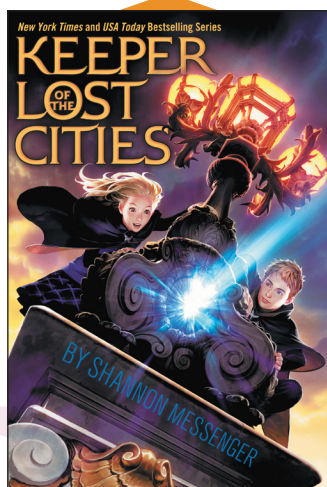


KEEPER OF THE LOST CITIES

BY SHANNON MESSENGER

Curriculum Guide



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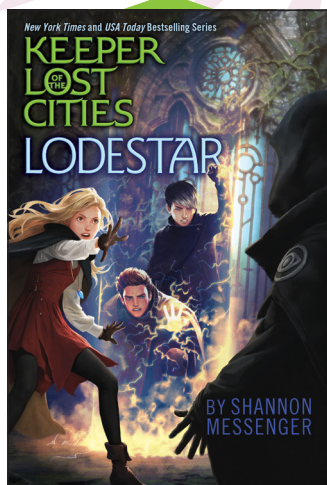
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Dear Educators and Librarians,

Kids aren't shy about vocalizing what they like to see in books, and Shannon Messenger's Keeper of the Lost Cities series earns an enthusiastic YES for keeping them coming back for more. Take it from Sonya B., age 10, who raves, "The Keeper of the Lost Cities books are filled with action, fun, and inspiring characters, and mysteries that are begging to be solved," or Carly T., age 9, who says, "The Keeper of the Lost Cities is a great series, and has inspired many students to be like Sophie, brave, smart, and kind. I cannot wait for *Legacy* to come out!"

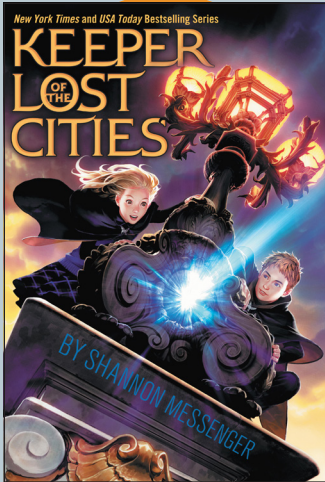
Legacy is the eighth book in the *New York Times* and *USA TODAY* bestselling middle grade fantasy series that stars a strong female heroine, Sophie, who learns she's a Telepath and discovers a new life filled with supportive allies and dangerous quests; she's supported by a big group of friends, making this an accessible and fun read for both boys and girls. In the **educator section on ShannonMessenger.com**, Shannon describes her process for scheduling school visits, Skype chats, or Google Hangouts, and you can find bonus content for the series on the books tab. Visit Shannon's featured author page on **The Book Pantry (<https://SimonandSchusterPublishing.com/TheBookPantry/Shannon-Messenger.html>)** to introduce Shannon and her books to your young readers, or watch her interview on Fairfax's Meet the Author program (https://www.YouTube.com/watch?v=qTR1_MP-Xql).

Now is the time to embark on the series that is taking the tween world by storm!

As Shannon says, "Keeper of the Lost Cities is the series I wish I'd had when I was younger, and so many elements of the story are based on the things I loved back then: alicorns! superpowers! sparkles! (oh, who am I kidding? I still love those things!)" It's this energy that weaves itself into her characters and plots, captivating a new generation of readers and writers eager to explore every corner of Sophie's world.

—The S&S Education and Library Team





Keeper of the Lost Cities Book 1: *Keeper of the Lost Cities*

By Shannon Messenger

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Keeper of the Lost Cities Book 1: *Keeper of the Lost Cities*
Curriculum Guide — Page 1 of 2

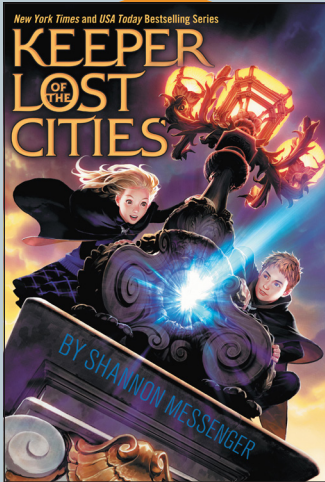


Background/Summary

Sophie Foster, who lives in San Diego with her family, just doesn't fit in. She's a lonely twelve-year-old prodigy with a photographic memory and a secret ability to read minds. So she's thrilled to learn of a place where she might belong: a vibrant world of elves who live in Lost Cities like Atlantis. But moving there isn't easy. Even in the Lost Cities, Sophie stands out among her new friends because of her mysterious upbringing and amazing telepathic talents. Her past and her powers lead Sophie into dangerous adventures as she tries to help those she left behind—even when it puts her own life at risk.

Discussion Questions

1. What does it mean to belong? Does belonging to a group or society require conformity? Can you belong and still maintain your individuality?
2. Compare the Forbidden Cities of Earth and how humans live there to the Lost Cities and how the elves and the other creatures live there. How are the two places and their inhabitants alike? How are they different?
3. Edaline explains to Sophie that the world of Lost Cities is “talent-based.” What talents does Sophie have and what can she do with them? What special abilities do her friends have? Find evidence of how important the talents are at Foxfire school. Name some of the other talents, and what people with them can do.
4. Describe Foxfire, Sophie's new school. What does it look like? What are the grade levels? How do mentors and students interact? What classes does Sophie take? Compare Foxfire to your school, analyzing how they are similar and different.
5. Alden says of Grady and Edaline, “They run an animal preserve at Havenfield, so they always have all kinds of exciting things going on.” Describe the preserve, some of the animals in it, and examples of the excitement. What does the preserve tell the reader about Grady and Edaline? What does it convey about the world of the Lost Cities?
6. The novel opens with a preface showing a scene later in the book in which Sophie has been kidnapped. What is the purpose of the preface? How might it affect a reader? How does it foreshadow the kidnapping and other elements of the story?
7. The first chapter also introduces many of the book's themes and foreshadows plot and character. After finishing the novel, go back and look closely at pages 1 and 2. What do you learn about Sophie, her personality, and how she's treated by those around her? How are these elements developed later in the book?
8. Many chapters in this book end with cliff-hangers, that is, paragraphs or sentences that leave the reader hanging. Find some examples of cliff-hangers and analyze how they create suspense. For each cliff-hanger you consider, find where and how the suspense is resolved, either in the next chapter or later in the book. Why does the author use cliff-hangers?
9. Even in the Lost Cities, people feel strong emotions such as jealousy, anger, and grief. Find evidence of these feelings in characters other than Sophie. What role do strong feelings play in moving the story forward? Give specific examples.
10. What is Sophie's relationship to her human family? Give examples of how it is revealed in words and actions. How have her special abilities affected her family life? What is her relationship with her human family after she moves to the Lost Cities? How does it affect the plot?
11. Describe Sophie's relationship with Grady and Edaline. Why did Alden suggest she live with them? Why is Sophie's presence hard for Grady and Edaline? How does their relationship change throughout the book and what's it like at the end?



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Keeper of the Lost Cities Book 1: *Keeper of the Lost Cities*
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12. In chapter 43, Stina tells Sophie something about Biana that hurts Sophie's feelings. What does Stina tell her and why? How does Biana's attitude toward Sophie change during the story? Give specific examples. Why does Biana's view change?
13. Compare Fitz and Dex. How are they similar? How are they different? How do the two boys feel about each other? How does each of them feel about Sophie? Compare their families, too. Give evidence for your answers.
14. Describe Bronte and his role in the plot. Why is he so powerful? Why does he oppose Sophie? Do things get better between them?
15. Sophie has always felt different, like "a freak." Why did she feel that way when she lived among humans? Find places in the story where she struggles with feeling different and lonely. Fitz tells her that being with the elves is "where you belong." Discuss if she feels at home among the elves, and if so, how that is conveyed in the novel.
16. Secrets are important in this book. What secrets does Sophie have to keep in the human world? In the elf world? How do the secrets affect her relationships? What secrets does Alden keep from her, and why? Sophie has secrets she doesn't know herself. Explain how that is true and how it affects the plot.
17. Another theme concerns helping other people. How does Sophie help her new friends and how do they help her? What is Sophie's attitude toward humans and what steps does she take to help them? What are the attitudes of different elves toward helping humans? Find specific examples.
18. Describe the narrator's point of view in this novel, pointing to specific examples that show it. Besides describing events, does the narrator reveal the characters' emotions and thoughts? If so, which characters?
19. The author uses imagery about light throughout the book. The name of the lost city, Lumenaria, comes from lumen, the Latin word for "light." Read what Fitz and Sophie say about the school name, Foxfire, in chapter 7. Find other examples of light imagery. Why is light so important in this story? What does it symbolize?
20. As you read, make note of examples of alliteration used throughout the book. For example, near the end of the fourth chapter, Sophie feels "a whole new world of worries" press down on her. After leaving Atlantis, "Their bubble bobbed on the breeze." Chapter 14 ends with her dreaming of "a life filled with friends and fun and finally belonging." What purpose does the alliteration serve? Do the different sounds evoke different feelings or images?

Extension Activities

Wall of Wonderful Images. Have students find similes, metaphors, alliteration, and other images in the book that create vivid pictures in their minds. Have them draw or paint some images, including the words and page numbers. Create a Wall of Wonderful Images with the artwork. Once all of the pictures are posted, have a group discussion about what categories the author draws her images from such as nature, machinery, and so on.

Fakebook Fun. Sophie gets to know a lot of people at her new school and home. Have students choose Sophie or another character and create a Fakebook page for them. A Fakebook page looks like a Facebook page but doesn't require logging into Facebook. Students can include a drawing for the character's profile picture, list their friends, and put remarks on their time line. They can list what music, movies, or books the character might like. Fakebook is part of ClassTools at ClassTools.net/FB/home-page. NCTE's ReadWriteThink also has a social networking profile tool at ReadWriteThink.org/parent-afterschool-resources/games-tools/profile-publisher-a-30243.html



Keeper of the Lost Cities Book 2: *Exile*

By Shannon Messenger

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Keeper of the Lost Cities Book 2: *Exile*
Curriculum Guide — Page 1 of 2



Background/Summary

Sophie Foster has a mysterious past. She was raised by humans but now lives in the world of elves. As she settles into her new life, Sophie develops more and more powers, including some that no one else has. When she finds a rare alicorn called Silveny, the two of them share thoughts and feelings telepathically, another new talent. Silveny becomes a significant symbol of hope for the elves. But the dangerous organization that once kidnapped Sophie may now be targeting Silveny. Sophie and her friends are willing to risk everything to keep Silveny safe, but will it be enough?

Discussion Questions

1. Why is trust important in relationships? What role does it play in government and public life? What does it mean to trust yourself and your abilities?
2. Sophie starts to take classes at Foxfire's elite towers. Describe the towers and specifically the Silver Tower. What does Master Leto do there and how does he treat Sophie? Give details about the Hall of Illumination and how it becomes important in the story.
3. The Lost Cities are not entirely peaceful. Give details about some of the weapons and methods of fighting mentioned. How can Inflicting function as a weapon? Explain what Sophie discovers about the opposite side of Inflicting, and Bronte's reaction to her discovery.
4. Describe how to get to Exile and what it's like there, giving specifics from the book. What purpose does Exile serve for the Lost Cities? What is Sophie's reaction to it? How does Exile fit in with the view you had developed of the Lost Cities? Did it surprise you that the Lost Cities would have such a place?
5. Sophie disobeys the adults in her life and breaks rules when she thinks it's important. Give examples of when she does this in big ways. What are the consequences of her decisions? How do her actions affect the plot and move the story forward? What would have happened if she hadn't broken the rules?
6. Brant calls finding Silveny "a turning point." What does he mean? What is the Timeline of Extinction and how does it relate to Brant's comment? Is Silveny's arrival a turning point? What does the alicorn symbolize to the elves, and what is her impact on their world?
7. What information does Sophie gather about the Black Swan organization? Analyze how the clues from Black Swan affect the plot. Who are the men in the dark capes who try to steal Silveny? What role do they play in the plot?
8. Which parts of this novel are suspenseful? How does the author create suspense? How does suspense keep readers involved in the story?
9. Describe Silveny and her personality. What's her relationship with Sophie like? What feelings do she and Sophie have in common? How does Silveny help Sophie?
10. Grady and Alden are the most important men in Sophie's life. Compare the two of them. How are they alike? How are they different? What do they disagree about? How does Sophie feel about each of them?
11. Describe Sandor and his work. What is Sophie's attitude toward him at first and how does their relationship change? Why does Sophie think, "Maybe having Sandor on her side wouldn't be such a bad thing." In what ways does having Sandor on her side help?
12. Keefe calls himself a "master mischief maker." What mischief does he make in the book? What other sides of his character do his words and actions reveal? How does his friendship with Sophie develop during the story? How does Silveny react to Keefe, and why?
13. After Sophie and Alden go to Exile, Fitz treats her differently than before. How does he act before and after? Why does he change? Compare how Fitz and Keefe treat Sophie after the trip to Exile.



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Keeper of the Lost Cities Book 2: *Exile*
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14. How does Stina Heks act towards Sophie, and why? Describe Stina and her parents, and their role concerning Silveny. Consider how Stina acts at the service for Alden. What does it tell you about her?
15. The theme of trust is explored throughout this novel. Describe different situations in the book where trust is vitally important. What role does it play in the major relationships in Sophie's life, including those with Grady and Edaline, Alden, Silveny, and Keefe? When Sophie thinks, "It all comes down to trust," what kind of trust is she talking about?
16. The topic of guilt is also central. What does Tiergan mean when he tells Sophie, "Do not let any guilt cloud your mind"? What different things does Sophie feel guilty about? Describe the role guilt plays in Alden's life and in what happens to his mind. What role does guilt play in Grady's life? How do Sophie's actions and discoveries help relieve Alden's and Grady's feelings of guilt?
17. Safety and freedom conflict in the story. Those around Sophie want to protect her after her escape from the kidnapping. What steps are taken to keep her safe? Why does Sophie complain that she feels imprisoned by the safety measures? What are the problems with being too protected? Describe the attempts to keep Silveny safe and how it conflicts with her freedom.
18. Find examples of figurative language such as similes and metaphors. Notice that some of them refer to machinery and technology such as "like a chainsaw," "a hair dryer whirring," "his motorboat snoring," "like a roller coaster," and "like a spoon caught in a garbage disposal." Why might the author refer to these topics? Where else in this book is technology important? Give specific examples.
19. Another source of figurative language is strong weather, including disasters: "a raging flood," "a cyclone of heat," "swallowed by an avalanche and launched through a blizzard," and "tornado of questions." What is the effect of these phrases? How do they color the reader's response? What other areas does the author draw from in creating imagery? Give specific examples.

Extension Activities

Mapping the Marvels of Sophie's Worlds. Have students gather information from the book about places that Sophie lives and visits. Each student or pair of students can then create a map of those worlds, cities, and other places. The map should be colored and decorated, and could feature some of the strange animals in the Lost Cities. It should have place names labeled, and perhaps a key and a map scale, which the students can base on their best estimate. Students who read fantasy novels may know of books with maps to use as models. An internet image search of "maps with dragons" will provide models, too.

A More Talented You. Have each student choose an elf talent such as Telepath, Mesmer, Polyglot, and so on, and write a description of what it would be like if they had that talent. Have them include how they could employ the talent for good in their lives. What specific ways could the talent be used? What dangers would be involved in using it? Have them share their descriptions with fellow students.



Keeper of the Lost Cities Book 3: *Everblaze*

By Shannon Messenger

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Keeper of the Lost Cities Book 3: *Everblaze*
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Background/Summary

Adventure and mystery fill this fast-moving fantasy about thirteen-year-old Sophie, who was raised in California but now lives in a world of elves. At her unique school, she's strengthening her extraordinary abilities while still recovering from being kidnapped not long ago. As she tries to figure out the identity of her kidnappers, Sophie comes to appreciate how much her new friends and family matter. She needs their help once more when her enemies close in again. But is it right to endanger those she loves in her own struggle against evil forces?

Discussion Questions

1. What are some advantages of working together as a team on a project or mission compared to working alone? What makes a team strong and successful? What factors can undermine a team?
2. Edaline tells Sophie, "Our world has been teetering on the edge of a blade for a very long time." What are some of the political problems among the elves? What are their relationships and conflicts with the ogres and dwarves? Describe the conflicts of the Black Swan and the kidnappers with the elf world.
3. Even though the Council requires a reluctant Sophie to heal Fintan, they also put blame on her when it gets out of control. Describe how they punish her for probing King Dimitar's mind. Fitz describes the Council's treatment of Sophie as making her a "scapegoat." What does he mean by that? Discuss whether the Council treats Sophie fairly, including her punishment.
4. Sophie tries to heal Fintan in Oblivimyre, which Sandor and Grady call "a place best forgotten." Describe what Oblivimyre looks like, its history, and what happens to Sophie there. Discuss the word "Oblivimyre" and what other words it might be related to. Does the name suit the place? Why or why not?
5. Early in the book, Dex's ability as a Technopath is finally revealed to the rest of his world. Describe the changes this triggers, and why it's so important to him and his family. What kind of trouble does his talent get him into? How does he show his loyalty to Sophie?
6. Master Leto, the Beacon of Silver Tower, changes during the novel in how he treats Sophie. What's his attitude when she encounters him in chapters 15 and 16? What does he do that surprises her in those scenes? How does he help her later in the story?
7. Ogres play an important role in the plot. Analyze scenes that convey information about ogres in general and about King Dimitar in specific. Compare the ogres and their society to the elves and theirs.
8. By the end of the book, Sophie realizes that she, Fitz, Keefe, Dex, and Biana are stronger and more able to protect one another when they work together. "Individually they were vulnerable. But together they were a *team*." Describe the skills that each of the friends brings to the team and how their strengths complement each other.
9. After reading the book, go back and reread the preface. What scene does it show from later in the novel? What purpose does the preface serve? Discuss why the author chose this particular scene to open the book.
10. This fantasy adventure has a lot of mystery elements. Sophie is trying to figure out who the Neverseen are and what role Black Swan plays in her life. Describe how she gathers information about each of those mysterious aspects of her life and what she learns about them by the end of the book.
11. At the same time, Sophie is trying to understand more about Jolie. Explain how she goes about finding out about Jolie. How does Vertina contribute to what Sophie learns? What are the most useful clues and sources of information that Sophie finds?
12. Sophie's ability to enter the minds of others proves important several times in the plot. Describe at least two times that she does it, what the consequences are, and how it moves the plot forward.



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By Shannon Messenger

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Keeper of the Lost Cities Book 3: *Everblaze*
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13. The plot contains many gripping scenes where Sophie and her allies face danger. Find one such scene and examine what makes it exciting. Analyze how the author creates a fast pace through sentence length and choice of words, especially verbs. What adds to the suspense and sense of danger in the scene?
14. More than one character is betrayed by someone they care for. Describe these betrayals. Who betrayed whom? Why?
15. Parts of this story explore the role of parents in a person's life. Describe how Sophie and Keefe both worry about the influence of their parents on who they are. Keefe says, "Our family doesn't decide who we are. *We* decide who we are." What does he mean? Discuss how that's true of both of them.
16. Friendship is at the heart of this story. Sophie's friends want to help her pursue the kidnappers, but she worries about putting them in danger, calling her friends the "Let's Ruin Our Lives Club." What are some of the dangers they face? Which of her friends get hurt, and how? Why do they choose to keep helping her?
17. As you read the book, keep a list of unfamiliar words. Try to figure out each word's meaning in context, and then check a dictionary for the definition.

Here are some possibilities:

searing	barricade	kindling	elixir	transit
minions	ingenious	legacy	flurry	albeit
scepter	cowering	visionary		

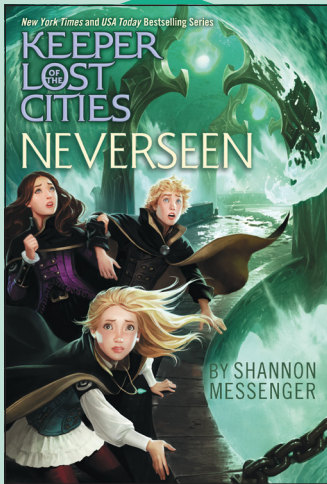
18. The author uses words with Latin roots to describe important abilities and objects in the Lost Cities. Here are some of those words. Look in a print or online source (such as [ReadingRockets.org/article/root-words-roots-and-affixes](https://www.readingrockets.org/article/root-words-roots-and-affixes)) to figure out the etymology of these and other words you find while reading the book.

empathy	polyglot	pyrokinetic	stellarscope
technopath	telepath	teleport	translocation

Extension Activities

Home Sweet Home. Many of the elves in Sophie's new world live in homes with intriguing features and unusual names. Her home is Havenfield, Keefe's is Candleshade, and Fitz and Biana's is Everglen. Have students choose one of the young characters in the book and imagine the home they will have as an adult in the elf world. Have the student name the home and describe it in writing, using vivid vocabulary and ample detail. They can illustrate the description with one or more drawings or paintings. Have them share their ideas with the rest of the class and answer questions about the homes they've envisioned.

A Mountain of Facts. Mount Everest is one of the few settings in the novel that's part of the human world. Have students alone or in pairs do research about Mount Everest using at least one print and one Internet source. Have them compile ten facts about topics like geology, climate, history, famous climbers, recent expeditions, accidents, controversies, and so on. Have them create a list of the facts and add visual elements when helpful like photographs, drawings, time lines, and charts. Then create a Mountain of Facts bulletin board for students to post and compare what they found.



Keeper of the Lost Cities
Book 4: *Neverseen*
 By Shannon Messenger

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Keeper of the Lost Cities Book 4: *Neverseen*
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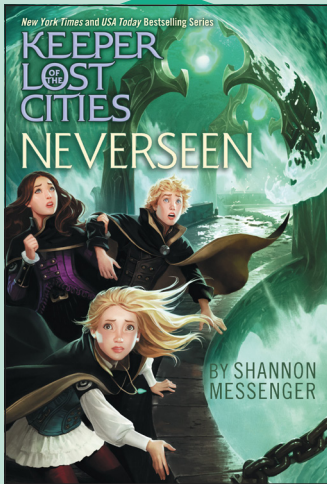


Background/Summary

Sophie and four of her best friends are on the run again! With help from the mysterious Black Swan rebels, they avoid punishment from the elves' council at a secret location. After a short break to strengthen their abilities, the five plunge back into danger as they seek a cure to the plague that's devastating the gnomes. Their pursuit leads them to bleak Exillium, a school for wayward teens, and then in Ravagog, the land of the ogres. Who can they trust? Can they even trust each other? Sophie makes new friends and allies but loses others in the perilous quest to make her adopted magical world a better place.

Discussion Questions

1. Sophie stays in Alluveterre for a while, thanks to the Black Swan. What is Alluveterre like and how does she get there? Who is with Sophie in Alluveterre? Who does she meet there? Describe what life is like for Sophie and her friends in their new home.
2. Why do Sophie and her friends go to Exillium? Describe the school, its coaches, its students, and its curriculum. What are some of the results of their time at Exillium? How does Sophie help the school?
3. Sophie and her friends secretly enter Ravagog to find the cure for the plague. Explain who lives there and what Ravagog is like. What is the relationship between the ogres of Ravagog and the Neverseen?
4. Keefe changes over the course of the story. What are the problems he's dealing with? Describe some of his emotions, giving specific examples. Talk about his decisions at the end of the book related to Sophie and the Neverseen, and why you think he made them.
5. In the end, Calla sacrifices herself and says she's happy to do it. Describe her in terms of appearance, personality, and skills. How does she help Sophie? Why does Calla make the sacrifice and what are its results?
6. Tam becomes an important character in the story. Describe what he's like when Sophie first meets him and why the friends have doubts about him. What are his powers? What does he have in common with Sophie?
7. Provide examples of Linh's power and when it proves important. Analyze the relationship between Linh and Tam, who are twins. How do they help each other? Name times when they disagree.
8. Della stows away on the trip through Florence. How does she manage it, and why does she want to accompany Sophie and her friends? Describe Della's personality, her skills, and the role she plays in the plot.
9. Alvar turns out to have a surprising secret. What do Sophie and the rest learn about him? Discuss why he might have made the choice he did about the Neverseen. Does the story provide any foreshadowing about his secret?
10. Sophie learns more about the Black Swan in the course of the story. Explain what she learns, including the identities of some of the Black Swan collective. How does her view of the Black Swan change?
11. Describe the origins and purpose of Project Moonlark, pointing to specific evidence in the text. What is a moonlark and why was the project named for it? Discuss places where the project and moonlarks come up in the novel.
12. Why does Oralie give Kenric's cache to Sophie? Give details about the cache and its history. Talk about the times that the cache is significant in the story and what makes it important. How else do secrets affect the plot?
13. Give a step-by-step description of how Sophie and her allies infiltrate Ravagog to try to get the cure for the plague. What role does each of the friends play? How do they use their strengths and work together? Discuss how successful their actions are.



**Keeper of the Lost Cities
Book 4: *Neverseen***
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Keeper of the Lost Cities Book 4: *Neverseen*
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14. Oralie says Kenric believed Sophie was “the spark of change our world needed.” What do you think Kenric meant? Discuss how Sophie could be the spark of change. Talk about times that one person in history sparks an important positive change.
15. When Sophie is annoyed with Timkin, she remembers Mr. Forkle saying that their world needs checks and balances. She thinks, “Why shouldn’t the Black Swan have similar voices of opposition?” Identify different characters in the book who provide voices of opposition at different times and discuss whether those voices are helpful
16. Sophie says to Keefe, “What I’m trying to realize is that it’s okay to be different.” What prompts her to say this to him? Discuss ways that the two of them feel different from their friends. How can being different prove to be an asset?
17. The author uses strong verbs to paint vivid pictures of action in this story. Choose an exciting scene in the novel and write down its strong verbs. Analyze how the verbs help energize the scene.
18. Identify the narrative point of view and why the author made that choice. How would the novel have been different as a first-person narrative? What does the extended use of italics signify in the text?

Extension Activities

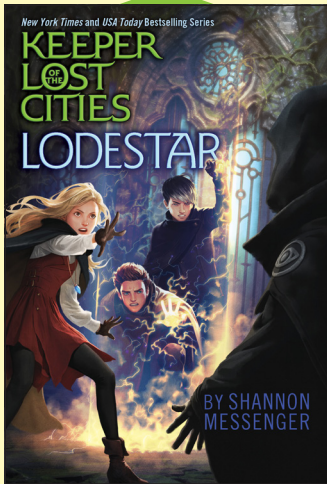
Florence: The Cradle of the Renaissance. Sophie and her friends encounter famous historic aspects of Florence, Italy. As a class, make a list of those aspects such as landmarks, artwork, or people. Have students, working in pairs or small groups, choose one aspect of Florence and research it. They should share their findings with the class in a multimedia presentation.

Take a Trip. Share some travel articles from newspapers and magazines with your students. Then have each of them write a travel article as if they had visited some of the places Sophie encounters in the novel. They should draw on descriptions in the story and add to them, using vivid language. Have students share their articles in small groups.

Is a Much Longer Life Better? The elves and other creatures live much longer than humans. Mr. Forkle reflects that if humans lived longer and “could see a bigger picture, they would not destroy themselves and their planet in the same way.” Have students discuss this idea in small groups and come up with a list of five pros and five cons of humans living for hundreds of years.

Wave the Banner High. Sophie and her friends receive pins that correspond to their abilities. Have students choose one of the magical abilities like Telepath, Empath, Technopath, and so on. The student should design a colorful banner that expresses the ability, with the option of incorporating the colors and symbols of the pins. Hang the banners and have students explain their choices.

Sophie’s Journal. Have students write entries about the last five chapters of the book that Sophie might write in her journal. The entries should mention events and focus on how Sophie feels about them. Have them include an entry for after the book is ended that expresses what Sophie thinks will happen next.



Keeper of the Lost Cities
Book 5: Lodestar
 By Shannon Messenger

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Keeper of the Lost Cities Book 5: Lodestar
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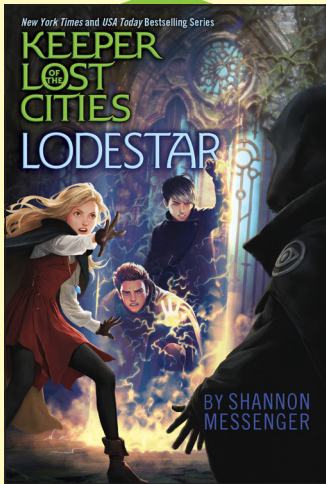
Background/Summary

Dark schemes unfold—and Sophie's loyalty is pushed to the limit—in this thrilling fifth book in the bestselling Keeper of the Lost Cities series. Sophie Foster is back in the Lost Cities—but the Lost Cities have changed. The threat of war hangs heavy over her glittering world, and the Neverseen are wreaking havoc.

The lines between friend and enemy have blurred, and Sophie is unsure whom to trust. But when she's warned that the people she loves most will be the next victims, she knows she has to act. A mysterious symbol could be the key—if only she knew how to translate it. Every new clue seems to lead deeper into her world's underbelly and the Black Swan aren't the only ones who have plans. The Neverseen have their own Initiative, and if Sophie doesn't stop it, they might finally have the ultimate means to control her.

Discussion Questions

1. Describe Rimeshine, both inside and out. How does Juline's ability relate to Rimeshine? Discuss the reactions of Sophie, Fitz, and Biana to Rimeshine, and the reasons that Dex was worried about having them visit.
2. Sophie goes with Sandor to Gildingham to honor Brielle. How do they get there? What is Gildingham like? How does it reflect the goblins and what they value? Describe how the goblins honor Brielle.
3. What is Lumenaria like? Describe the castle and the events that take place there. What are the elves trying to communicate with the opulence of the castle and the gala?
4. In the first chapter, Sophie thinks about the silver moonlark pin that was a "symbol of the role she needed to figure out how to play." What does the moonlark stand for? When in the novel does she make progress in figuring out her role?
5. Most of the time in this story, Sophie and Keefe communicate telepathically. How does that affect their relationship? What is Keefe up to, and how does Sophie feel about it?
6. Describe Grizel, her personality, and some of her actions. Talk about her relationship with Sandor and what it shows about him. What is Sophie's reaction to their relationship?
7. Lord Cassius sends Keefe a message that says he can always come back home. Why does that surprise Sophie? Did it surprise you? What does it say about Lord Cassius as a person?
8. In chapter 41, Keefe shares an important memory about his mother with Sophie, which Fitz also sees and hears. What is the memory? What does it reveal about Keefe's mother? Discuss how it explains some of Keefe's problems. How do Sophie and Fitz react to the memory?
9. Stop after reading the preface and discuss what it might foreshadow about the novel. Then discuss it again after reading the novel to see how the preface fits into the whole and why the author chose to open the story with it.
10. Describe how the matchmaking works. Why does the fact that Fitz can get a matchmaking list catch Sophie by surprise? What is Fitz's plan about the list? Why does Dex say he might not register for matchmaking?
11. Why is Juline's admission about who she really is so important? How does Kesler react, and why? What are Dex's emotions and reaction? Explain how the birth of her triplets inspired Juline to make her important choice.
12. How does Sophie's new Enhancer ability work? What are its advantages and drawbacks? Describe ways she uses it in the story.
13. Chapter 21 ends with a dramatic cliff-hanger. Read the cliff-hanger again and then analyze the content of the chapter. What aspects of the chapter make the cliff-hanger's impact stronger? What emotions do the chapter and the cliff-hanger evoke?



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14. Mr. Forkle describes himself as someone whose “first instinct is to deny things.” What is he referring to in general and specifically in this scene? Point to other places in the story where he exercises this instinct. What is Sophie’s opinion of his tendency?
15. When she can’t sleep, Sophie thinks about something Keefe told her: “Sometimes things have to get worse before they get better.” Identify examples in the plot where this pattern is true. What role does this pattern play in writing any adventure story?
16. In the same scene, Sophie also remembers Bronte’s advice that, “Worry can bring power... Better to embrace it than ignore it.” What does this mean? Do you agree with the advice? Can you find examples of Sophie following the advice?
17. What is a lodestar? What role does it play in the plot? Discuss the Lodestar Initiative and why it is named that. Why do you think the author used *Lodestar* as the title?
18. Keefe’s mother writes him a note that says, “All it takes is a leap of faith.” What does the phrase “leap of faith” mean to you? What does Keefe’s mother mean by it?

Extension Activities

Keeping You Safe. Bodyguards are everywhere in *Lodestar*. Have students imagine a bodyguard that they would like to have for themselves. How would the bodyguard protect them? What would the bodyguard’s personality and physical attributes be? Students should draw their creation on a small poster and add a few paragraphs of description to share with the class.

Make a Literary Map. Visual organizers can help students understand literary elements in a novel. Have students open the NCTE’s ReadWriteThink interactive for mapping such elements. Have them choose one or all of the elements to expand on. The interactive asks questions that the student answers online. They can save the work to expand later or print it out to post in the classroom.

ReadWriteThink.org/Classroom-Resources/Student-Interactives/Literary-Elements-30011.html

What Could You Do with an Obscurer? One of the most intriguing devices Mr. Forkle has is an obscurer, which hides the user from being seen or heard. Have students write short stories in which the main character makes use of an obscurer as an important part of the plot. The students should share their drafts in small groups and then revise their stories to compile into a class book.

Find a Poem in a Passage. One type of found poetry is created by taking a text and using words from it to create poems. Have students find several passages or even a chapter that they think would work well for poetry. They will then take whatever words and phrases from the text that appeal to them and “remix” them into a poem. Information and examples at the Academy of American Poets can be found here: Poets.org/PoetsOrg/Text/Found-Poem-Poetic-Form

Essential Objects. Sophie’s world is full of unusual objects and artifacts. Have students choose five objects from the story that they consider significant, and list them. Then have the students gather in small groups to talk about what they chose and why. After the small group discussions, have each student choose just one object and share their thoughts about it with the whole class.



Keeper of the Lost Cities Book 6: *Nightfall*

By Shannon Messenger

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Keeper of the Lost Cities Book 6: *Nightfall*
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Background/Summary

Sophie, who was raised among humans but now lives with the elves of the Lost Cities, faces one of her biggest challenges yet in this thrilling sixth book in the bestselling Keeper of the Lost Cities series. Sophie's enemies have kidnapped her human parents, despite the fact that their memories of her were magically removed years ago. Who has them, and how can Sophie save them? Her human sister, Amy, managed to hide from the kidnappers, but what will happen to her now? As always, Sophie relies on good friends among the elves, goblins, and other magical people as she fights evil forces that threaten her family—and the entire future of the Lost Cities.

Discussion Questions

1. After reading the preface, predict what might happen in the novel. Then, when you finish the novel, go back to the preface and discuss how it foreshadows some of the action and dilemmas.
2. Describe Amy and her personality, and compare her life so far to Sophie's. How do they interact in the novel? At the end, Amy makes an important choice about her own memory. What does she choose, and why does she make that choice?
3. Sophie and her friends learn something shocking and amazing about Mr. Forkle. What do they find out? Describe his unusual past and how it changes Sophie's understanding of him.
4. Sophie doesn't have romantic feelings for Dex, so why does she kiss him? What is his reaction? Describe the consequences of the kiss both in that moment and later on in the story.
5. Lady Cadence is trying to forge an alliance between Black Swan and the ogres. Why does she think that's important? Why are the elves willing to consider it? How could it benefit the ogres?
6. Sophie expects King Dimitar to challenge her, but he challenges Keefe instead. What is the challenge? Who wins, and how does he do so?
7. Who is Ro? How does she end up spending time with Keefe and his friends? Describe her appearance and her personality. Give examples of how she helps Keefe, Sophie, and their friends.
8. What is the relationship between Keefe's blood and Nightfall? Keefe's mother, Lady Gisela, refers to Keefe's legacy. What is she talking about? How does Keefe feel about his mother?
9. What are Lady Gisela's goals? Why does she forge alliances near the end of the story? Discuss why she says to Keefe and Sophie: "I must get both of you ready for everything ahead."
10. Who is Vespera, and where has she been until recently? Explain her history in Atlantis and with human beings. What does she want now? Why has she kidnapped Sophie's parents?
11. What is sopordine? How is it made, and what are its effects? Identify those in the book who are given the drug and what happens to each of them.
12. In the first chapter, Sophie thinks about her friends and how it will take "all of their abilities, all of their ideas—and a scary amount of luck—to get through" their challenges. What do each of her friends contribute when they have to fight Vespera in Nightfall?
13. In Nightfall, Vespera explains that Sophie remains trapped because she refuses "to accept that it takes ruthlessness to win in this world." What does she mean by ruthlessness? In what ways is Vespera ruthless? What does Sophie choose to be instead?
14. Vivid places appear throughout this series. Describe a few of the novel's settings, such as Brumevale, the first and second Nightfall, Atlantis, and so on. What words does the author use to make the different places easy to picture?
15. The author uses questions effectively throughout the novel. For example, she ends chapter seven with two questions. What effect do those questions have on the reader? Find other examples of questions and analyze their role in the narrative.



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16. Several times throughout the story, Sophie finds herself worried about what-ifs. At one point, Mr. Forkle says to her, “No ‘what-ifs.’ Try to wait until we have facts.” Explain what he means. Why does Sophie worry so much? Why do you think her “what-ifs” are negative instead of positive?
17. After Sophie describes her time in the Lost Cities to her sister, Amy wonders how Sophie has survived so much. Sophie’s answer also explains how they’ll face the future: “One day at a time. One problem at a time. Each tiny bit of progress slowly adds up to something big.” Discuss this attitude and whether you think it’s a good one. When does Sophie demonstrate this approach in the novel?
18. In talking to Sophie about Project Moonlark, Livvy describes the present time as a “turning point in history.” In what ways is it a turning point in history? What occurs in the novel that might change the future for those living in the Lost Cities and elsewhere?

Extension Activities

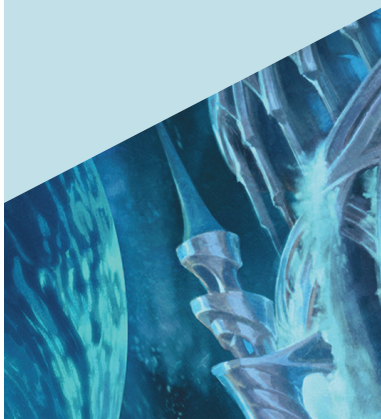
Cast of Characters. A large cast of characters appears in this novel. Have each student choose a character and create an avatar for him or her at a free site like [AvatarMaker.com](https://www.avatar-maker.com/). The student should download the avatar and print it on a large piece of paper. Then have them add a written description of the character and his or her role in the novel. Post these on a wall and have students compare them.

Welcome to the Lost Cities. Introduce or review the genre of travel writing with students, discussing its purpose and sharing examples. Each student should then choose a setting in the Lost Cities and describe it in a travel article, emphasizing aspects that might interest a tourist. Students can decorate their articles with drawings that they create or visuals from the internet.

Web of Friends. Fitz, Keefe, Biana, Dex, Linh, and Tam, who all go to Brumevale with Sophie, are among her best friends. Have students create a web graphic organizer with Sophie’s name in the center circle and lines that connect six outer circles to the inner one. Each outer circle should be labeled with one of the friends’ names and a short description of that character. On the lines to Sophie’s circle, have students briefly describe that character’s relationship with Sophie.

What’s Your Oath? In chapter 2, Sophie reminds herself of the oath she swore: “I will do everything in my power to help my world.” Have students write an essay about her oath and how well she upholds it in the novel. The essay should also address whether the student would adopt such an oath, or what other resolutions they might consider adopting themselves.

Ro! Ro is a vibrant new character in the series. Have students reread the first twenty pages about her, paying close attention to her way of speaking. Then they should write a monologue from Ro’s point of view in which she talks about her assignment to guard Keefe and what she thinks of Keefe, Sophie, and their world. Have students perform their monologues in small groups.





Keeper of the Lost Cities Book 7: *Flashback*

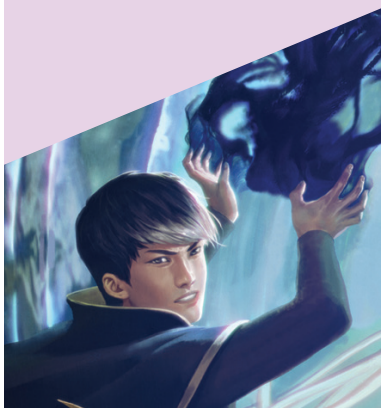
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Background/Summary

Will Sophie and her friends ever defeat the Neverseen? At first, the teens seem as vulnerable as ever to the forces of darkness they're fighting. But when Sophie decides to intensify her training with weapons and telepathy, her friends do too, and they start to believe they have a chance of defeating their opponents. Sophie and Fitz's feelings for each other finally come to light, but there's little time for romance. Once again Sophie, her elf friends, and their bodyguards—goblin, ogre, troll, gnome, and dwarf—find themselves facing clever, vicious enemies from the beginning to the end of this gripping, fast-paced fantasy.

Discussion Questions

1. What does the prologue foreshadow? Talk about the role of illusions in the plot, including who produces them. When are illusions a challenge for Sophie and her friends? When do they create illusions themselves, and why?
2. What are some of the barriers keeping Sophie and Fitz from getting romantically involved? How does their relationship deepen during the story? What do you think the last line implies about their future together? What qualities do you value in a relationship or a friendship? Do you see any of these in Sophie and Fitz?
3. Early on, a decision is made about Alvar staying with his parents. Discuss the pros and cons of this decision. Why do his parents agree to it? How do Fitz and Biana feel about it? Describe how Fitz expresses his feelings about it to his parents. What choice would you have made for Alvar?
4. Describe the extended Vacker family. How can you tell that they are an important family? What do you learn about their history? Why does Sophie sometimes feel intimidated by them? Do her feelings affect how she acts around them?
5. Who is Luzia, and how does she fit into the Vacker family? What does Sophie learn about her over the course of the story? Describe Luzia's personality and powers. Why did she leave Everglen? What kind of alliance has she made with the trolls? Do you think Luzia is an easy person to trust? Explain your answer.
6. In chapter 2, Sophie remembers what Alvar once told Biana: "You'll understand, someday, when you see the Vacker legacy for what it is." What does Sophie think about the legacy at that point? What does it turn out to be in the end? Are there other plot elements or characters that appear to be one thing and are revealed as another by the end of the story?
7. When Grizel starts teaching Sophie to use a throwing star, how does Sophie feel about it? What makes her think that Project Moonlark may have made her a "natural killer"? What do you think separates Sophie from her enemies, if both are willing to use violence? When does she use her new skills in action?
8. How do Sophie and Fitz end up in the infirmary? What are their injuries, and what caused them? What kind of treatment do they get, and from whom? Talk about the differences between elf medicine and human medicine.
9. Why does Sophie decide to intensify her training? What areas does she work hardest on? Who else increases their training? Who are their teachers, and what do they teach? How does the training end up feeding into Vespera's scheme?



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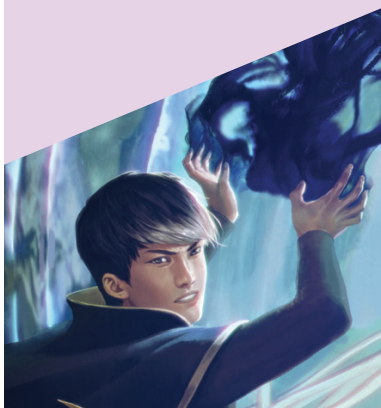
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10. Why does Tarina join Sophie's group of bodyguards? What are some of her strengths and abilities? What does she teach Sophie? Describe times that Tarina is important in protecting Sophie. Are there sacrifices in agreeing to protect someone? Think about the degree of loyalty and trust required, and whether developing an emotional bond is a help or a hindrance.
11. What kind of alliance does Tarina want to forge with Sophie? What does Tarina offer in return for the promise of Sophie's help in the future? How does Sophie react to the idea of an alliance? Why does she end up agreeing to it? Is there a line between a partnership and a parasitic relationship, and is it crossed here? What would you have decided to do if you were in Sophie's place?
12. Describe Tinker's home and workshop, and some of her inventions. Why does Mr. Forkle bring Dex to Tinker? How does Dex react to her and her workshop?
13. Who is Marella? Describe her relationship with Sophie. Why is Marella's talent with fire a problem? What does Fintan offer to do for Marella? Explain why Sophie and her friends are skeptical of Fintan's offer, and what they decide to do about it.
14. When Fitz and Sophie are talking about the Winnowing Gala and matches, he says to her, "I want it to be you." What does he mean? What is Sophie's reaction? Why do you think it's challenging for them to navigate romance? Does developing a friendship first change the stakes when moving into a relationship? Explain your answer.
15. When Sophie later expresses her lack of confidence about their possible romance, Fitz tells her that she's "the most powerful elf our world has ever seen." What makes her powerful? Why doesn't Sophie see herself that way? Why do you think she lacks self-confidence? Can you relate to Sophie? Why can it be harder to convince yourself of your worth than it is to convince others? Explain your answer.
16. How does Keefe react to Sophie and Fitz's changing relationship? Find examples that show how Keefe feels about Sophie. When Keefe says to Fitz, "It's not exactly easy being your friend," what does he mean? Can you relate to Keefe in this situation? How would you have handled things if you were in his shoes?
17. Mr. Forkle tells Sophie, "Life is a series of hard choices, Miss Foster. The most you can do is face them one at a time." What are some of the hard choices Sophie has to make during the story? What makes those choices hard? Do you think there are right and wrong choices? What advice would you give to Sophie?
18. Mr. Forkle cautions Fitz against harming Alvar by saying, "Punishing someone because you expect them to commit a crime will always be unjust." To do so, he explains, would make Fitz "as bad as our enemies." Discuss these statements and whether you agree with them. Can you relate them to other situations you've seen in your community or in the news? Sophie points out the difference between "fighting back" and "preemptive murder." What does she mean? Why is that distinction important?
19. What is the role of memory in the plot? Describe memories in conjunction with Alvar, Keefe, and Sophie. What is the significance of the title? How does it relate to memories?



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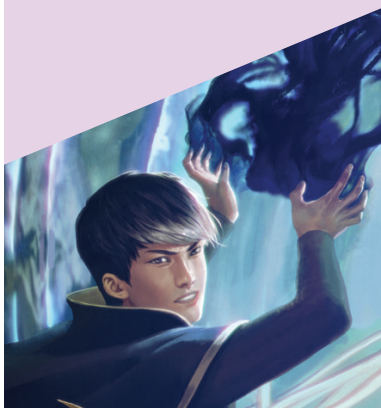
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Extension Activities

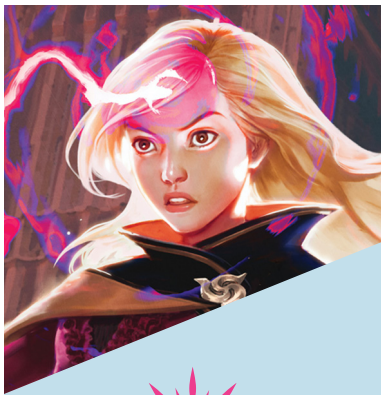
Hang in There. Sophie, Fitz, Keefe, and others face serious danger and setbacks over the course of the novel. Have students choose a character that they like and write him or her an encouraging letter to help the character keep their spirits up despite challenges. The letter should refer to specifics in the plot, and give reasons the student believes the character can prevail.

Game Time. *Flashback* is packed with characters, places, and other details that make it perfect for a quiz game. Have pairs of students use the free website, [JeopardyLabs.com](https://jeopardylabs.com), to create a game with questions and answers using facts in the novel. The class can play individually or in teams to see who remembers the most about the book!

Wanted! A Neverseen Villain. Some of the most vivid characters in the series are the villains. Have each student choose one of the characters who opposes Sophie and her friends, and create a wanted poster for that character. It should have a drawing of the character, along with a description that makes it clear why he or she could be called a villain. Have students put up the posters and compare and contrast the characters.

Speed Round. When Fitz and Sophie try to decide whether or not to meet with Fintan, she proposes they try a speed round in which they trade off stating reasons why they should or shouldn't meet. As a class, make a list of important decisions or disagreements in the novel. Then have students meet in small groups and have speed rounds about the pros and cons of each topic.

Matchmaker, Matchmaker, Make Me a Match. Sophie is disconcerted by the elves' custom of making marriage matches through the use of a list and the Winnowing Gala. In our world, arranged marriages and matchmaking have been part of many cultures historically, and still exist today. Have each student do brief research on the topic and then write an essay about the advantages and disadvantages of such arrangements. The essay should refer to Sophie's situation and also consider the topic more broadly.



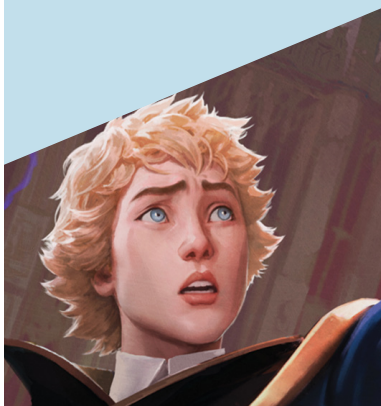
Keeper of the Lost Cities Book 8: *Legacy*

By Shannon Messenger

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Keeper of the Lost Cities Book 8: *Legacy*
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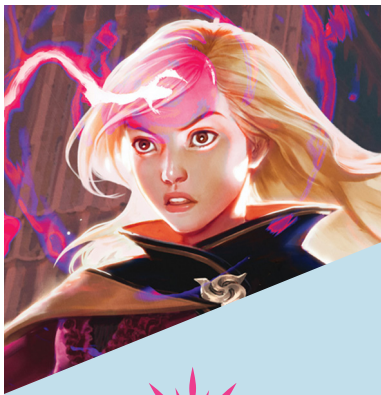


Background/Summary

Meet Team Valiant! The powerful Council of the Lost Cities has decided that Sophie and four of her friends must become nobility, complete with crowns and titles of Lady and Lord. With the honors come heavy responsibilities, especially for Sophie as a leader. But her search for her biological parents keeps getting her distracted; although the two main boys in her life aren't on the team, their emotions keep her off balance as well. However, Sophie knows she must focus her remarkable powers on the fight in hopes she and her team will finally defeat the forces of evil.

Discussion Questions

1. Describe Team Valiant and its members. What strengths does each team member bring? How does Sophie feel about being the leader? How do her team members feel about her leadership role?
2. The Team Valiant members are also elevated to Regents, which gives them titles and makes them members of nobility. Why does the Council decide this distinction is important? How will it affect their prestige in the community and beyond? What clothing and objects are they given in the process?
3. Why is Sophie searching for her biological parents? Who does she tell about the search? Who doesn't she tell, and why does she keep it a secret from them? How does she go about figuring out who her parents might be? What mistakes does she make, and what does she learn from it?
4. Sophie gives Mr. Forkle an ultimatum: "Tell me who my biological parents are or I won't let you reset my inflicting." Why does he want to reset her inflicting ability? Why doesn't he want to tell her about her biological parents? When does she change her mind about the ultimatum, and why?
5. Why does the issue of identifying Sophie's biological parents matter so much to Fitz? How does he act when she says she's unmatched? How does he react when she explains that she isn't going to keep trying to find out about those parents? Describe Sophie's and Fitz's relationship at the end of the novel.
6. Talk about Keefe's and Sophie's relationship, and how it changes during the book. What do you think Ro keeps hinting at? When does Fitz seem jealous of Keefe, and why?
7. During the first trip to Loamnore, Bronte says to Sophie, "I have no doubt that you'll be an incredible leader if you stop second-guessing yourself and commit." In what ways does Sophie second-guess herself? What makes Bronte believe she has leadership skills? Do you think Sophie becomes a more confident leader during the story? What qualities do you think a good leader should have?
8. Why is Sophie so convinced that she's "basically defective"? What would she like to change about herself? Describe her strengths and weaknesses. Talk about how some of her friends see her and how that differs from her view of herself. Can you relate to Sophie? Explain your answer.
9. Sophie's enhancing skills change throughout the story. Describe what they are and how they evolve. Why does she have to wear gloves and Dex's devices, at least initially? What effect do the skills have on those around her and their abilities? What helps change her enhancing skills?
10. "We have too many enemies," Sophie says to Mr. Forkle early in the story. Who are some of their enemies? How do they work against Sophie and her friends throughout the story? Describe what you know about their goals and motivations. How do Sophie and her allies fight back?
11. Why is Keefe searching for the man in London? What does Keefe come to believe that his mother did to this man? How does his mother find Keefe, Sophie, and Dex there? Discuss Keefe's mother and what she wants for him.
12. What is Tam's situation during most of the story? What communication does Sophie have with him? How are those communications confusing? What does she learn about him and Lady Gisela during the dramatic scene at Loamnore?



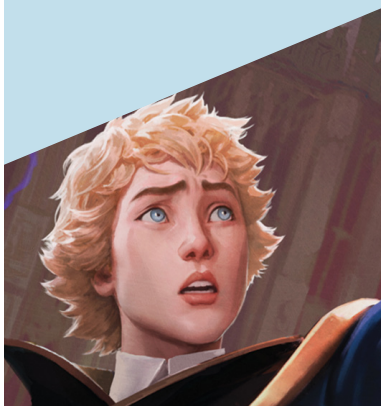
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13. Talk about Oralie's role in the plot and how Sophie's feelings about her change at different times. What is Oralie like? How does she help Sophie? Why is Sophie so angry with her in some scenes? Would you have felt the same way if you were Sophie? Explain your answer.
14. Loamnore is an important setting in the story. Describe its features and the journey to get there. Why do Sophie and her allies go to visit King Enki? Why do they return near the end of the story?
15. Who is Nubiti, and what role does she play in the plot? How does she help Sophie and her allies? When does she disagree with King Enki? What important change comes about for Nubiti at the end of the novel, and why?
16. How do Sophie's friends use humor to cope with different situations? For example, when Team Valiant is first formed, what kind of jokes do the team members make? How does Keefe joke in a way that annoys his mother, and why? Find other examples throughout the novel.
17. *Legacy* explores the importance and burden of responsibilities. Emery talks about the Councillors' responsibility to use their "power for good." Discuss what he means by that and why he believes it. Why does Sophie worry about and sometimes resent her responsibilities as the moonlark? What are some other examples of a sense of responsibility in the story?

Extension Activities

Team Valiant Goes Public. If Team Valiant is going to influence the Lost Cities inhabitants, they could use a few public relations materials. Have students do some research on PR campaigns and what they entail. Then ask students to work in groups to launch a campaign for Sophie and her team. The project can include designing a logo, coming up with a catchy slogan, scheduling an event, creating an infographic, and more.

"Everything Changes Us." Near the end of the novel, Elwin gives Sophie some advice. Have students reread the paragraph in which Elwin talks about how "*Everything* changes us." Students should then write an essay applying Elwin's words to the novel and how Sophie and her friends have changed because of other people and experiences, and what decisions they've made in response to these changes.

Switch That Image. Throughout the novel, figures of speech create images. For example, Flori sings a song that whispers "through the air like warm spring rain." At one point, Sophie thinks about "the roller coaster of complicated conversations" she and Keefe have had. Have students find five figures of speech from the book that they like; for each one, write a figure of speech that is different from the example but conveys the same meaning or feeling.

Dear Abby, Help! Sophie and her friends need help with their complicated relationships. Invite students to work in pairs to write and receive advice from a columnist. Each student should write a letter from one character's point of view, seeking help for a relationship problem. Then the two students should exchange letters and each write a reply in the voice of an advice columnist. Post the exchanges on a bulletin board to share with the class.

Mythical Places. Early in the book, Sophie sees a 3D map of the Lost Cities that makes her think of various mythical places including Atlantis, Shangri-La, the Bermuda Triangle, Camelot, and El Dorado. Ask students to choose one of these places or another mythical place they've learned about. Have them discover more information about the location and then create a poster that shows some of its features and gives its mythical history.



Q&A with Keeper of the Lost Cities series author SHANNON MESSENGER!



Q: *Flashback* is book seven in the series, which means you've been with Sophie and her friends for over five years now. Do they feel like a part of your family? What's the best part about being able to spend so much time with a character like Sophie?

A: I actually came up with the idea for *Keeper of the Lost Cities* way back in 2008, so Sophie and her friends have been living in my head for a *decade*, if you can believe it. Which makes them almost feel like they're my children—despite all the near-death experiences I put them through. There's something so special about getting to watch a character grow and change on the page—especially Sophie. She was always a brave, powerful little girl, but as the series has progressed she's gotten so much more fearless and comfortable in her own skin, which is such a joy to see. I try to never control her. I write her by sitting back and thinking about everything she's been through and everything going on at that moment in the story and asking myself, “okay, what is Sophie going to do now?” And she never ceases to amaze me with her strength and confidence and courage.

Q: The *Keeper of the Lost Cities* series is full of action-packed adventures, magical creatures, and shadowy organizations. Were you a fantasy reader as a kid? Did you ever wish for a telepathic power like Sophie's?

A: Strangely enough, I wasn't—but that was mostly because I grew up *right* before Harry Potter came along, and most of the fantasy books I was steered toward were older books that didn't really grab me for some reason (Narnia being the big exception). So *Keeper of the Lost Cities* is the series I wish I'd had when I was younger, and so many elements of the story are based on the things I loved back then: *alicorns! superpowers! sparkles!* (oh, who am I kidding? I still love those things!) And the idea for Sophie's ability did come from me asking myself, “if I could have any superpower, what would it be?”—though my answer has changed over the last few years. Now that I have to travel so much for work, I would love to teleport and never have to deal with airports again!

Q: Did you always intend for Sophie's story to become a multi-book series? How have the characters or plots surprised you along the way?

A: I knew that the problems Sophie was facing—and the villains she was up against—were much bigger than anything I could address in a single book. But I wasn't exactly sure how many books the story would need. Honestly, I'm *still* not sure. I tend to be a little overly ambitious and start writing each draft with a long list of “Things I Need to Cover in this Book,” and only end up making it through a portion of them by the time I get to the end. And the story has definitely surprised me along the way. Usually it's the villains who shock me with the coldness and cleverness of their schemes—and make me seriously question my dark side. But the plot has also curved a lot of ways I never expected, and I've gone along with those shifts because I feel like a story this big *needs* room to grow, rather than trying to force it down too rigid of a path. At the same time, every book always has plenty of moments that I planned from the very beginning, and it's always so fun to see those play out on the page after having them live in my head for so long.

Q: Have you gotten to meet some of your middle grade readers over the years? What are some of your favorite memories of seeing fans responding to the series?

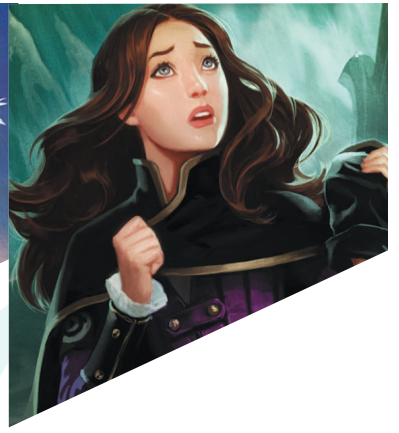
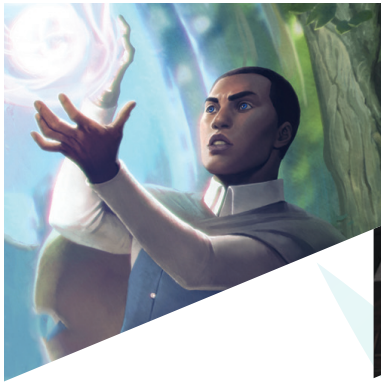
A: I have! I'll never forget the first time a reader showed up in a Sophie costume. I was on tour for *Exile*, so it was still very early days for the series, and her costume was a spot-on recreation of what Sophie's wearing on that cover. I'll admit, I got a little choked up, seeing such visible proof that a reader had connected so strongly with my character. And that feeling never goes away. I've now seen thousands of “Sophies” at events (and plenty of other characters in the series too) and every time I'm overwhelmed by that enthusiasm. There's also nothing cuter than seeing readers holding stacks of books—which are sometimes half as tall as they are—and hearing them talk to each other about series the way my friends and I used to do with the things we loved when we were that age: all the friendly debates, and the wild speculating. To see that happen and know it's now about something that once lived only in my imagination is seriously the coolest feeling ever.

About the Author

Shannon Messenger graduated from the USC School of Cinematic Arts, where she learned—among other things—that she liked watching movies much better than making them. She's studied art, screenwriting, and film production, but she realized her real passion was writing stories for children. She's the *New York Times* and *USA TODAY* bestselling author of the award-winning middle grade series, *Keeper of the Lost Cities*, as well as the *Sky Fall* series for young adults. Her books have been featured on multiple state reading lists, published in numerous countries, and translated into many different languages. She lives in Southern California with an embarrassing number of cats. Find her online at ShannonMessenger.com.

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Teachers, librarians, kids, and booksellers share their love for the *New York Times* bestselling *Keeper of the Lost Cities* series!



"The *Keeper of the Lost Cities* series is magic beyond words and I wish I could explain the amazing places it took me. I have those books and Shannon Messenger to thank for the wondrous hours I spent reading!" — Rishitha G., age 12

"Shannon Messenger's books are consistently in demand in our library. Students love reading them and her event at our school was the most popular one we have ever hosted. The *Keeper of the Lost Cities* series is a must for all middle school library collections." — Ian Richards, Learning Commons Tech, Carmel Valley Middle School

"This debut novel is a powerful and appealing package of skillful world-building, fantasy, suspense, mystery, and middle school relationships... A slew of interesting and well-drawn characters, careful plotting, and just plain good storytelling will have readers racing through the pages." — *School Library Journal* on *Keeper of the Lost Cities*

"When Shannon visited on her *Nightfall* tour... local dedicated fans, curious new converts, and superfans from as far as two states away came dressed in costume. Move over Harry Potter, at the Country Bookshop girl power rules and Sophie Foster is the coolest kid in town." — Angie Tally, The Country Bookshop in Southern Pines, NC on the *Nightfall* tour

"One of the finest and best books I've ever read." — Lauren W., age 13 on *Keeper of the Lost Cities*

"We had a mom and daughter who flew in from North Carolina, and we had people drive in from Memphis, Kentucky, Mississippi (seven hours!), and northern Illinois. We had kids in costume. There were fans of all ages. It was terrific." — Melissa, bookseller at The Novel Neighbor in St. Louis, MO on the *Flashback* tour

"Shannon Messenger's presentation was highly personal as she shared her own heart wrenching experiences as a young author. In her dynamic, upbeat presentation, she connected extremely well with both students and teachers as she shared inspiring statements such as, 'Writing is rewriting.' and 'The only people who have never reached their dreams are the ones who somewhere along the way stopped trying.' The children who are reading the *Keeper of the Lost Cities* are giving it rave reviews, one of the true tests of a successful visiting author at WES!" — Martha Lambertsen, Wallingford Elementary School Librarian

"The *Keeper of the Lost Cities* is a great series, and has inspired many students to be like Sophie: brave, smart, and kind. I cannot wait for *Legacy* to come out!" — Carly T., age 9

"It's an action-packed story that has the most wondrous plot, it's the most amazing book series ever!" — Leah M., age 9

"Your *Keeper of the Lost Cities* series books are the best I've ever read, and I don't say that a lot. Though I'm only on the fourth book, they are my favorite series. All of my friends and I have done quizzes, including 'What character are you?' and 'What's your ability?'" — Harper M., age 10

"Sophie is such a unique character with out-of-the-box traits that make me disappear in the pages." — Scarlett M., age 10

"This series was highly enjoyable. I loved the way Shannon Messenger brought me into her world. I can't wait for the next book." — Kaitlyn H., age 10

"The *Keeper of the Lost Cities* series has a great taste of adventure, you never know what's coming next, and there's always something to look forward to." — Van J., age 10

Awards and Honors for *Keeper of the Lost Cities*

California Young Reader Medal ✨ South Carolina Book Award Nominee ✨ Oregon Battle of the Books List
New York Times bestselling series ✨ *USA TODAY* bestselling series ✨ Alaska Battle of the Books selection
Buckeye Book Award Nominee ✨ *Publishers Weekly* bestselling series ✨ Indie bestselling series