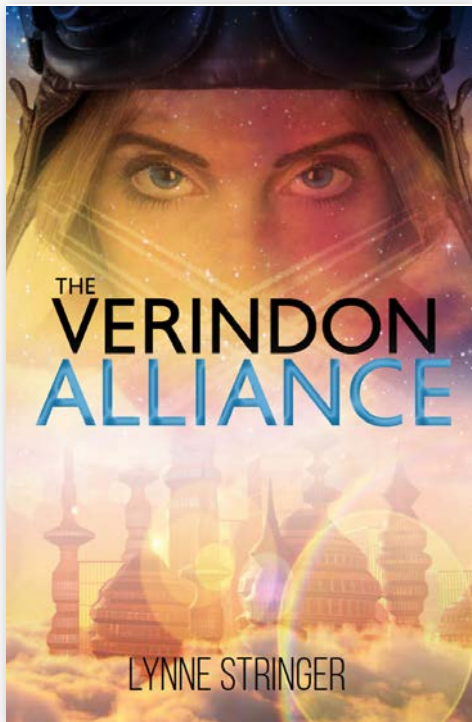




TEACHING NOTES



The Verindon Alliance

Lynne Stringer

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Reading Level: 15+ years

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As Princess Vashta of the Vendel finishes her combat training, she hopes she will lead their forces into battle against her race's deadly enemy, the Verindal. But when Brandonin, the heir to the Verindal throne, comes to see her father, it's clear he desires peace, not war.

When a new enemy arises, striking at all who call their planet home, each race blames the other, even though the princess is sure this danger comes from somewhere new. She seeks Brandonin's help in fighting this menace, but what can they do when both Vendel and Verindal refuse to work together? Can they defeat this deadly threat themselves or will it mean the end of life on Verindon?

Themes

- Implicit bias • Xenophobia • Racism
- Sibling rivalry • Insecurity • Change • Genocide

Discussion questions

Implicit bias/xenophobia/racism

1. Define implicit bias, xenophobia and racism.
 - In what ways are they similar?
 - How can one lead to the others?
2. Both the Vendel and Verindal have grown up with implicit bias towards each other. This has developed both xenophobic and racist responses in each race. However, at least for the Vendel, their dislike of the Verindal doesn't extend to their technology. Why do you think they are accepting of what the Verindal create but not the Verindal as individuals?
3. Do you see similar situations like Question 2 in our world, where one aspect of a culture is accepted but not the individuals themselves?
 - In which instances?
 - How could this change to a more accepting attitude towards the race/culture itself?
4. Do you think inhabitants of planet Verindon would have been more likely to develop a tolerance for each other if their planet was more multicultural?
 - Do you think there is a correlation between increased multiculturalism and a decline in xenophobia and/or racism?
 - Why or why not?
5. How has the attitude of each race towards the other harmed their planet?
 - Do you see the same instances in our own country and the world at large?
 - In what ways?
6. The leadership of both the Verindal (under Overlord Dransen) and the Vendel (under Chief Princess Mestitha) seem anxious to foster the animosity between both races. Do you believe this is because of implicit bias or is there a more political motivation? Why do you think some governments create xenophobic feelings among their people?
7. While many of the Verindal regard Vashta with suspicion when she first joins them, they soon grow to accept her. What do you think caused this?
 - Can things like xenophobia and racism be overcome by bringing different races and cultures into closer proximity? List ways that this could be actioned practically in your local area and ways that it could cause problems.

Sibling rivalry

1. Do you have siblings? If applicable, what are the benefits of having siblings? What are the negatives?
2. Given that Mestitha, Vashta's oldest sister, is heir to the Vendel throne, it was inevitable that she would receive some privileges that her younger sisters did not. Do you think every parent favours some siblings over others?
 - How is this true in your situation, if applicable?
 - What are some things that could be done to overcome this?

3. Brandonin and Larinda seem to have a better relationship than Vashta and her sisters, yet Vashta's parents seem more approachable than Brandonin's father. What do you think has led to the difference in their relationships? Is there likely to be an environmental cause or do you think it's more to do with genetics? Explain your answer.
4. Given that serious consequences could have come from Anam sabotaging Vashta's flier, do you think she should have told her father what happened? Why or why not?
 - What benefits might have come from informing him of Mestitha's actions? What problems might have arisen from it?
 - Can you think of situations in your own life where you informed an authority figure of the negative actions of your sibling or friend? What was the result?
5. Do you believe that Vashta had no option but to leave Matarsiss after Mestitha took the throne? Do you think there were things she could have contributed had she stayed? Explain your answer.
6. Do you think Vashta's decision for dealing with Mestitha in Chapter 23 was the right one or was there something else she could have done?
 - Could she have been reconciled to her sister in some way?
 - What would you have done in that situation?

Insecurity

1. Vashta knows that she's looked down on by some people because she is the youngest of five princesses. How does this affect her behaviour?
2. In what way do you think Vashta's insecurity has influenced her tendency to make impulsive decisions?
3. Even though she's the youngest of five princesses, Vashta clearly still has a prominent position in society, but she only compares herself with her sisters. Do you think she could have overcome her insecurity by changing this point of view? Have you seen instances in your own life or experience where this has happened?

Change

1. Even though Brandonin believes his people have grown tired of war with the Vendel, there is clearly still a lot of resistance to peace on all levels of society in both the Vendel and Verindal people. Why do you think people are willing to put up with something as drastic as war rather than seek peace to overcome it?
2. It has been said that although people want change, none of us wants to change ourselves. This is the case on Verindon, where each race thinks the other is the problem. In what ways can change be made more acceptable both in our lives and our communities?
3. The cultural divide is the biggest problem on Verindon and the reluctance to overcome it nearly destroys both races. A similar problem we face on our own planet is climate change. Why do you think some people are so determined to resist it?
 - What can be done (if anything) to change their minds?
 - What other situations in our world today do we need to change in order to avoid such a drastic outcome?

Genocide

1. Vashta and Brandonin are faced with the decision of whether or not they should wipe out all the Arctals, both on their planet and on the mastership. Do you think they made the right decision? Explain your answer.
2. Once Brandonin sees that Blassin's DNA Destroyer works, he comments how good, but also appalling, it is that the device works. What do you think he meant by that?
3. Do you think genocide is justified in a case like this, when a race or planet is under attack from an invading force intent on wiping out the inhabitants?
 - Why or why not?
 - Can you think of any other course of action that might work instead?
4. Do you think that Mestitha was justified in planning to use the DNA Destroyer against the Verindal? Is what she was planning to do different from its use on the Arctals? Explain your answer.

About the author

Lynne Stringer has always enjoyed writing. She began writing professionally as a journalist and was the editor of a small newspaper (later magazine) for seven years before turning her hand to screenplays and novels.

Lynne is the author of the Verindon Trilogy, a young adult science fiction romance series released through Wombat Books in 2014. She's also the author of *Once Confronted*, a new adult contemporary drama.

Lynne's new release, *The Verindon Alliance*, enriches the world of Verindon that she created. Set hundreds of years before her trilogy, it gives fans a taste of the planet's history.



Key curriculum areas

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