

Princess Nevermore Teaching Guide



Before Reading

Share the title and allow students to predict its possible meaning(s).

Compare the two covers above. The 1995 edition is on the left and the 2007 edition is on the right. Which do students prefer? Which offers the most clues for predicting what the story is about? Which is the most intriguing?

Look at the Table of Contents. Encourage students to write possible scenarios for a few of the chapters.

The author's office is home to 100 walrus. A walrus is mentioned in many of her books. Tell students to watch for the walrus as they read.

While Reading

Chapter 1

Discuss the significance of a "wishing pool" found in literature. Have students research the origin of a wishing pool or wishing well. Encourage them to share their experiences. What have they wished for? Locate a local wishing well and contact its governing body to determine if there is a special designation for money from the well.

Princess Quinn refers to a "Mandrian truth." Explain the importance of Mandrian truths to the storyline. Keep a list of the truths as they are revealed. Compare and contrast these to the "truths" recognized by our society. Have the students identify and explain those with which they most agree.

Cam casts a spell and chants the following:

"Anger, fear, love, and mirth Send Quinn and Cam to outer earth."

Have students invent a spell for a specific purpose.

Melikar tried to avert Quinn's interest in the outer world by saying: "Centuries ago, all magical creatures were driven to the underground kingdoms. . . It takes magic in one's surroundings to make the magic inside work." Discuss common motifs and magic found in fantasy and fairy tales. Will Quinn find magic on outer earth? Debate what magic exists today.

Chapter 2

Cam was burdened by his disobedience, then approached by Melikar, who said: "Your prank was a thoughtless one, but the tapestry has been woven and the thread snapped." Discuss the implications made in reference to a "tapestry." Research what purpose they served during the Middle Ages. Look for samples, then design a tapestry which reflects a specific event in history or in your life.

Chapter 5

The ancient Mandrian symbol of trust and secrecy, the Sign of Lorik, was meant to serve as a bond that could not be broken. Loyalty is an vital part of the code of honor. Have the students discuss what it means to be loyal to someone. Elaborate on why they are loyal to that person and how they show their loyalty. Is there a point beyond which loyalty should end?

Chapter 8

After experiencing an apprentice's nightmare, Cam has foreboding thoughts concerning Quinn's future in the outer world. To a wizard, many dreams were actually premonitions, yet being a mere apprentice, Cam's premonitions were few and far between. Does Cam appear to be a "mere" apprentice? Explain.

Cam is bothered by his "unknown heritage." Why is this so important to him? Who do you think Cam is?

Chapter 13

Quinn's initial idea of traveling to outer earth with a "message" seemed foolish to her once she'd experienced life here. She decides that: "Outer earth folk have more to teach her than she, them." Do you agree or disagree? Explain.

In Mandria, at the age of sixteen, a princess must marry. "No matter how hard she tried to squelch the truth, her deepest heart told her she'd already chosen the young man who'd caught her fancy. And the choice frightened the princess so much. . . ." Why is Quinn frightened? Discuss the outcome(s) if Quinn chooses to remain on outer earth. Will this solve or create more problems?

Chapter 15

In Mandria, conflicts were often solved with jousting matches. In today's society misunderstandings can turn violent. Discuss ways of dealing with troubling situations. What other options did Adam and Zack have?

Chapter 16

Mondo expressed his emotions when he stated, "If I could be Melikar for one brief moment, I'd cast a spell over you and Adam that was so powerful, you'd never be able to bear the sight of one another." Explain his detachment.

Chapter 18

During a joust, it is customary for a lady to give her knight a token of luck. Quinn, desperate to find something suitable, gave Adam the magic ring. What other 'token of luck' could she have given him?

Chapter 19

What does it mean when Melikar "reads the fire"? Name other examples used to foretell the future. How do they compare?

Melikar predicted the foreboding outcome of the power of the ring: "Quinn is using the magic unwisely. . . better if the ring had stayed in Mandria." Explain Melikar's concern. Discuss whether mankind is capable of using magic "responsibly."

Chapter 27

From the statement, "The honorable princess and her Mandrian truths cannot deny obligations." This fact is pivotal to the story. Why?

Chapter 30

Quinn tearfully begged Melikar not to erase Adam's memory of her. "How can you be so cruel? she asks." Who is being cruel to whom? Explain this contradiction.

After Reading

What is the purpose of the epilogue?

Recall and list the powers of Melikar, the wizard. Have students note other sorcerers, magicians, or enchanters found in literature. Select one to research. How do they compare to Melikar?

There were many references to the noble life of royalty, the rules of protocol, and "proper" behavior. If students were given the opportunity to live as royalty, would they do so? Explain. Write "A day in the life of . . ."

Premonitions permeate the story and are taken seriously in Mandria. How are premonitions regarded in our society? Ask students if they have ever experienced one? Did it come true?

Three is a number often found in fairy tales. Recount instances or references made to the number three. Discuss other characteristics of a fairy tale. Does Princess Nevermore resemble a fairy tale? Why or why not?

Stage a Medieval Ball or Medieval Faire. Research the lifestyle, mannerisms, and speech of the time. Provide music, refreshments, clothing, and decorations appropriate for the 15th century.

Students can work cooperatively in groups to select a key event and create a "radio play" or taped dramatization.

Across the Curriculum

Language Arts

Marnies' "sole purpose, their lifeblood, was helping others." Encourage students to imagine being blessed with a "Marnie-for-a-day." Detail what they would have the Marnie do.

Terminology spoken by Medieval folk differs from modern times: student=scholar; mirror=looking glass. Create an "Olde English=Modern English" dictionary. Choose terms for your dictionary that would help explain a soccer game to a visiting "scholar" from the 15th Century.

Encourage students to compose a poem about the character of their choice.

Review the history of pourquoi stories. Have students create a pourquoi story for: "Why Cats are Rare in Mandria," or: "How the Sign of Lorik Came to Be."

Legends about dragons exist in many countries. A dragon's presence can be a threat or good fortune. Quinn's pet, Scrabit, was small and tame. If you were given a dragon on the day of your birth, what power would it possess? What would you name it? Describe how it looks. What would be the advantages and disadvantages of owning a pet dragon?

Adam gave Quinn a blue rose to match her gown and to describe his mood. What other colors are associated with emotions? Decide if color can influence appetite.

Give a snack with a colorful twist (using tasteless food coloring). Serve and record the comments.

If you knew you were traveling to a previous era, what three modern conveniences would be hardest to give up? What items would you want to take with you and why? Is there anything from the past you'd want to bring to the present? Items? Beliefs? Knowledge?

Social Studies/ Economics

Upon learning of Quinn's journey to the outer world, Ameka hoped Quinn would keep a written record of her travels: "what she sees, hears, what she does." Have students pick a city they'd like to visit. Write journal entries describing what they did, heard, saw, and ate on their imaginary trip. Include specific and factual details discovered in the research.

Authors often choose to set a story in a real location. Why? Outer earth is a specific city where the author once lived. Recall landmarks mentioned in the story. (Clues: Caprock High, Canadian River, Wonderland Amusement Park.) Ask students to determine where the actual setting is. (Answer: Amarillo, Texas.)

Princess Quinn was accustomed to drinking a nightly cup of herbal tea. Perhaps it was valerian tea, known to promote restful sleep.

Melikar mixed these herbs to soothe the king's stiff muscles: rue and wild yam. Herbs have been used for thousands of years as medicine. In fact, rue is known to ease pain in the joints; wild yam is good for sore muscles.

Many herbal remedies are being "rediscovered" today. When you sip Ginger Ale for an upset stomach, you are using ancient herbalists' knowledge of the uses of ginger root. Research which herbs might help other maladies: headaches, toothaches, colds, the flu. Bring samples of herbal tea to share. Select a tea and design an advertisement for a billboard touting its health benefits.

Math

Recall the sources used to measure time in Mandria. Study how we've kept track of time over the centuries. Invent ways of keeping time in an underground kingdom without the help of the sun, stars, or the seasons.

Refer to references made to the passage of time in Mandria, pages 176 - 177. How old would Mondo be in the year 2000? Hannah? Invent either a time line or a graph titled "Aging in Mandrian Years vs. Aging in Human Years." How would you handle aging slower than those around you? Aging faster?

Science

Marnies developed mutant seeds to grow in dim candlelight. Research what developments have been made by plant scientists to improve food production. Make a seed germinator (use an aluminum foil pan with a plastic lid). Plant a variety of seeds and chart their germination times. Experiment with different types of lighting.

Grizzle, an old Marnie, taught Cam how to form objects out of precious metals. Research the history of metallurgy. How were metals molded into objects in medieval times? Have students mold clay into goblets or other basic items. Fire in a kiln.

Rings date from early times. They represent the sun, and draw on its power. Wedding rings represent a form of a magical amulet. Research the origin of the customary ring finger. If you owned a magic ring for one day, how would you use it to benefit earth, society, yourself?

Art, Music & Physical Education

Refer to descriptions throughout the story to create a vision of the underground Kingdom of Mandria. Design a mural or a floor plan of the castle. Include a compass rose.

Create "character mobiles" by combining varying lengths of yarn, string, coat hangers, small dowel rods, etc. Each mobile will become a statement from one of the characters. Gather tokens, pictures, and drawings to represent the character, their traits, and their actions. Display and allow students to determine which mobile represents which character. (Could also be done as a collage with pictures cut from magazines.)

In earlier times, people were associated with their place of birth, i.e., "Quinn of Mandria." Have students invent a "title" for themselves based on their name and birthplace. Design a family crest.

Research the history of jousting. In times of peace, knights would hold a *joute a plaisance* (joust of peace) to keep their skills sharp. Organize a "friendly" joust using skateboards or Rollerblades. What did Adam and Zack use for lances? What else can be used?

Quinn was delighted to recognize wrestling as an outer earth sport similar to wrestling matches held in Mandria. Pick a sport and research its history. Where did it originate? When? How is it different today from its beginnings? How many historical sporting events can you list that are no longer practiced.

About the Contributors to this Curriculum Guide

Sherry Park is a library media specialist in the Edmond, Oklahoma, Public School System. Sherry has been a classroom teacher, a consultant on foreign language curriculum guides, and has presented ideas at workshops to integrate literature throughout the curriculum. She also teaches for the Education Department at the University of Central Oklahoma.

Special thanks to Consultant, Michelle Hasenfratz, library media specialist, Sequoyah Middle School, Edmond, Oklahoma.