

A Curriculum Guide to

The Revenge of Magic

By James Riley

About the Book

When you visit the Lincoln Memorial as a tourist in Washington, DC, you don't expect to be attacked by monsters. But that's just what happened to Fort and his father. Worse still, the monsters captured Fort's father while a voice in his head forced Fort to escape, keeping him from rescuing his dad. Now Fort's vowed to get revenge on the monsters. His chance comes when he's recruited to study at a boarding school that trains young people in magic, including Destruction magic. But nothing's simple there. He doesn't know who to trust among the dangerous adults and strange students around him. He just knows he's going to get revenge, no matter what.

Discussion Questions

The questions in this section address the following Common Core State Standards: (RL.4-7.1, 2, 3) (RL.5-6.5)

1. What kind of person is Fort? Do you think he was different before his father disappeared? Explain your answer. What are his strengths and weaknesses? How do these affect him at school and in his quest to seek revenge?
2. Describe the scene where Fort meets Rachel. What does she do? How does he react to her? How does his view of her change during the novel, and what causes it to change? Explain Rachel's background and how she ended up at the school.
3. Identify the different types of magic found in the discovered books. Which types are being taught at the school? How do the teachers decide which young people should learn which type of magic? Which types of magic don't they teach, and why? How do you feel about their reasonings and practices?
4. What kind of person is Cyrus? How does he reach out to help Fort when Fort arrives at the school? Why do you think he does this? What are Cyrus's powers? Give specific examples of how those powers help Fort in his quest. How might Fort's experience have changed without Cyrus?
5. As he's going to meet Dr. Ambrose, Fort overhears a conversation between her and Dr. Oppenheimer. What does he learn by listening? Why is Dr. Ambrose so worried about having Fort at the school? How is she planning to make sure he can't stay?

6. Compare Dr. Oppenheimer and Colonel Charles. What are their goals? What do they disagree about? Discuss what they have in common, if anything. What happened to the Colonel's son, and how do you think that affects his choices?

7. Only young people can read the magic books and perform magic. How does this fact affect the plot and character motivations? How do the adults use the kids' magic to provide a defense against the monsters? How does Dr. Ambrose feel about her inability to perform the magic that she teaches, and why does she feel that way?

8. How does Jia help Fort? Why is she reluctant to do so? Describe her background before coming to the school, and her time there before Fort arrived. What is her relationship to Sierra?

9. What role does Sierra play in the plot and in Fort's life? When does he first connect the voice he heard in Washington, DC, with the girl at the school? When does he meet her in person, and what happens during the encounter?

10. Why does Fort blame Damien for the attack on his father? Describe Damien's powers and earlier actions in conjunction with the monsters. What does Damien want? Do you agree that the attack is all Damien's fault? Why can it be difficult to admit wrongdoing or take the blame? Explain your answers.

11. Describe the monsters, and summarize what happened at the beginning of the book when they emerged in Washington, DC. When Fort was at the Lincoln Memorial, where was Sierra? What was happening to her? How might these incidents have been prevented, if at all? Explain your answer.

12. Where are the monsters from, and what do they want? What is their previous relationship to Earth and humans? Describe the scene near the end where they attack the school. How do Fort and his friends defeat them? What do you think this experience showed the group about themselves? Have you ever had to stand up for yourself or others? How did it make you feel?

13. Although we only see Fort's father at the beginning of the story, he has a distinctive voice that carries on in Fort's mind. How does he treat his son? Why do you think Fort's father talks to him that way? Explain what happens to Fort's father, and what is uncertain about his situation. How does Fort feel about this?

14. Cyrus says to Fort, "Life is less about what happens and more about how you deal with those events." Describe the context in which he says this. What does he mean? Do you think he's right? Explain your answer.

15. Fort says he wants to learn Destruction magic so he can get justice. But Doctor Oppenheimer replies, "You don't want justice. . . . You want revenge." Why does the doctor say that? What's the difference between justice and revenge? Discuss how the idea of revenge comes up elsewhere in the book, and why *revenge* is in the book's title.

16. Explore the novel's theme of whether the ends always justify the means. For example, Colonel Charles threatens to harm Fort's aunt, saying, "What I do, I do to keep my country safe." Do you agree that his actions are justified? Explain your answer. Find and discuss other examples in the novel that question whether using violence is appropriate to justify a seemingly good goal.

17. Why do you think the author chose to use a third-person point of view? How might the novel have changed if Fort had told his own story? Identify how the book uses different typefaces to convey different voices, and whether you found that to be an effective choice.

Extension Activities

1. My Favorite Spell

As a class, compile a list of spells in the novel, including the page numbers of where they are mentioned. Have each student choose the spell that they would most like to perform. Ask them each to write an essay about why they've chosen this spell and what they would do with it.

2. Monster Mania

Ask students what kind of monster they would put into a story like this. Ask each student to come up with their own creation and present it on a poster that includes an image of their monster. The poster's text should describe the monster's powers; characteristics, such as smell or texture; and name. Then ask the students to imagine what role the monster might have played in this novel and have them add it to the poster.

3. Many Thanks!

Acknowledgments sections can be found in the front or back of books. As a class, read James Riley's acknowledgments after the final chapter. Discuss the purpose of acknowledgments in general, and the role of some people he mentions, such as his editor. Talk about the tone of his acknowledgments and what it reveals about his personality. Ask students to find acknowledgments in other books, including Riley's earlier books, and compare their tone and content.

4. The Power of a Title

Some of the adults in the book have titles such as Doctor and Colonel. Have students gather in groups and list other similar titles such as Professor, Judge, Captain, Senator, and so on. Have a day in which each student is addressed by a title of their choice. Then hold a discussion about the power of titles and why they exist in society. What kind of responsibility do these people have? How long do they hold that responsibility? Who holds them accountable?

5. Before We Met

Readers plunge into Fort's dramatic story without learning much about his background. Where did he live? What were his parents like? Who were his friends? What did he like to do? Invite students to imagine Fort's earlier years in the time before the novel opens. Ask each student to write and perform a monologue about Fort's life before this story begins, drawing on specifics from the book and adding to them.

Guide written by Kathleen Odean, a youth librarian for seventeen years who chaired the 2002 Newbery Award Committee. She now gives all-day workshops on new books for children and teens. She tweets at @kathleenodean.

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