

A Curriculum Guide to

Ages of Oz, Book 1: *A Fiery Friendship*

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About the Book

On her Declaration Day, a day meant for celebration and happiness, Glinda’s peaceful life in Oz is shattered when her mother is imprisoned for practicing forbidden Magic. As she is ripped from her home by a fearsome bounty hunter sent by Aphidina, the Witch of the South, Glinda soon uncovers a startling truth: the Oz she’s always known is not good and right—it’s a world governed by the wickedest of the wicked, overrun with tyranny, corruption, and dark power. And Glinda’s mother? She is actually a high-ranking member of a secret society whose mission is to overthrow the four Wicked Witches and set the stage for the return of the rightful ruler of Oz.

With the help of a feisty, purple-haired girl named Locasta, Glinda sets across the unforgiving landscape to rescue her mother. They are soon joined by Ben, a revolutionary New Yorker, and a mysterious girl called Shade. Armed with their individual gifts, these unlikely heroes mount an epic attack on Aphidina to free Glinda’s mother . . . and save the future of Oz from the Wicked before it’s too late.

Discussion Questions

The discussion questions below have been written in alignment with the Common Core State Standards: (RL.4–7.1, 2, 3, 4) (RL.5–6.5)

1. Describe Glinda and her life when the book opens. How has she changed by the end? What caused those changes? What kind of adult do you think she will be?
2. One of Glinda’s goals is to free her mother, Tilda. Discuss Tilda, what kind of mother she is, and what her powers are. What is her relationship with Glinda like? How and why does she end up as Aphidina’s prisoner?
3. Tilda says that the day comes when children “step away from innocence and learn that the world contains dark corners and treacherous cliffs.” How is this true in Glinda’s life? Tilda goes on to say that “there is also friendship and loyalty to be found.” Describe how this is true for Glinda, too, pointing to scenes and characters in the story.
4. Describe Madam Mentir’s Academy for Girls, and name some of the courses that Glinda has taken there. Compare it to what you’ve learned about Professor Mendacium’s Institute for Intellectually Promising Young Boys and its courses. Name the four possible career choices for the girls. Why are they so limited? What does it say about female roles in Oz?
5. Who is Aphidina and what are her powers? What does she hope to achieve? Describe her castle and its grounds, and what happens to them in the end.

6. Talk about the scene early in the book in which Glinda sees her mother summon the Moon Fairy. Describe the witches other than Aphidina. Where do they come from and what are their powers? Discuss the consequences of what happens in this scene.
7. Locasta and Glinda clash at times during the story. Where is Locasta from? What is she like? Why do the two girls argue so often? Find scenes where they get along and analyze what factors bring them together.
8. Where does Ben come from and how does he end up joining Glinda's quest? Describe his personality and interests. What are some similarities between what's happening in the American colonies and what's happening in Oz?
9. Shade is a mysterious character. Where is she from? How does she meet Glinda? Why does she join the quest? Describe her talents, giving specific examples.
10. Locasta complains that the Road of Red Cobble seems to be teaching the children lessons, to which Ben replies, "Isn't that what journeys are for?" How does the road teach the four children lessons? What else do they learn along the way?
11. When Glinda and her mother are separated, Tilda whispers, "Unite." How do Glinda and her three companions unite? What strengths do each of them bring to the quest and how do they work together to succeed?
12. Explain why Aphidina instructs Blingle Plunkett to intimidate and torment "anyone who shows signs of having a mind of her own." Why is Aphidina afraid of independent thought? Relate your answer to Tilda's statement, "The only manner of *thought* that can truly *last* is *independent*."
13. What is the Queryor and what role does he play in the plot? Describe how he interacts with those who come to him with queries. What is his reaction to Glinda and how does he help her?
14. Name the statues that come alive in King Oz's castle. Which ones interact with Glinda, and how? How are they important to her quest?
15. Who is Glinda's father? How and what does she learn about him? Why isn't he a part of her life?
16. The sword that Glinda gets in King Oz's castle proves vital in her quest. Describe how she obtains it, its features, and why it's important. What role does the Tin Boy play in how Glinda uses the sword?
17. Once Glinda has the sword, she and her three companions talk about patience. Identify the view of patience that each of them expresses and then talk about how that view reflects their own character and their actions elsewhere in the story.

18. Glinda remembers her mother's observation that "in this life we must play the hand we are dealt." What does Tilda mean by that? How is life like a card game? Supply some adjectives for the hand that Glinda has been dealt and discuss how successful you think she was with it.

19. King Oz's final thought was, "That moment in which all is lost is the same moment in which begins the battle to regain it." Explain how his statement applies to the story and specifically to Glinda's quest.

20. Why is the story titled *A Fiery Friendship*? What multiple meanings does the title have? Why do you think the series is called *Ages of Oz*?

Extension Activities

Magical Deck of Cards

In the Reliquary, Glinda conjured up a deck of cards, each with a magical being on it. Have students use the descriptions of the cards and their own imaginations to create a deck of eight large cards. One side should show the magical being and its accoutrements, with its name in ornate letters. On the other side, have students write a short paragraph about the magical being.

Once upon a Wicked Deed

Glinda sings a song she heard from Maud that starts, "Once upon a wicked deed." Have students study the song closely and then write an essay about how the song reflects Glinda, her companions, and their deeds.

Coming to You Live from the Grand Alleé

What if Oz had television reporters? They would want to be on hand during the dramatic scene in which Glinda and her companions fight Aphidina in the Grand Alleé. Have students give oral presentations in which either they recount the action as a reporter live on camera, or they work in pairs, with one student as the reporter interviewing the other as a character from the story. They should write out their scripts before presenting them to the class.

Design and Describe a Monster

Aphidina's monsters, Bog and Lurcher, are drawn from her earth-based, growing magic. Have each student design and name a monster that the witches of the East, West, and North might have. The monster should be based on that witch's type of magic. Have each student create a poster with a picture of the monster, labeled with its name and surrounded by adjectives that describe it.

Following the Threads

Even though this is set in a fantasy world, the author makes references to Earth that add to the book's richness. As a class, make a list of these references, such as the American colonies—

including the concept of liberty and specifically the New York colony; the book titled *The Sword in the Stone*; the instruments in the Makewright's lodge; Michelangelo; and the pan flute. In the series title and various parts of the story, the author also makes references to L. Frank Baum's Oz books. Have students work in small groups to research one of the references and report back to the class.

The Zoetrope's Tale

A Fiery Friendship uses a wide vocabulary, which is especially evident in the stories-within-a-story. Have students reread "The Zoetrope's Tale" and make a list of unfamiliar words. Then, working in small groups, have them discuss the words in context, guessing what they might mean, and then look them up. Have each student print out one of the words, its sentence from the story, and its definition, and then decorate it to add to a Word Wall.

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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