

A Book Club Guide to the Bestselling Series

RANGER'S APPRENTICE

BY
JOHN FLANAGAN

Discussion
Questions
& Extension
Activities
for Books 1~2

APPRENTICE TO ONE,
HERO TO ALL



PRAISE & ACCLAIM FOR THE RANGER'S APPRENTICE SERIES

★ "Flanagan expertly juggles the overall plot line . . . that culminates in a hard, suspenseful battle."

—*Kirkus Reviews*, starred review

★ "The last few years have seen the publication of many fantasies, but few have the appeal of this original story."

—*Booklist*, starred review

★ "A winning formula that should prove out to a long, steady run for this series."

—*Kirkus Reviews*, starred review

"Will's vivid world will entice fantasy readers who are drawn by the lure of high adventure carried out by believable, down-to-earth heroes."

—*Booklist*

"With fast pacing, plenty of action, sympathetic characters and entertaining dialogue, this knightly adventure offers readers enjoyment without condescension."

—*Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books*

"An exciting tale of battle and honor."

—*Publishers Weekly*

"The well-paced plot moves effortlessly toward the climax, letting readers get to know the world and the characters gradually as excitement builds. A pleasing finish should leave readers eager to share the future adventures of the Ranger's apprentice."

—*School Library Journal*

"Flanagan's deft character portrayals and well-paced story will engage readers, and the ending will leave them clamoring for the next volume."

—*Booklist*

A Book Club Guide to the RANGER'S APPRENTICE SERIES by John Flanagan Books 1~2

WITH ITS BREATHLESS PACE, CAPTIVATING STORYLINE, AND SUSPENSEFUL ADVENTURE, the Ranger's Apprentice series by John Flanagan has truly made its mark on young readers. Perfect for boys and girls alike, the books in this series have proven to be excellent choices for reluctant readers *and* avid book lovers. The materials included in this booklet will help you introduce the series into your classroom lesson plans. From ideas for leading book clubs and literature circles to character studies and historical research projects, the enclosed activity prompts will inspire you to enter the world of Ranger's Apprentice—a series that is not only classroom compatible but student friendly as well.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Get to know the author, John Flanagan! Begin your literature study of the Ranger's Apprentice series with an author study unit. Visit his websites, read his bio, and enjoy the entertaining and informative Q&A we've included in this booklet.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Pair or group your students and let them express and defend their opinions on the Ranger's Apprentice books and on the series as a whole. Discussion questions are included for books one through ten.

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

Enrich your Ranger's Apprentice-based book club by taking advantage of the extension activities we've included for each book in the series.

STORY ANALYSIS

The Ranger's Apprentice series can help students demonstrate knowledge of basic story elements. Incorporate the reproducible worksheet included in this booklet into your lessons, and watch your students' reading comprehension skills grow!

CHARACTER ANALYSIS

Use the Ranger's Apprentice series to help students develop knowledge of basic character traits and to be able to track a character's development. Use these handy reproducible worksheets to get students started.

READING, WRITING, AND RESEARCHING:

Encourage group and independent projects across all areas with reading, writing, and research activities. From history and language arts to multimedia and creative writing, the Ranger's Apprentice series provides the perfect opportunity to for a year-long book club.

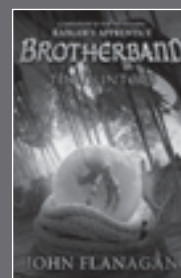
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John Flanagan, author of the international phenomenon Ranger's Apprentice, creates a new cast of characters to populate his world of Skandians and Araluens, a world millions of young readers around the world have come to know and admire. Full of seafaring adventures and epic battles, The Brotherband Chronicles is sure to thrill readers of Ranger's Apprentice while enticing a whole new generation just now discovering the books.





About the Author

A former advertising and television writer, JOHN FLANAGAN is now known for writing the Ranger's Apprentice fantasy books for young readers. Flanagan grew up in Sydney, Australia, took to writing early, and eventually caught on as an ad agency writer. Later he moved to television and, with co-writer Gary Reilly, created a show that was a long-running hit on Australian TV. Initially, Flanagan was inspired to write Ranger's Apprentice as a series of short stories to encourage his son to read (the character of Will is loosely based on him). Mr. Flanagan currently lives in the northern beach suburb of Manly in Sydney, Australia, with his wife. When he's not writing books, he enjoys playing his guitar and mandolin, scooting around his neighborhood on his 150 cc motor scooter, paddling his kayak around Sydney Harbor, and spending time with his grandchildren.

Visit **www.rangersapprentice.com**
to learn more about John Flanagan and the Ranger's Apprentice series.

Book club Ice-breakers: Get to Know Author JOHN FLANAGAN

Q: What inspired you to write the Ranger's Apprentice series?

A: Originally, I wrote a set of short stories for my son Michael, to get him interested in reading. This was many years ago and I set them aside. About ten years later, I found them again and decided to turn them into a book. I didn't realize that book would become a series.

Q: In the series, the Rangers serve as a special intelligence force to the king of Araluen; what was your inspiration for this elite troop?

A: A lot of people assume I was influenced by the Rangers in Lord of the Rings. Actually, my rangers were based on two groups: The Texas Rangers, a small group whose influence and reputation far outweighed their numbers, and the U.S. Army Rangers of World War II. The U.S. Rangers were modeled on the British Commandos, but I thought Ranger was a better term for a medieval setting.

Q: How has your vision of the series changed as it's developed throughout the books?

A: I'm not sure that it has. The characters have grown and developed, as have their relationships with one another. But that's their doing. I'm just the chronicler. I do as they tell me.

Q: What are the biggest challenges of writing a series?

A: Finding a good spot to break between two books, without having people howl at me, "That's a terrible cliffhanger!" There has to be a sense of completion, but at the same time, a sense that the story will continue.

Q: Do you have a favorite character? If so, who is it and why?

A: Well, it'd be easy to say Halt. Most people like him. And he does amuse me. At the moment, I'm quite partial to Tug. But overall, I like Horace. He's very useful and a linear thinker, as opposed to what I call Will's butterfly mind. He provides a necessary balance and common sense.

Q: How many books do you anticipate there will be in the series?

A: I haven't set a limit. If I have an idea that will progress the characters, I'll write it. But I don't want to find myself jumping up and down on the same spot, as it were.

Q: While the setting for the Ranger's Apprentice series is a mythical world, there are many similarities to the real world around the time of the Middle Ages in England, Europe, and Scandinavia. What inspired you to place your story in such a similar setting?

A: I grew up in Australia through the 50s and 60s. At that time, we were steeped in English and European culture and history. Our books tended to be English, not American. In addition, I loved reading mythology – Greek and Norse – and military stories. I guess I've always been interested in military subjects. In the 50s, it seemed that everyone who participated in World War II put out a memoir. I read most of them.

Q: Many of the adventures the characters encounter are great action sequences with detailed fighting scenes. Did you spend a great deal of time researching to get those battle scenes accurate?

A: My research has been ongoing for most of my life. As I said, I've always been interested by military history and well-researched novels with a military background.

Q: In most traditional stories that involve a hero's journey, the hero's mentor must die for the hero to complete his growth. Do you agree that this is necessary?

A: If this is a trick question to get me to tell you what happens, it's not going to work. But no, I don't think it's necessary. It might make for a strong dramatic concept.

Q: Though your American fan base is largely boys, there are a growing number of girls who are reading and enjoying your books. What elements of the series do you believe attract female readers?

A: I'm not sure I agree that the fan base is largely boys. Easily 50% of the emails I receive are from girls. The first two fan letters I received were from two girls in Victoria, Australia. They still write to me. I think girls like the strong female characters in the books. And Will is a pretty attractive hero, as well.

Q: What's the best part of writing for adolescents and teens?

A: They're more willing than adults to e-mail you, telling you what they like and don't like about the books. So far, luckily, I've had more likes than dislikes. But it definitely keeps you in touch with your audience in a way unknown to authors of an earlier generation.

Q: What do you believe are the underlying themes or universal truths to be found in the Ranger's Apprentice series?

A: I set out to entertain. Now you want truths and themes? I guess the eventual triumph of good over evil. I don't know that it always happens, but it should. Then there's loyalty, courage, and the sense that anyone can do anything if they really set their minds to it.

For the first meeting of the year, introduce your readers to the series and the author. Use the synopsis of books 1 and 2 to remind students what they read. If not everyone finished the books, choose the questions that are more universal, and lead discussions about the characters in general, and less about the plot. Use the questions below to get started, and tailor them to fit your needs:



Book 1: The Ruins of Gorlan

They have always scared him in the past—the Rangers, with their dark cloaks and shadowy ways. The villagers believe the Rangers practice magic that makes them invisible to ordinary people. And now 15-year-old Will has been chosen as a Ranger's apprentice. What he doesn't yet realize is that the Rangers are the protectors of the kingdom. Highly trained in the skills of battle and surveillance, they fight the battles before the battles reach the people. And as Will is about to learn, there is a large battle brewing. The exiled Morgarath, Lord of the Mountains of Rain and Night, is gathering his forces for an attack on the kingdom. This time, he will not be denied . . .



Book 2: The Burning Bridge

For years, the Kingdom of Araluen has prospered, with the evil Lord Morgarath safely behind the impassable mountains. But the scheming hand of the dark lord has not been idle. On a special mission for the Rangers, Will and his friend Horace, an apprentice knight, travel to a neighboring village and discover the unsettling truth: All the villagers have been either slain or captured. Could it be that Morgarath has finally devised a plan to bring his legions over the supposedly insurmountable pass? If so, the King's army is in imminent danger of being crushed in a fierce ambush. And Will and Horace are the only ones who can save them.



Start your book club with Discussion Questions for books 1~2

- Will struggles with not knowing his family heritage. Why might the author choose a main character with no known history? What would be the advantages of having a character with no background?
- What skills does Will display as he gains access to the Baron's study? Why do you think Halt allowed Will to sneak into the study?
- Halt tells Will that if he had lied to cover his misdeeds, he would never have become his apprentice. Why? Are there any situations when lying is okay?
- Horace is repeatedly bullied by three older boys. He feels like this is just part of his joining the Battleschool and all first-year boys must go through it. Is it acceptable to haze younger boys in this way? When does this behavior cross the line into bullying? Do you think Horace should tell his teachers? Why or why not?
- At what point does Will first feel that he has a sense of belonging and being part of a group? What events led up to this realization?
- Why does Halt decide to bring Will along to hunt down the Kalkara? Do you agree with his logic? Explain.
- Explain how Morgarath tricked Will and Halt. What implications does this act have?
- How has Will and Halt's relationship changed since the end of *The Ruins of Gorlan*? State specific examples.

- What does Gilan mean when he says the people have become complacent? In this case, why is complacency dangerous?
- When describing Will and his ability to be a good Ranger, Halt says to Alyss, "He has true courage. He can feel fear, he can be afraid. But it doesn't stop him from doing what he has to. Mindless courage isn't any sort of real courage at all." What does this mean?
- Why do people think that Rangers are sorcerers? Why do you believe this group is so misunderstood?
- Gilan shows Horace how to use the smaller knives to block a sword. How does this lesson foreshadow the events that close the novel?
- What is Lady Pauline's explanation on why Halt is so troubled lately? Do you agree?
- What was Will and Horace's mistake while they waited for Gilan to scout out the deserted town? Explain what you believe they should have done.

Have more fun with Extension Activities for books 1~2

- After reading the Prologue, create a military report outlining the events that occurred following the death of the old King of Araluen. Write the report from the point of view of a commander for young King Duncan's forces.
- The villain in *The Ruins of Gorlan* is named Morgarath. What's in a name? How does the author describe Morgarath? What figurative language does he use to build the sense of evil around the character? In the Harry Potter series the villain is Lord Voldemort. In the Sherlock Holmes series it is Moriarty. In a brief journal entry explain what these names/characters have in common.
- Recount the events that led up to Horace defeating his tormentors. What do you think of the way Halt handled the bullies? Was this the right thing to do? Do you feel that justice was served in this manner? Create a flyer for an anti-bullying program. Include the steps you believe should be in place to neutralize a bullying situation.
- "Will studied the knife more closely, seeing the faint blue tint in the blade, feeling the perfect balance. With its leather and brass hilt, the knife might be plain and functional in appearance. But it was a fine weapon and, Will realized, far superior to the comparatively clumsy swords worn by castle Redmont's warriors." How is the weapon Will is given to use similar to his character? Using descriptions from the book of Will and his knife, create a character sketch citing these images as evidence.
- Will turns down the opportunity to become what he once greatly desired—to join the Battleschool and become a knight. Why does he do this? Do you agree with his decision? Why or why not? Write a letter to Will explaining your position and offer him at least four reasons why you think he made the right (or wrong) decision.
- Evanlyn tells Will and Horace, "We have to be sure we're not taking him another red herring". Research the etymology of the term "red herring." Once you understand what a red herring is, return to the Prologue of the book and discover what type of red herring Morgarath plants for Will and Halt. Consider and predict how the story would be altered had Will and Halt not taken this bait. Create a plot structure map detailing a different series of events leading up to the battle with Morgarath and his forces.
- The idea that knowing why your enemy is doing something is just as important as knowing what he is doing is implied in the story. Consider this philosophy. Do you agree? While considering Morgarath's motivation, write an "I AM" poem from his perspective. Use the Internet to search for examples and format instructions.
- One of the reasons Morgarath is defeated is that he ultimately underestimates the teen characters he encounters and battles. Consider a time when you may have been underestimated by an adult. What was that experience like? In a journal entry, explain the events that transpired and how they made you feel. Did you choose to take action? If so, what did you do?
- Will tells Horace and Evanlyn about an adage of Halt's: "When you can't see the reason for something, look for the possible result—and ask yourself who might benefit from it." Using Halt's message, consider three actions from the story. Write a paragraph about each, examining the action and benefit of the results from each action.