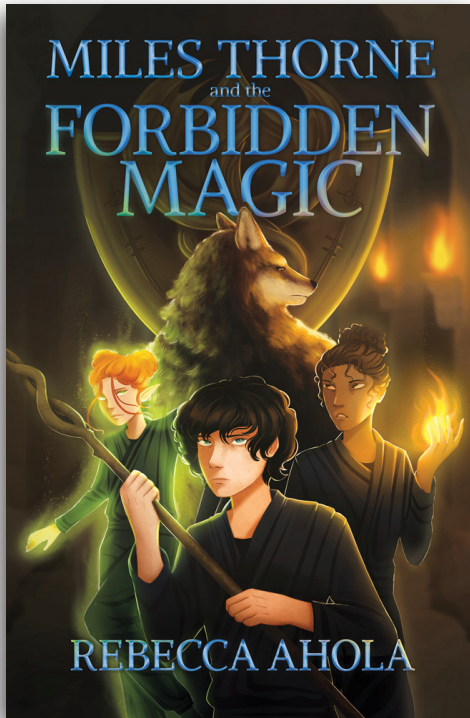

Teachers' Notes



MILES THORNE AND THE FORBIDDEN MAGIC

Rebecca Ahola

ISBN: 9781761113406

Reading level: 12+

BOOK SUMMARY

Miles Thorne was kicked out of his last school, the prestigious Nox Wizarding Academy, because he's a wizard with almost no magic.

At his new school, he meets Eric, a monster, Freya, a fairy, and Colter, a werewolf. To protect Miles from the bullies at his new school, they enter the Battle Games, a dangerous contest only for the strongest of magic users.

But when Miles's magic starts to develop, it's different from anyone else's. What secret is his family hiding?

THEMES

Belonging • Relationships • Personal Growth • Power & Social Hierarchy •

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**Rebecca Ahola is available for author talks and workshops.
Contact Rhiza Edge for more information.**

Miles Thorne and the Forbidden Magic Teachers' Notes can be used in schools (independent learning, small groups, and whole classes); at home with caregivers; and as part of mental health support programs facilitated by counsellors, psychologists, children's charities, etc.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Rebecca Ahola is a Middle Grade and Young Adult author raised in Tasmania living in Far North Queensland. She is also a Guidance Officer and English Teacher. She is passionate about helping young people develop a love of reading and writing stories.

As both a teacher and a counsellor, Rebecca has seen the power stories have to help young people make sense of the world. She enjoys creating characters that children both love and to whom they can relate.

Her love of fantasy started when she was very young. Her childhood was filled with 'make believe' games with friends that would span the whole neighbourhood and would take weeks to play out. She started playing Dungeons and Dragons with her older brother when she was seven and loved losing herself in a magical world where you could be anyone you wanted to be.

In all the books Rebecca loved as a child, characters had to dig deep, band together and overcome adversity. Her belief that narrative teaches us that we can shape our own lives the same way is at the centre of her storytelling.

Rebecca Ahola is available for author talks, school visits and workshops. Contact her at rebeccaahola.com for more information.

AUTHOR NOTES

This book was inspired by so many of the young people I have taught over my years as a teacher. One of the things I noted time and again, in a school context, was the importance of supportive friendships in allowing young people to be their authentic selves. I also observed so many young people grow in self-assurance after embracing who they wanted to be. I wanted to write a novel that explores friendship, understanding and forgiveness. My characters don't get everything right all the time, but when they look within themselves as well as at the actions of each other, their friendships are strong enough to survive.

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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

GENERAL

1. What species are introduced in the novel? What do we learn about each of them?
2. What different magical abilities do the team members possess?
3. Who might the woman in Grandfather Austin's sketchbook be? What clues support your ideas?
4. Why do Miles, Eric, Freya and Colter choose to enter the Battle Games despite the risks?
5. What kind of training would be required to prepare for the Battle Games?
6. Why is it important for Miles to hide his powers during the competition?
7. What motivates Colter to leave and later return to the team?
8. Describe your first impressions of Colter, Freya and Eric. How do these impressions shape Miles' relationships with them?
9. What motivates Eric, Freya and Colter to enter the Battle Games? To what extent is loyalty to one another a factor?
10. Do you think Colter makes the right decision to stay with Taj? Why or why not?
11. Miles chooses acceptance over power. Do you agree with his decision? Why or why not?
12. Can you think of real-life situations where people choose to fit in rather than stand out? What influences these decisions?
13. To what extent is Miles in control of his identity and growth throughout the novel?

BELONGING

1. Miles notes that he and Victor could have been friends, but Victor chooses distance to avoid being bullied. What does this suggest about how belonging and safety influence friendship choices?
2. Why does Miles want to blend in at his new school? What does this suggest about his sense of identity and belonging?
3. Miles' Grimling heritage is considered taboo, leading him to hide part of his identity. How does this affect his sense of belonging and how he presents himself to others?
4. While some characters begin to accept Miles' magic, others reject him. How does acceptance or rejection from others shape Miles' identity?
5. Why is Miles so distressed at the thought of being separated from his team? How does belonging to a group affect his sense of self?
6. At the beginning of the novel, Miles believes his lack of magic defines him. How does this belief shape his identity, and how does it change over time?
7. How do labels such as wizard, fairy, monster and Grimling influence how characters understand themselves and others?
8. Why does Miles struggle with being seen as different? How does this influence him?

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9. How does Miles react to discovering his Grimling identity? In what ways does this challenge his understanding of who he is?
 10. What does Miles ultimately learn about identity and self-acceptance by the end of the novel?
 11. How does Miles' understanding of his family history affect his identity?

RELATIONSHIPS

1. Compare Eric's offer of friendship with Victor's refusal. Why might Eric respond differently?
2. Why do Eric and Colter choose to protect Miles? What does this suggest about their values?
3. Why does Eric continue to support Miles despite his limited magical ability?
4. Why does Colter's betrayal hurt Miles so deeply?
5. How does Miles' relationship with Freya change over time?
6. What advice does Lewis give Miles about friendship? How does this influence his actions?
7. What motivates Miles to finally use his magic openly? How are his friendships involved in this decision?
8. How would you describe Miles' relationship with his father at the beginning of the novel?
9. How does Miles feel about his grandfather? How do these feelings change over time?
10. What can we infer about Miles from his reaction to Eric's mother?
11. Describe Grandfather Austin's character. How does he influence Miles?
12. Why is Miles so distressed at the thought of being separated from his team? How do family and friendship both influence this reaction?
13. What do we learn about Grandfather Austin's feelings towards Miles?
14. Why does Miles defend his father? What does this suggest about their relationship?
15. How do Miles' feelings about his father change throughout the novel?
16. How does Freya's relationship with her family shape her character?
17. Why might Miles feel unsettled when learning more about his grandmother?
18. How does Colter feel about his mother? How might this influence his behaviour?
19. How do Miles and his grandfather feel during key confrontations? What does this reveal about their relationship?
20. How have Miles' relationships with his father and grandfather changed by the end of the novel?

PERSONAL GROWTH

1. Why does Miles choose to forgive Colter? What does this reveal about his character?
2. Define courage. Does Miles demonstrate courage throughout the novel? Provide examples.
3. What motivates Miles to make key decisions such as joining or resisting the Battle Games?
4. Why does Miles sometimes choose restraint over power?

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5. Why does Miles choose not to use his magic in certain situations? What does this reveal about responsibility?
 6. What do Miles' moral and ethical choices suggest about integrity?
 7. Miles feels shame about his abilities. How does this affect his confidence and behaviour?
 8. At the beginning of the novel, Miles believes his lack of magic defines him. How does this change?
 9. How does Miles respond to setbacks and self-doubt? How do these experiences shape him?
 10. What internal conflict does Miles experience between belonging and being true to himself?
 11. How does discovering his Grimling identity mark a turning point in his development?
 12. Why does Miles struggle with being seen as different? How does this evolve?
 13. How does Miles respond emotionally to challenges, and what helps him persist?
 14. What qualities does Miles develop over the course of the novel beyond courage?
 15. How does Miles' understanding of strength change throughout the story?
 16. What advice do Freya and Eric give Miles about his abilities, and how does this shape his growth?
 17. Miles is given opportunities to become more powerful but chooses acceptance instead. Why?

POWER & SOCIAL HIERARCHY

1. Arthur Pratt establishes a hierarchy with wizards at the top. What evidence suggests species are ranked differently?
2. Arthur Pratt removes Miles' staff and robe. How do these objects symbolise power and status?
3. Mr Nguyen questions whether a hierarchy still exists. What does this suggest about changing social systems?
4. How do characters reinforce or challenge the existing hierarchy?
5. What do Tobias' comments reveal about attitudes towards different species?
6. How do Eric, Freya and Colter challenge expectations of their species?
7. How does Freya respond to meeting Miles' grandfather? What does this suggest about status and hierarchy?
8. Why is the werewolves' creed missing from the fountain? What might this symbolise?
9. Why is Colter reluctant to form alliances? How does hierarchy influence trust?
10. What does Taj reveal about hierarchy within wizard society itself?
11. Eric states that all species are equal. To what extent do competitions like the Battle Games challenge or reinforce hierarchy?
12. Why are species separated into different schools or groups? What parallels exist in the real world?
13. Freya reveals that Colter changed social groups. How easy is it for people to return to previous friendships after leaving a group?
14. Do you think Freya is justified in her treatment of Miles? Why or why not?

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CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

IDENTITY SHIELD

Draw a circular shield and divide it into five sections. Label each section with a species from the story: wizard, fairy, werewolf, monster, and Grimling. In each section, write key characteristics of that species.

On a separate page, explain how the species are similar and different, and describe how their differences and similarities affect how they work together in the story.

FRIENDSHIP SPECTRUM

Draw a line across your page. Label the left end *loyal* and the right end *disloyal*. Place each of Miles' friends along the line and justify your choices with evidence from the text.

'WAS IT COURAGE?' DEBATE

Choose a key moment in the novel where Miles shows courage or self-preservation. In groups, debate whether his actions show true courage. Be prepared to support your opinion with examples from the text.

BATTLE GROUND ARENA

Draw the arena where the Battle Games take place, using descriptions from the novel.

Extension: Design a new challenge for the Battle Games and explain how it would test the competitors.

CHARACTER PROFILE POSTER

Choose a character from the novel and create a profile poster. Include key traits, relationships, and relevant quotes or evidence from the text.

HOT SEAT

One student takes on the role of a chosen character. The rest of the class asks questions about the character's actions, motivations, and decisions in the story.

KEY CURRICULUM AREAS

REASONS TO STUDY THIS BOOK

Miles Thorne and the Forbidden Magic offers an imaginative and accessible entry point for students to explore coming-of-age themes within a fantasy setting that remains highly relatable to adolescent readers. Miles' experience of feeling different, particularly his struggle with limited magical ability in a world that values power, provides a meaningful lens through which students can examine how self-perception influences confidence, behaviour and relationships. The novel highlights the importance of friendship and the role peers play in shaping identity and resilience. Miles' relationships with new friends encourage reflection on what constitutes healthy connections, as well as the roles of trust, empathy and understanding in strengthening social bonds. Family relationships are also central to the narrative, providing opportunities to explore generational expectations, the formation of values and beliefs, and the balance between personal growth and maintaining respectful family dynamics.

Set within a richly imagined world of magical and interspecies communities, the story invites discussion around hierarchy, power and inclusion. Students can draw connections between these fictional structures and real-world social and political systems, supporting critical thinking about fairness, inequality and representation in both historical and contemporary contexts. Throughout the narrative, Miles is faced with moral and ethical dilemmas. These moments support students' development of ethical reasoning, encouraging meditation on the consequences of choices and what it means to act with integrity in challenging situations.

With its fast-paced plot and diverse cast of characters, the novel supports cross-curricular learning opportunities in English, Civics and History, while fostering empathy, critical thinking and personal reflection.

CURRICULUM V9

YEAR 6

English, HASS

AC9E6LY05 - use comprehension strategies such as visualising, predicting, connecting, summarising, monitoring and questioning to build literal and inferred meaning, and to connect and compare content from a variety of sources

AC9E6LA02 - understand the uses of objective and subjective language, and identify bias

AC9E6LY01 - examine texts including media texts that represent ideas and events, and identify how they reflect the context in which they were created

AC9HS6S01 - develop questions to investigate people, events, developments, places and systems

AC9HS6K06 - the key institutions of Australia's system of government, how it is based on the Westminster system, and the key values and beliefs of Western democracies

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YEAR 7

English, Civics and Citizenship, History

AC9E7LE01 - identify and explore ideas, points of view, characters, events and/or issues in literary texts, drawn from historical, social and/or cultural contexts, by First Nations Australian, and wide-ranging Australian and world authors

AC9E7LE02 - form an opinion about characters, settings and events in texts, identifying areas of agreement and difference with others' opinions and justifying a response

AC9E7LE03 - explain the ways that literary devices and language features such as dialogue and images are used to create character, and to influence emotions and opinions in different types of texts

AC9E7LE05 - identify and explain the ways that characters, settings and events combine to create meaning in narratives

AC9E7LE06 - identify and explain how literary devices create layers of meaning in texts including poetry

AC9E7LY06 - plan, create, edit and publish written and multimodal texts, selecting subject matter, and using text structures, language features, literary devices and visual features as appropriate to convey information, ideas and opinions in ways that may be imaginative, reflective, informative, persuasive and/or analytical

AC9E7LA03 - identify and describe how texts are structured differently depending on their purpose and how language features vary in texts

AC9HC7K04 - how Australia's secular democracy and pluralist, multi-faith society draws upon diverse cultural origins, including Christian and Western heritage, distinct First Nations Australian histories and cultures, and migrant communities

AC9HC7K05 - how values based on freedom, respect, fairness and equality of opportunity can support social cohesion and democracy within Australian society

AC9HC7S01 - develop questions to investigate Australia's political and legal systems, and contemporary civic issues

AC9HC7S03 - analyse information, data and ideas about political, legal or civic issues to identify and explain differences in perspectives and potential challenges

AC9HH7S01 - develop historical questions about the past to inform historical inquiry

AC9HH7S07 - explain historical interpretations about significant events, individuals and groups

YEAR 8

English, Civics and Citizenship, History

AC9E8LE01 - explain the ways that ideas and points of view may represent the values of individuals and groups in literary texts, drawn from historical, social and cultural contexts, by First Nations Australian, and wide-ranging Australian and world authors

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AC9E8LE03 - explain how language and/or images in texts position readers to respond and form viewpoints

AC9E8LE05 - analyse how language features such as sentence patterns create tone, and literary devices such as imagery create meaning and effect

AC9E8LA07 - investigate how visual texts use intertextual references to enhance and layer meaning

AC9E8LY01 - identify how texts reflect contexts

AC9E8LE04 - identify intertextual references in literary texts and explain how the references enable new understanding of the aesthetic quality of the text

AC9HC8K05 - how culture and religion may influence individuals' and groups' perceptions and expressions of citizenship and their actions as citizens

AC9HH8K09 - the experiences and perspectives of rulers and of subject peoples, and how the interaction between power and/or authority relates to empire and/or expansion

GRIMLING CASE FILE: CLASSIFIED REPORT

TOP SECRET - BATTLE GAMES AUTHORITY USE ONLY

You are part of the governing council responsible for monitoring magical species and assessing potential risks in the Battle Games system. Your task is to compile a classified report on Miles Thorne and the Grimling lineage.

SECTION 1: SUBJECT PROFILE

Complete the profile using information from the novel.

Name: Miles Thorne

Species classification: _____

Known / suspected abilities:

Key personality traits:

Risk level (circle one):

Low / Medium / High

Explain your choice:

SECTION 2: EVIDENCE LOG

Identify THREE key moments from the novel that reveal information about Miles' Grimling heritage or magical abilities.

Evidence 1

Event:

What does this suggest?

Evidence 2

Event:

What does this suggest?

Evidence 3

Event:

What does this suggest?

SECTION 3: HIERARCHY ASSESSMENT

Answer the following questions:

Where do Grimlings appear to sit within the species hierarchy?

Who benefits from the current hierarchy system?

Who is disadvantaged by it?

SECTION 4: OFFICIAL RECOMMENDATION

Write a short report to the governing council and use evidence from the text to support your decision:
Should Miles be allowed full participation in the Battle Games? Why or why not?

EXTENSION: CONFIDENTIAL LEAK

Imagine Miles discovers this classified file about himself. How would he react? What would it reveal about how others see him?
