

A Curriculum Guide to
Five Kingdoms, Book 1: *Sky Raiders*
By Brandon Mull



About the Book

When slave traders from another world kidnap sixth grader Cole's best friends, he follows them to The Outskirts, a realm beyond our own made up of five kingdoms. Once he arrives in the Outskirts, Cole is quickly taken away to Skyport, home of the Sky Raiders. Cole is forced to become a Sky Raiders scout, risking his life to find treasure in floating castles. After a girl named Mira befriends him, Cole responds by defending her from deadly enemies. Along with two other scouts, Cole and Mira flee their armed pursuers, only to end up in even more danger. Join Cole in this harrowing heroic journey to save his friends, old and new.

Prereading Question

What does it mean to be a hero? Does a hero have to show physical courage? Is the courage to do the right thing enough to be a hero? What's the difference between a hero and a superhero?

Setting

The following questions particularly address the Common Core State Standards: (RL.4–6.1, 3) (RL.7.1)

1. Compare the Outskirts and its Five Kingdoms to our world. Discuss similarities and differences in areas like transportation, terrain, weather, clothing, government, laws, and customs. What are the biggest differences between the two worlds?
2. Describe shaping and semblances, giving specific examples. What positive impact do they have on life in the Outskirts? What negative impact?
3. What is life like for the Sky Raiders? Describe their home and their work. In what ways is working for the Sky Raiders a good development for Cole? In what ways is it a problem? What does he learn as a scout?
4. Contrast the life and rights of a slave versus a freeman. How does someone end up as a slave? Can that status be changed? How does Jace treat the two slaves in Chapter 29? Why is he so harsh to the older slave?

Themes

The following questions particularly address the Common Core State Standards: (RL.4–7.1, 2) (RL.4.3) (RL.6.3)

1. Being a hero is at the heart of this novel. “The vital question is, are you a hero?” says Lyrus. Find similarities and differences in how Lyrus and Cole define a hero. Where in the book does Cole act like a hero, according to his definition? Do other characters act like heroes? Give specific examples.

2. Often, part of being a traditional hero entails fighting monsters. Describe some of the monsters that Cole encounters. Where do the monsters in Brady’s Wilderness come from? Find the monsters from Greek or Roman mythology that Lyrus fights or just mentions. Look up the ones you don’t know. Why do you think the author included these mythological monsters?

3. Guilt is an important theme in this novel. Find specific passages where Cole and Mira feel guilty. Why does Cole feel guilty? How does the guilt influence his choices? Do other characters agree with his assessment of his guilt? Do you? Why or why not? Why does Mira feel guilty about Carnag? How does feeling guilty affect her actions?

Character

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

1. Describe Cole’s relationship with Mira. How does she help him? How does he help her? Why do they like each other? How does their relationship change during the course of the story?

2. Compare Cole and Jace, and describe how they interact with each other. What are some differences in their backgrounds? In what ways do the two work well together? What causes tension between them? Give specific examples from the story.

3. Cole thinks Jace has romantic feelings for Mira. Describe how Jace interacts with Mira. In what ways are they important to each other? How are their backgrounds similar and different? When Jace learns that Mira’s a princess, how does that change his view and actions?

4. Describe the steps Cole, Mira, Jace, Twitch, and Liam take to defeat Carnag. What strengths does each of them bring to the mission? How do they work together and help one another in the process?

Plot

The following questions particularly address the Common Core State Standards: (RL.4–7.1) (RL.4.3) (RL.6.3) (RL.5–6.5, 6)

1. Why does the book open with Halloween? What does this foreshadow about Cole’s future? How does Cole’s costume as a scarecrow full of arrows relate to the rest of the book? Find other examples of foreshadowing in the first chapter.

2. A hero often gets advice along his journey. What advice does Cole get and from whom? Is it useful? How does he use the advice in making his decisions?

3. Magical objects are important in the plot. What magical objects do Cole, Jace, Twitch, and Mira carry with them on their journey to find Carnag? What role does each magical object play in that adventure? Which one would you want if you were in danger, and why?

4. Some chapters end with cliff-hangers, which leave the reader in suspense until the next chapter. Others don't. Find examples of cliff-hangers and analyze how they create suspense. Find examples of other chapter endings, such as those that wrap up an adventure, and compare their effect to cliff-hangers.

5. Chapter 16, titled "Messenger," is filled with suspense. Analyze how the author creates suspense through a series of events and by withholding information from the reader. How does seeing the events unfold from Cole's point of view heighten the tension? For example, when does he realize Adam Jones is helping him and Mira?

Language & POV

The following questions particularly address the Common Core State Standards: (RL.4–7.4) (RL.5–6.6)

1. The Sky Raiders say to one another before a mission, "Die bravely." Why do they say that? What role does death play in their work? Cole and Mira also say it to Lyrus when they first part ways. In return he says, "Live well." Why does he reply that way?

2. This novel has a limited omniscient narrator who conveys Cole's inner thoughts and emotions. Find examples of that in the book. How would the novel change if the narrator were omniscient? Why do you think the author chose this point of view?

3. Because adventure is central to this novel, the author uses many strong action verbs. Look at the scene where Cole and Mira are flying in the coffin. Write down the verbs that describe the flight, looking up definitions for any you don't know. Discuss the actions described by the verbs, how they differ from one another, and the mental images they create.

Activities

Floating Castles: First have students recall the different castles Cole encounters, discussing their inhabitants and dangers. Then have students come up with a floating castle of their own, complete with architecture, furnishings, and hazards such as monsters. Have them describe it in words and create a drawing, painting, or other artistic response. Assemble a display of the castles with their descriptions.

Who's a Hero? Have students, in pairs or small groups, do research on heroes in mythology. They should choose a hero and make notes on the important features of the hero's life and journey. Have each group give a short presentation on their hero, noting if the hero's story is similar in any way to parts of *Sky Raiders*. Then have students discuss general characteristics of heroes and their journeys, drawing on their research and *Sky Raiders*.

A Curriculum Guide to

The Five Kingdoms, Book Two: *Rogue Knight*

By Brandon Mull



About the Book

Cole Randolph never meant to come to The Outskirts, but when his friends were kidnapped on Halloween he had to try and save them. Now he's trapped in a world that lies between wakefulness and dreaming, reality and imagination, life and death. Cole's hunt for his lost friends has led him to the kingdom of Elloweer. Accompanied by new friends Mira, Twitch, and Jace, Cole teams up with the resistance movement and joins the search for Mira's sister Honor.

In the Kingdom of Elloweer, Cole and his companions face enemies and forge alliances. They seek the Rogue Knight—not knowing his true identity but knowing he's the key to finding Honor and perhaps to saving the kingdom.

Prereading Question

What does it mean to be loyal? How important is it to be loyal to friends, family, and country? Can loyalty conflict with doing what's best for yourself?

Characters

These discussion questions align with the following English Language Arts Common Core State Standards: (RL.4–7.1) (RL.4–5.3)

1. How does Skye get involved with Cole and his friends? Describe her character, her background and her abilities. Why is she willing to accompany them on their journey? Give details about her role in fighting Morgassa.
2. Cole and Dalton are united after being apart and worrying about each other. Describe their reunion. How different have their experiences been? What does each of them see in the other that has changed? How do they come through for each other in the course of the story?
3. Describe how the Rogue Knight got his power, what he does with it, and his relationship with the Enforcers.
4. Describe Trillian, where he's from, and what his powers are. Explain why he doesn't return to his own world and what he does in the Five Kingdoms. Assess how well or how poorly he treats Cole, Mira, Jace, and Honor.
5. Discuss the relationship between Trillian and Callista. Compare their characters. Why does Callista go with Cole and his friends to fight the Morgassa? Describe what happens to her on that journey.

Plot

These discussion questions align with the following English Language Arts Common Core State Standards: (RL.4.3) (RL.5–6.5)

6. The novel's first two pages include foreshadowing about the rest of the book. Find words and phrases that point to the danger Cole and his friends will encounter. Why does an author use foreshadowing?
7. The plot consists of several journeys that Cole takes. Identify those journeys and their destinations, and discuss what motivates Cole to take them. How does each journey add excitement to the plot?
8. Describe the role of champions in Elloweer government. How does a champion take over a town or city? What kind of power does it give him there? Describe what happened in Twitch's village and why he's looking for a champion.
9. The challenge from Trillian involves disturbing scenes from the pasts of Mira, Cole, and Jace. Compare these nightmare situations to each other, including the villains in each. Analyze how they relate to that character's past and why Trillian chose these three scenes as the challenge.

Setting

These discussion questions align with the following English Language Arts Common Core State Standards: (RL.4 – 7.1) (RL.4.3)

10. Describe the two Confidence Lounges that Cole visits. What is their purpose? How do they operate? What is Jill's role at the first one?
11. Carthage fascinates Cole, who hasn't spent time before in a city in the Five Kingdoms. Describe Carthage, giving details about the Elloweer and Sambria sides. What aspects of the city are new and interesting to Cole?
12. Cole and his companions are determined to reach Callista but Fog Lake makes it difficult. Give details about what they encounter there. How does the author create a sense of suspense and danger during their journey through Fog Lake?

Themes

These discussion questions align with the following English Language Arts Common Core State Standards: (RL.4 – 7.2) (RL.4.3)

13. Loyalty plays a central role in this story. Give examples of which characters are loyal to each other, to family, to a cause, or to their kingdom. Point to details and dialogue that show their loyalty.

14. “None of us start strong,” Minimus tells Jace. “And none of us have the exact same strengths.” Discuss Cole’s strengths and especially the inner power that he is starting to tap. What are the strengths of other characters and how are they revealed in the story?

Language

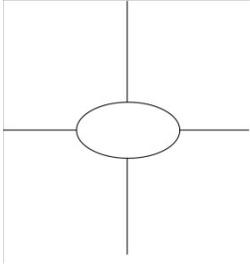
These discussion questions align with the following English Language Arts Common Core State Standards: (RL.4 – 7.4)

15. In the first chapter, Cole and his friends have a fight with enemies. The author makes the scene vivid by the words he chooses. Identify some of the words and phrases that convey action, analyzing whether they are verbs, nouns, adjectives, or adverbs. How does the author convey the fast pace of the fight?
16. Take a close look at the chapter titles. What do they have in common? What is their relationship to the content of the chapter? Describe what they convey, such as information, intrigue, foreshadowing, and so on.
17. The author uses figurative language sparingly but effectively. Below are some examples. Find others as well, and discuss how the images contribute to the impact of the writing.
- like brushing through spiderwebs
 - like guzzling vinegar
 - like a bug in a can
 - like a labyrinth
 - like flexing a muscle in your mind
 - for a home-run swing
 - like a veteran linebacker
 - a walking horror movie
 - like a giant scorpiped
 - like a medieval skyscraper

Activities

Vivid Vocabulary

Have students jot down interesting yet unfamiliar words as they read the novel and then create the graphic organizer called Vocabulary Square for several words. Find a template on the Internet or have students make their own. They draw an oblong for the vocabulary word in the middle of a sheet of paper and then draw lines from each side of the oblong to divide the rest of the page in quarters. Possibilities for the other boxes are the sentence from the book that contains the word; a sentence the student writes with it; the dictionary definition; a definition in the student’s words; an illustration the student creates; synonyms; antonyms; or the part of speech. Students can add a colorful border and post the squares on a bulletin board.



Masks of Strength

At Callista's, Cole and his companions each choose a mask that transforms them into that particular creature. Have each student choose an animal not used in the story and write a paragraph about what strengths it would give them for adventure and battle. Have each student create a mask of that animal by drawing it, coloring it, and cutting it out. Have them show the mask to the class and read aloud their paragraph about the animal's strengths.

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.

Series 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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