


A Classroom Guide to the Bestselling Series

RANGER'S APPRENTICE

by
John Flanagan

Curriculum
Connections,
Discussion
Questions,
& Extension
Activities



Includes
bonus
materials for
Books 1–9!

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 Classroom Guide to the RANGER'S APPRENTICE SERIES by John Flanagan

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 nine.

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

Enrich your Ranger's Apprentice-based classroom unit 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.

CLASSROOM CONNECTIONS: READING, WRITING, AND RESEARCHING

Encourage group and independent projects across all areas of classroom study 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 introduce trade books into classroom learning and required curriculum subjects.

RANGER'S APPRENTICE SPECIAL SNEAK PEEK!

An Insider's First Look at the Final Battle.

In his brief time as an Araluen warrior, Horace has traveled the known world and fought countless bloody battles. All for his country, his king, and his friends. For all that is right.

When Horace travels to the exotic land of Nihon-Ja to study the Senshi fighting technique, it isn't long before he finds himself pulled into a battle that is not his—but one he knows in his heart he must wage. The Nihon-Ja emperor, a defender of the common man, has been forcibly dethroned, and only Horace, Will, and his Araluen friends, along with a group of untrained woodcutters and farmers, can restore the emperor to the throne.

In this final battle in the worldwide phenomenon that is Ranger's Apprentice, a kingdom teeters on the edge of chaos, victory lies in the hands of an inexperienced group of fighters, and it's anybody's guess who will make the journey home to Araluen.



Available Spring 2011

Visit www.rangersapprentice.com
for more great content!



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 four grandchildren.

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

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 of (currently) 10 volumes.

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 in Book 9, 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 get on the Net and 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.



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 . . .

Discussion Questions

- 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.

Extension Activities

- 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.



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.

Discussion Questions

- 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.

Extension Activities

- 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.



Book 3: The Icebound Lake

Kidnapped after the fierce battle with Lord Morgarath, Will and Evanlyn are bound for Skandia as captives aboard a fearsome wolfship. Halt has sworn to rescue Will, and he will do anything to keep his promise—even defy his king. Expelled from the Rangers he has served so loyally, Halt is joined by Will's friend Horace as he travels toward Skandia. Soon Horace begins to attract the attention of knights and warlords for miles around with his uncanny skill in fighting those they encounter. With so many obstacles, will they be in time to rescue Will from a horrific life of slavery?

Discussion Questions

- Halt wants to search for captured Will, but King Duncan has other plans for Halt. Why would the King not want Halt to go on a rescue campaign for Will and Evanlyn?
- Halt is told that the King will not see him because he doesn't want to have to refuse to let him go look for Will. Halt states, "Then I'll just have to change his mind." What does this imply? Do you think Halt does the right thing? Support your opinion.
- Erak seems conflicted about his feelings toward Will and Evanlyn. Why do you think this is? Explain.
- What does Evanlyn's revelation of who she really is do to Will? Why does knowing her true identity make such a difference to him?
- What is a Vallasvow? What does it mean that the Oberjarl has sworn one against Duncan and his family? Why does this make Evanlyn's presence on the island so dangerous?
- Why do you think Halt refuses Gilan's assistance but accepts Horace's help?
- Horace struggles with his conscience because he pretends to be a knight when he isn't. Why does he feel this way? Do you agree with his feelings? Explain your position.
- Describe the character of Deparnieux. What role does he play in the novel? Why would John Flanagan insert this character into the story line?

Extension Activities

- Will and Evanlyn's experience on board the wolfship starts out very poorly with a horrible storm. How might this symbolically represent what the rest of their experience might be like? Write a paragraph explaining your predictions and the ultimate conclusion to their actual experience.
- Horace meets many a wayward knight on his quest to find Will. Using a graphic organizer, outline the different people he meets and what he has to do to best each of them.
- Consider the setting of the island of Skorghijl. How will a place like this affect Will and Evanlyn? Using the descriptions provided in the book, illustrate the four most important places in the story. Explain the significance of each place, and why you believe it is important.
- Using the Internet or books on Vikings from your library, look at sketches of the Viking ships which inspired Flanagan's Skandian boats—what makes these vessels so special? Using textual descriptions from the novel, draw an illustration for one of the boats. Why do you believe the wolfships are so important to the Skandian leaders? In a journal entry, explain your position.



Book 4: The Battle for Skandia

Still far from their homeland after escaping slavery in the icebound land of Skandia, Will and Evanlyn's plans to return to Araluen are spoiled when Evanlyn is taken captive by a Temujai warrior. Though still weakened by the warmweed's toxic effects, Will employs his Ranger training to locate his friend, but an enemy scouting party has Will fatally outnumbered. Certain death is close at hand, until Halt and Horace make a daring, last-minute rescue. The reunion is cut short, however, when Halt makes a horrifying discovery: Skandia's borders have been breached by the entire Temujai army. And Araluen is next in their sights. If the two kingdoms are to be saved, an unlikely union must be made. Will it hold long enough to vanquish a ruthless new enemy? Or will past tensions spell doom for all?

Discussion Questions

- Discuss Evanlyn's role as Will's caretaker. Do you think she feels obligated to take care of him? Why or why not?
- How does Evanlyn's capture by the Temujai force Will to return to the skills he's acquired as a Ranger's apprentice despite his addiction to warmweed?
- Do you think Halt makes the right decision to have his group stay and help the Skandians fight against the Temujai? Why or why not? Explain your position.
- Halt ultimately persuades Ragnak to offer freedom to any of the slaves who choose to take up arms and fight on the side of the Skandians. Do you think the slaves are wise to do so? What might be gained or lost by these actions?

Extension Activities

- The Temujai forces are a source of real danger to the Araluen and Skandian kingdoms. How does Halt's past experience and knowledge of their war strategy put the Skandians at an advantage? Research a historical battle in which knowledge of the enemy helped the victor to win the battle. Prepare a short newscast reporting the key players, events, and tactics used.
- Assume the role of one of the key players of the battle. Draft a diary entry detailing what you witnessed. To prepare, create an outline using the five Ws: who, what, when, where, and why. Remember to write in first person and give special attention to sensory imagery (what you saw, smelled, heard, etc.).
- Utilizing archers is a key component to the strategic plan for this battle. Investigate the history of archery. How early in documented history are there references to archers? Consider how other civilizations have used them in warfare. Select a particular civilization and create a PowerPoint slide detailing the information you have learned.
- Use the Internet or your library to research the history and design of the Bayeaux Tapestry. Design a paper tapestry which recounts the details of the Battle for Skandia, making sure to outline the order of key events.
- The obvious inspiration for the Temujai is Ghengis Khan's Mongol armies (Khan's given name was Temujin). Examine the history of Khan and his army. Using a Venn diagram, detail the similarities and differences between the two groups.



Book 5: The Sorcerer of the North

Several years have passed since the apprentice and his master, Will and Halt, first met, and Will is finally a full-fledged Ranger with his own fief to look after. The fief seems sleepy—boring, even—until Lord Syron, master of a castle far in the north, is struck down by a mysterious illness. Joined by his friend Alyss, Will is suddenly thrown headfirst into an extraordinary adventure, investigating fears of sorcery and trying to determine who is loyal to Lord Syron. As Will battles growing hysteria, traitors, and most of all, time, Alyss is taken hostage, and Will is forced to make a desperate choice between his mission and his friend.

Discussion Questions

- Upon arrival at his assignment as the new Ranger in the fief of Seacliff, Will discovers that the military have not prepared themselves adequately. Why does Will feel this is a dangerous situation? Do you agree with his assessment?
- After adopting an abandoned and abused dog, Will struggles to name her. Why might this decision be such a difficult task for him? Does this indicate anything about his character?
- Why does Will choose to travel disguised as a jongleur rather than in his Ranger's gear? What does he hope to accomplish? Do you think he'd be more successful if he were more forthcoming about who he really is? Why or why not?
- Although Alyss serves as a helpful ally to Will in his investigation, he seems concerned about her presence at Macindaw Castle. Why is he fearful? Predict and share what you believe could happen to Alyss.
- The "Black Art" believed to be practiced by Malkallam is blamed for Lord Syron's illness. Do you agree? Why or why not?

Extension Activities

- As a way to disguise himself so that he can be more successful in his investigation, Will poses as a jongleur as he travels to the north to investigate. Research the role of the jongleur in history; what did these people do? What purpose did they serve and who was their chief audience? Be sure to consider the descriptions in the text of how Will carries out this disguise. Using the details learned through this study, draw a comparison between a traditional jongleur and Will's portrayal of one.
- In *The Sorcerer of the North*, elements of superstitious beliefs abound. All characters are affected in some manner; for example, the villagers refuse to travel into the forests because they believe a sorcerer controls the land. Research medieval superstitions. What were some of the most common ones? How are these similar to those presented in the novel?
- Some of the villagers believe Lord Syron's mysterious illness might be caused by his son, Orman. He is mistrusted because he is a self-proclaimed scholar who spends his time studying rather than serving as a warrior and leader of men. Investigate the role of scholars during the medieval era. Who were the traditional scholars of the time? What is the major difference between their scholarship and that of Orman's?
- Use the Internet to find examples of character analysis charts and create a character map for one of the following characters: Orman, Keren, or Malkallam. Be sure to consider the textual evidence presented about your selected character in *The Sorcerer of the North*.



Book 6: The Siege of Macindaw

Not long into Will's service protecting his first fief, everything that can go wrong does: Keren, a renegade knight, has taken over Castle Macindaw, a strategic gateway to the North—poisoning the royal family in the process—and is holding Will's friend Alyss captive. The situation grows direr when Will uncovers Keren's secret alliance with the Scotti, who have plans to plunder Araluen. Time is of the essence, and Will must recruit a motley crew to rescue Alyss and reclaim Castle Macindaw—before the Scotti can make it their own.

Discussion Questions

- As he prepares for the siege of Macindaw, Will chooses to enlist the assistance of the Skandians who have been stranded on the coast of Araluen. Why does he do this? Do you think he has made the right decision? Explain your position.
- Describe John Buttle. What makes his character so important to the story?
- What does Lord Keren hope to gain by hypnotizing Alyss? Do you think she could have resisted his persuasive techniques? Why or why not?
- Why does Horace choose to aide Will in his plan to overthrow Lord Keren at Macindaw? What can we learn about his character from this decision?
- Why do you think Will chooses to give Trobar, the giant, such an important gift? What does the gift tell us about Will?

Extension Activities

- The Macindaw fortress serves both to protect and imprison. Research medieval fortresses and castles. What design elements are typical of these types of structures? Based on your findings, design your ideal fortress and create a poster, a 3-D model, or a design in PowerPoint or Microsoft Movie Maker. Share your creation with your classmates.
- Though misunderstood by the villagers, Malkallam's work as a healer and protector is essential to many of the "undesirables" that have found their way to him. While considering the motivations for Malkallam's actions or those of another important secondary character, complete a "Become a character" project. After choosing a character, pick ten adjectives that best describe you (as that character). Next, select three other characters and describe them by listing ten adjectives for each of those characters (again, from the perspective of your chosen character). After checking to make sure your descriptions are appropriate and accurate, write a copy of your lists for each character onto separate sheets of paper, making sure to keep the identity of the characters anonymous. Exchange papers with classmates and identify the characters described and which character offered the description.
- Will, Horace, and the Skandians use a handcart as a kind of "Trojan horse" to help gain access to the Macindaw fortress. Research the use of the Trojan horse in Virgil's epic poem, *The Aeneid*. How are these two devices similar? Create a Venn diagram detailing the similarities and differences between the two.
- In what ways has Will's perception of his relationship with Alyss changed? At the end of the novel, Will receives a letter from Alyss in which she shares her feelings for him. Using Will's voice, craft a letter back to Alyss telling her how he feels.
- With their tartan cloaks and kilts and their huge broadswords, it's evident that Flanagan's inspiration for the Scotti's are the Highland clans of Scotland. Explore the history of the Highland clans and compare and contrast the Scotti invading group with another group of invaders from the Ranger's Apprentice series. Document your findings on an H Map or a Venn diagram.



Book 7: Erak's Ransom

How far does loyalty take you? If you're a Ranger, the boundaries are endless. In *Erak's Ransom*, time takes a step back—to when Will was still an apprentice. After Erak, the Skandian leader is kidnapped, Will, Halt, the young warrior, Horace, and the Princess Evelyn venture to lands unknown to rescue their new ally. The desert is brutal, unforgiving, and home to tribes that will just as soon kill a foreigner as look at him. For Will, lost and on the verge of death after a sandstorm, survival has never been so precious. But he will need to do more than just survive if he is to save his friends from an unspeakable fate.

Discussion Questions

- Evelyn is reprimanded by her father for using the sentries of Castle Araluen to practice her stealth combat skills. How does this scene foreshadow pivotal events later in the novel?
- At the beginning of the novel, the celebration of Halt's marriage to Lady Pauline is interrupted by the arrival of Svengal. Do you think he was right to ask for the Ranger's help at this time? Why or why not?
- After losing Tug in a sandstorm, Will risks his life trying to find the horse. Did he make the right choice by going to search for him? What do readers learn about Will from this choice?
- Describe Svengal. What are three things you find most (or least) appealing about him?
- As the group awaits their executions, Halt remarks, "They're forgetting one thing . . . Will's still out there." What can be inferred from Halt's statement? Is he wise to have so much faith in his apprentice?

Extension Activities

- In a letter to his readers, author John Flanagan offers an explanation as to why he takes a step back in time to share with readers the events that transpired between *The Battle for Skandia* and *The Sorcerer of the North*; after reading *Erak's Ransom*, reread the letter and consider his rationale. Do you believe this novel makes the series more complete? Write a letter to John Flanagan, sharing your opinions, making sure to offer specific details from the book or series. You can find his address at www.rangersapprentice.com
- The campaign to rescue the Oberjarl Erak takes the group on a journey far away from the Araluen. Using details from *Erak's Ransom*, create an original topical map, detailing the route the rescuers take, making sure to include a legend.
- Princess Evelyn is allowed to join Will, Halt, Horace, and Gillian on the rescue mission because she is a seal bearer for the Kingdom of Araluen. Research royal seals. What are common attributes of these symbols? Where have artifacts of royal seals been found throughout the world? Take what you've learned and create an original seal for the Kingdom of Araluen.
- Use the Internet to find examples of character analysis charts and create a character map for one of the following characters: Svengal, Selethen, Toshak, or Yusal. Be sure to consider textual evidence presented about your character in *Erak's Ransom*.
- After the Skandian Oberjarl is captured, Svengal implores King Duncan to lend him the ransom money to free Erak. Research the history of ransoms in the Middle Ages. Be sure to consider the etymology of the word and find evidence for the historical significance of utilizing ransoms. Use your finding to prepare a PowerPoint detailing what you've learned.



Book 8: The Kings of Clonmel

When mankind seeks protection from the world's many dangers, they put their faith in warriors, kings, gods, and even money. In the neighboring kingdom of Clonmel, a mysterious cult has sprung up, promising defense against lawless marauders in exchange for people's riches. Their sermons are attracting audiences from miles around, but there's a dark side to this seemingly charitable group, prompting Halt, Will, and Horace to investigate. What the trip uncovers could threaten the safety of not only Clonmel, but their homeland of Araluen as well. During their journey, secrets will be revealed and battles to the death will be waged. And this is only the beginning . . .

Discussion Questions

- Given the title of the novel, make predictions about this particular installment of the Ranger's Apprentice series.
- In the opening of *The Kings of Clonmel*, new Rangers receive training during the Annual Gathering. Why might Will's participation be particularly beneficial to these Rangers in training? What do these young men have to gain from his experience?
- Crowley creates a "Special Task Group" that will be run by Halt and Will; how does this new assignment benefit Will? In what ways will these "tasks" utilize Will's special skills?
- What kinds of problems might having more than one king create? Is it better to have shared power or do you believe it weakens the government? Explain your position.
- To prove Tennyson's corrupt nature, Halt has to impersonate his brother, the king. Is this deception honorable? Why or why not? Are there other tactics he could have implored?

Extension Activities

- Do you think the Araluen Special Task Group has the right to intercede in another country when their help hasn't been requested? Write an editorial piece for the "Araluen Times" where you offer your position about this matter.
- At the end of the novel, Halt has chosen to rescind his rightful place as king of Clonmel. Do you agree with his decision? Write a letter to Halt, explaining why you think he made the right (or wrong) decision and be sure to offer examples of the specific benefits you believe will be the result of this choice.
- Because of Tennyson's skillful rhetoric, he is able to convince many to support and believe in his "religion." Consider another influential person in history who is widely regarded as a fine orator. Complete a Venn diagram, comparing and contrasting the delivery of their messages.
- Halt refers to Tennyson's group, The Outsiders, as a cult. What are common characteristics of cults? Why are people so easily drawn to them? Complete a KWL chart listing: "What I KNOW" about cults and "What I WANT to Learn" about cults. After completing these parts of the KWL chart, research well-known cults, and consider how their activities are similar to those by The Outsiders as described in the novel. After concluding your research, complete the "What I LEARNED" section of the chart. When finished, share what was learned.
- As the novel closes, Tennyson has escaped and readers know that Will, Halt, and Horace will persist in pursuing him as they attempt to bring him to justice. Using the same point of view as the author, create a creative journal entry where the focus is writing a chapter that continues the story from where it ends in *The Kings of Clonmel*.



Book 9: Halt's Peril

Hot on the trail of the Outsiders, a cult that's been making its way from kingdom to kingdom, conning the innocent out of their few valuables, Will and Halt are ambushed by the cult's deadly assassins. Pierced by a poisoned arrow, Will's mentor is near death and in dire need of the one antidote that can save his life. Time is not on Will's side as he journeys day and night through the harsh terrain to Grimsdell Wood in search of the one person with the power to cure Halt: Malkallam the Sorcerer.

Discussion Questions

- When Will discusses his habit of talking to his horse, Tug, with his friends, Halt replies, "Of course we talk to them. Our horses show more common sense than most people." What are some of the reasons Halt might feel this way? Do you agree with his assessment of these animals? Do you ever find yourself engaged in conversation with a special pet?
- Given that the action of *Halt's Peril* picks up right where *The Kings of Clonmel* ended, offer some predictions as to what the greatest challenges will be for the Rangers as they continue their pursuit of Tennyson and his cult.
- When Will's interrogation of Black O'Malley is unsuccessful, Halt returns to the pub to see if he can garner the information the Rangers need from the smuggler. What does this interaction between Halt and O'Malley prove about Halt's skills as a Ranger and a teacher? How does Will handle this lesson?
- After the smuggling ship, the Claw, is driven into a reef while pursuing the Rangers, Halt instructs the captain of the Sparrow to "toss some barrels overboard to float down to them. It might give them a chance." If in a similar position, would you lend aid to someone intent on harming you? How does this simple act exemplify the honor and code by which the Rangers' live?

Extension Activities

- In *Halt's Peril*, Tennyson is aided by the smuggler, the Black O'Malley. Research modern smuggling rings that are conducted by sea. What are some typical types of goods that are smuggled, and where are common geographical locations for these illegal activities? What common tactics do smugglers employ? After gathering this information, create a Venn diagram detailing similarities and differences between modern day smuggling rings and those described in Flanagan's novel.
- Throughout the course of the novel, the author hints at Horace's eagerness to learn Ranger tactics and skills. Consider his motivation—what might make Horace interested in learning these skills? How would incorporating Ranger tactics make Horace a more well-rounded fighter and defender of Araluen? Create a brief "how-to" manual for Horace detailing five specialized methods that make the Rangers the elite corp for Araluen's defense.
- After being injured and poisoned by the Genovesan assassins, Halt's life is saved by Malcolm the Sorcerer, who has an extensive knowledge of both poisons and antidotes. Using the library and the internet, research poisons and answer the following:
 - What is a poison? What are typical side effects of poisons? What are the most deadly types of poisons for children and/or adults?
 - What are common antidotes? Are they often organic?
 - What actions should be taken if a person ingests a poison?
- After gathering information, make a pamphlet detailing and addressing each research point or alternatively, create a Prezi digital presentation installation.

Ranger's Apprentice Story Analysis

PURPOSE: Students demonstrate knowledge of basic story elements in a selected Ranger's Apprentice novel.

DIRECTIONS: After a lesson on basic story elements, read a Ranger's Apprentice novel to the class and have students complete the chart considering setting, characters, problems (conflict), events (sequencing), and solution (conclusion).

Setting

Where did it happen? When did it happen?

Characters

Who are the most important people in the story?

Problem (Conflict)

What was wrong? What was the problem?

Events (Sequencing)

What happened first? Next? Then what happened?

Solution (Conclusion)

How did they solve the problem?



Classroom Connections: Reading, Writing, and Researching

REMEMBER—HAVE FUN!

The thing that makes the Ranger's Apprentice series so great is that kids love reading it and following Will's adventures! Engage your reluctant readers and challenge your avid readers. Let us know how you use this guide in your classroom and email us at schoolandlibrary@us.penguin.com. We look forward to hearing from you!

Creativity-based Prompts

Perform a Readers' Theater

- Write and perform a Readers' Theater production of one of the books in the Ranger's Apprentice series. Assign each student a different part to play—whether they're an actor or the narrator or part of the set crew, encourage the whole class to get involved! Have a group of students design a playbill with a summary of the story action, the names of the characters, bios of the actors, etc. Then invite students' parents and other classes in your school to attend the performance!

Make a battle map

- Using textual details from one of the novels, have students create a topical map of an important battle as well as any other important story content. Allow students to preview the maps created by John Flanagan at www.rangersapprentice.com.

Character-based Prompts

Learn life lessons

- Encourage your students to make thematic connections! Have students consider the following themes: *loyalty*, *courage*, *ingenuity*, and *perseverance*. Place students in small groups, and assign each group a theme to consider. Next, have them find examples from the books in the series that support this theme. Create a sample Life Lesson Chart filling in information under the following column headers: *Theme*, *Supporting Evidence from Text*, *How Does This Theme Relate to My Life?* After modeling this lesson, have each group create a Life Lesson Chart about their featured theme.

Discover your dream job

- Though Will's slight physique keeps him out of Battleschool, his first choice for apprenticeship, his build turns out to be just the ticket for Ranger work, which combines survival skills and keen powers of observation with the ability to move about unseen. Have students create a chart noting the different qualities needed for each trade. Given the options afforded to these characters, which career would they be most interested in pursuing? Begin by having them list ten skills they possess or qualities about themselves (example: "I am good at listening to others" or "I am quick to solve problems"). Next, have them consider their career options and then create a basic résumé and letter of interest explaining their qualifications for the career they apply for.

Design a T-shirt

- One of the strengths of the Ranger's Apprentice series is the number of fully realized characters. Have students select a favorite character and create a character analysis T-shirt. Have them identify the literary elements used by the author to describe the character, and then create a visual representation of the character traits. The front of the T-shirt must include the book title, author name, and the character's name, picture, and description. The right sleeve must list the character's strengths and the left sleeve should list the character's weaknesses. List internal and external conflicts, figurative language, and the story's climax on the back of the T-shirt.

Research-based Prompts

Design your own code of chivalry

- In *The Icebound Land*, Horace rides with Halt to find Will. As they travel across the country, Horace learns what it is to become a knight. Through this process he understands more about honor, loyalty, and courage. Although when he first gets his shield, he uses it as a front for others to see him as a knight, he quickly adapts to his new station. Using the Internet, have students research Codes of Chivalry. After reading the statements of belief that knights lived by, have students select four in which they also believe. Next, have them write an essay in which they explain why they chose the four codes and how they honor those codes in their lives today. Finally, have them create or draw a coat of arms for the shield that would be theirs if they were a knight. The four beliefs must be symbolically represented in each quadrant of the shield. Have them come prepared to explain what the symbols represent and how they relate to their beliefs.

Research famous heroes

- Many of the characters in the Ranger's Apprentice series face opportunities to make decisions that have profound impact on others. By choosing to act, they save the life of another. An example from *The Icebound Land* is Erak's choice to assist Evanlyn and Will run away. Why would he do this? What risk does he take on by helping them? Research people in history who have put themselves at great risk by helping others escape. Create a PowerPoint featuring a famous rescuer. Consider the following: general biographical information (where the person was born, lived, etc.), life before making the decision to rescue, who were the people most affected by the rescue, what was life like for the rescuer after making this decision, consequences of actions). Have students present to each other, and as a culminating activity, have students create a journal about commonalities among these rescuers. You can also have students create a double-sided baseball-style trading card which features the following elements: image or photo of person and biographical information, including date of birth, death, where they resided, and important contributions.

Create a medieval newspaper

- While the setting of the Ranger's Apprentice series is a mythical world, it parallels the time period most recognized as the Middle Ages. Using what they've learned from the novels and research, have students create a medieval newspaper. Divide students in pairs and have each pair select a topic of research. Possible topics include knighthood, the Black Death, fortress systems, tournaments, medieval music, medieval games, and medieval medicine. Each pair will write an article pertaining to their research area, and after undergoing revision and editing, articles can be assembled into a newspaper.

Research slavery & serfdom

- After Will and Evanlyn arrive in Skandia, they are sold into slavery by the Jarl, Erak. While Evanlyn is assigned to work as a kitchen servant, Will is assigned a position in the yard, the most dangerous of all the slave assignments. Flanagan paints a disturbing portrait of slavery, where slaves are coerced by other slaves, and stupefying drugs are used to keep them under control. Have students consider the following:
 - While slavery didn't exist in most of Europe in the Middle Ages, much of the peasant population was bound by a feudal arrangement known as serfdom. Research the institution of serfdom during the time period. After learning about this institution, have students find ten facts about serfdom. After listing each fact, have them analyze whether this quality is similar or different than the reality of the characters in the series.
 - The use of slavery was very common for the Vikings, Flanagan's inspiration for the Skandians. Using a graphic organizer, have students analyze the similarities and differences between those enslaved by the Skandians and those enslaved by another conquering group.

Design a magazine cover

- In the Ranger's Apprentice series, Flanagan's female characters are smart, confident, and independent. Have students investigate the roles of women during the Middle Ages, specifically examining domestic roles, social and cultural contributions. Design a magazine cover which might be featured for women in the Middle Ages.

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