1. Zeropolis has the most in common with Earth of any place Cole has visited in the Five Kingdoms. Compare and contrast life in Zeropolis to life in the US. Describe Old Zeropolis and why it exists.
2. Cole encounters a number of technologically advanced forms of transportation in Zeropolis, from warboards to Hunter's glider. Describe the different vehicles and how they work. What does each one have in common with a form of transportation on Earth? Which one would you most like to use?
3. Describe the parts of the First Castle that Cole sees. Who are some of the people that work in the castle? What disguises does Cole use to fit in? What magic does he encounter during his visit?

Characters

The following questions contained in this section particularly address the following Common Core State Standards: (RL.4–7.3)

4. Cole describes himself to the Queen as “a kid with messed-up powers.” She answers that he’s “a young hero who has survived much hardship.” Compare the two descriptions and give examples of how each of them is accurate. How would *you* describe Cole’s personality?

5. Why is Cole so delighted to find Blake, even though they hadn’t been close friends? What is Blake like? Describe his special power and how it has affected his time in the Five Kingdoms. How does Blake prove important to Cole’s mission?

6. Even though he looks like a small street sweeper, Sidekick has a big personality and many useful qualities. Why does Cole like him so much? Describe Sidekick’s appearance and his powers, and those of other robots in the story.

7. Roxie has been Constance’s only companion for many years. What is their relationship both technologically and emotionally? Why is Constance surprised and disappointed by Roxie’s actions? Explain why Constance has been kept hidden for so long.

Plot and Structure

The following questions contained in this section particularly address the following Common Core State Standards: (RL.4–7.3) (RL.5–6.5)

8. What role do the Unseen and the Crystal Keepers play in Zeropolis? Discuss Cole’s comment about them that “Outlaws can be the good guys. Like Robin Hood.” What are the goals of the Unseen? How do the Crystal Keepers help achieve those goals?

9. Cole misses the time before the Outskirts “when not everyone he met was a potential enemy.” Who are his enemies in this story? Who in particular attacks him and how does he get away? Discuss the role of his enemies in the plot.

10. Cole, who hopes to return to Earth, is excited to find Internet connections in Zeropolis. What does the Internet offer and how much does it help him? Explain what he learns from Joe, Hunter, and others about the possibility of returning to Arizona and being recognized there.

Themes

The following questions contained in this section particularly address the following Common Core State Standards: (RL.4–7.2)

11. Googol and Nova are adults but many of their fellow outlaws are teens and even children. “I’m an old devil for using children like I do,” says Nova. Why do they use young people? Discuss whether Googol and Nova are justified in that choice.

12. Discuss an ethical dilemma that the Unseen leaders must face. Compare this predicament to Roxie’s claim that she needs to use violence to become a peaceful tyrant.

Language

The following questions contained in this section particularly address the following Common Core State Standards: (RL.4–7.4)

13. As the narrator, Cole sometimes asks questions as he tells his story. For example, in Chapter 2, one paragraph includes four questions. Find other examples, and analyze the effect on the reader of such questions. Why does the author use them instead of just declarative sentences?

14. List the names of the Unseen and the Crystal Keepers, and talk about what each one refers to. For example, Roulette is a type of casino game. Discuss why each name might have been chosen, referring to any information given in the text such as Googol's explanation for his name.

Activities

Urgent News Update!

Have students work in pairs to create a radio broadcast about the climax of the book. One student will be the broadcaster in the radio studio and the other out in the field, covering the event. They should map out questions and answers, then create a podcast using a tool such as Audacity or GarageBand. Have students share their podcasts with the rest of the class.

Really Getting into the Story

Have each student choose a scene in the story that involves the Crystal Keepers and rewrite the scene, adding himself or herself as a new Crystal Keeper. The students should create their cover names, explain how they ended up as a Crystal Keeper, and explain their special power. Then they can retell the scene, becoming part of the action themselves. Post the scenes on a bulletin board or online for everyone to read.

Guide written by Kathleen Odean, a former school librarian and Chair of the 2002 Newbery Award Committee. She gives professional development workshops on books for young people and is the author of Great Books for Girls and Great Books about Things Kids Love.

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