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PLOT SUMMARY

Jace Tanner has always been different – he can see monsters no one else can. All he wants is to be normal . . . and maybe make it through his final year of primary school without getting expelled!

But when you can see monsters, trouble follows you everywhere – and things are about to get worse. A lot worse.

When strange happenings begin to unfold, Jace uncovers a secret world hidden behind museum walls and a mysterious curator who knows more than he's saying. Drawn into an ancient mystery, Jace soon realises he's not the only kid who can see monsters.

A heart-pounding adventure where bravery, friendship and danger collide.

RECOMMENDED FOR
(ages 8+; years 4 to 7)

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KEY CURRICULUM AREAS

• Learning areas: English • General capabilities: Literacy; Critical and creative thinking; Ethical understanding

REASONS FOR STUDYING THIS BOOK

• Adventurous, exciting debut novel • This is a celebration of friendship, belonging and finding your place in the world.

THEMES

• Belonging and identity • Bravery • Family and friends
• Trust

PUBLICATION DETAILS

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The Lost Defenders

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Sam Summers has had a lifelong dream be an author, to share her passion for creating magical worlds and relatable characters that captivate young readers and inspire them to embrace their own unique abilities. *The Lost Defenders* is her first children's book and does just that. Sam also runs a successful coaching business for mums returning to the corporate workforce to help them avoid burnout. She is mum to two kids, one of whom is a middle-grader who LOVES her middle-grade stories.



AUTHOR'S INSPIRATION

My journey into the world of *The Lost Defenders* began many years ago, huddled over a book that changed everything. I was nine years old when I first discovered *The Dark Portal* by Robin Jarvis – a story about a group of small, unlikely heroes who must summon enormous courage to face ancient, terrifying forces. From that moment on, I was drawn to stories where the most unexpected characters become the bravest heroes. In fantasy stories I found a powerful idea that stayed with me: magic often hides in plain sight, just beneath the surface of the ordinary world.

Many years later, the final spark for *The Lost Defenders* came from my (then eight-year-old) son. His bedroom

walls were covered in drawings of monsters and mythical creatures. He loved anything mysterious, strange or slightly terrifying, and watching his imagination run wild reminded me of the girl I once was in the school library, completely absorbed in fantastical worlds. I realised I wanted to write a story for him, but also for the child I used to be.

Jace, Alice and Felix can see monsters that nobody else can. Because of this, they feel out of place in the ordinary world. Yet it is precisely that difference that makes them special. They are the descendants of an ancient line of monster hunters and the only ones capable of stopping a dangerous prophecy from coming true.

When I wrote this book, I hoped that young readers would see something of themselves in the characters. Books have a powerful way of reminding us that the qualities that make us different can also make us brave, capable and extraordinary.

Writing *The Lost Defenders* didn't happen all at once. It began as an idea and slowly grew over time. Once I had the idea for Jace – a boy who can see monsters no one else can – the rest of the story began to take shape. I spent time sketching out the world, thinking about the different creatures that might exist just beyond the edge of our reality, and imagining what it would be like to discover that you were part of something much bigger than yourself.

For me, writing is a lot like exploring somewhere new – you start with a map, but along the way the characters often surprise you and lead the story somewhere you didn't expect. That sense of discovery is one of the most exciting parts of being a writer.

PRE-READING QUESTIONS

1. Look at the cover of *The Lost Defenders*. Based on the title and the illustration, what do you think the



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book is about? Where do you think it might be set?

2. Now, read the blurb and add to your ideas about what the story might be about and the concepts it might explore. What elements capture your interest?
3. Have a go at writing a paragraph predicting what you think will happen in the story. Then, once you have finished reading the book, re-read your paragraph and see if you were close. You might like to swap your answer with the person next to you and see what they thought would happen too. Which version do you like better?

be no explanation?' (page 1). What effect does this have on the experience of reading the story? How does it make you feel about the character?

Visual Literacy



(Illustration from page 5)

Writing Style

The Lost Defenders is written in first-person, from Jace's perspective. We can only know the other characters through their outward actions, but we have insight into Jace's inner life. This means that we are experiencing the story through his body, mind and emotions. We see what he sees and know what he knows.

The book ends with an epilogue, which Jace is not in. In this epilogue, the narration changes to third-person, and the perspective switches to that of the stranger who knocks on the museum door – though in a much more limited way. We aren't given the same level of insight into the stranger that we had with Jace.

Questions and activities

1. The book has illustrations by Mario Gushiken. How do they impact the reading experience?
2. Discuss whether you prefer books with or without illustrations.
3. Design your own cover for the book. Think about what you want the cover to tell people about the book.

Questions and activities

1. Why do you think the author chose to use first-person perspective? And why did they use a different voice and perspective for the epilogue?
2. Choose a short section from the book (e.g. a few paragraphs or a page) where Jace is with another character, and rewrite it from that character's perspective. For example, you could write Alice's perspective of the scene where she gets her veillight, or Basque's visit in chapter 7 from the goblin's point of view.
3. Jace often addresses the reader directly – like in the opening line of the book: 'Have you ever noticed how bad things happen sometimes, and there seems to

KEY STUDY TOPICS

Adventure fantasy genre

'Genre' means the style or type of story – such as crime, romance, historical fiction, non-fiction, etc. *The Lost Defenders* can be categorised as adventure fantasy. It combines supernatural elements with action and adventure. Different fiction genres often come with their own tropes – recurring themes, motifs or plots that are common across many books in that genre. For instance, *The Lost Defenders* includes typical fantasy tropes such as mystical abilities, a different universe (the Monster Realm), magical creatures, etc. It also falls into the adventure genre, because the characters undertake an



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exciting, high-stakes mission full of danger and unexpected challenges.

Questions and activities

1. What other fantasy and adventure tropes can you identify in the story?
2. Identify other novels/movies/stories you have come across that explore the tropes listed above. (For instance, the Chronicles of Narnia series has the fantasy elements of magic, quests and good triumphing over evil. It also has adventure elements of chase scenes, plot twists and strong, courageous characters who grow as a result of their adventure.) Once you have done this, have a look at how these tropes play out in *The Lost Defenders*. Consider the similarities and the differences.

Research and critical thinking

The Defenders train with Mr Madzongwe, so that they will be ready to take on the Monsters in the final battle. But the most important preparation they undertake is not physical and doesn't involve their powers. It is the research and planning that they do.

All we knew was that some end-of-the-world-type event was going down right here in Clover Meadows, that it was taking place in just a few days' time and a vampire was behind it. But we needed some solid info so that we could plan how to protect our world. (Page 68)

Throughout *The Lost Defenders*, Jace and his friends rarely accept information at face value, they question it, cross-check sources, and look for more information. The group's 'research guru', Eli, looks at a variety of sources, from ancient texts to the internet. Where a source is potentially unreliable (like the webpage he shows the others on page 50), he cross-references it with other sources to determine if it is accurate.

Once they have done as much research as they can about the vampire, the ritual and the solar eclipse, they come up with a plan for the night of the ritual. The plan draws on everything that they have learned, and makes use of each team member's strengths. Jace, Alice, Felix and Eli also identify things that might go wrong and develop back-up plans (plan B and Plan C).

All this preparation is crucial to their success in the final battle.

Questions and activities

1. Discuss the difference between primary and secondary sources. Is the journal of T. E. a primary or secondary source?
2. What are the benefits and weaknesses of a primary source? What are the benefits and weaknesses of a secondary source?
3. In small groups, think of a problem in your school and devise a plan to address it. Identify your goal, list the steps and resources needed to achieve it, assign tasks and responsibilities, and set a timeline for the work.

Courage and resilience

Throughout the story, Jace overcomes his fears and shows himself to be brave and courageous. Other characters also show great bravery, such as Felix volunteering to act as bait for the vampire, and Eli getting involved in the Defenders' activities even though he can't see monsters and doesn't have any powers.

Courage isn't the absence of fear. Jace is scared a lot, but acts anyway. True bravery isn't never being afraid: it's standing up to your fears.

Questions and activities

1. Make a list of instances of bravery and courage in the story.
2. Research real-life people who have stood up against bullies or unfair laws or systems, or overcome challenges in their lives, and what they did to initiate change in the world or to show great courage in their lives.
3. Write a paragraph about a time in your life when you had to be brave.

Belonging and identity

Now I'd met others like me, I felt like I was part of something, that I wasn't just a mistake. Maybe I belonged somewhere after all. (Page 29)

At its heart, this is a story about Jace's need to discover his identity and find where he belongs. Everyone wants



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to find a place, a group of people, a way of doing things that make sense to them. Jace has always felt that he is different from everyone else because of his ability to see monsters. He's felt like there is something wrong with him and that his ability is a negative thing.

Meeting Alice and Felix, and learning more about Defenders and the Monster Realm from Mr Madzongwe, creates a sense of identity for Jace, and makes him feel like he is part of a community. The group are all 'misfits' who become a team of heroes.

For Jace, Felix and Alice, gaining this sense of identity is part of finding their superpower. In *The Lost Defenders*, powers don't come from being the fastest, strongest or best at sport. They come from who you are underneath. The things that make them different are actually their strengths. Jace isn't strong because he lifts weights – he's strong because he cares deeply about people. Alice is fast because she's had to adapt to a lot of change and keep going. Felix has perfect aim because he's always trying to solve puzzles and make sense of things in his mind.

Questions and activities

1. Why do you think that belonging is important to Jace?
2. Write a list of all the things that make you feel at home or like you belong.
3. How would you define your identity? Have you ever felt like you don't belong because of your identity?
4. Think about how Jace, Alice and Felix's powers relate to aspects of who they are. If you had a 'power' what would it be, and why?



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Further reading from Penguin Random House



Time Lions and the Chrono-Loop
by Krystal Sutherland and Martin Seneviratne

Twin geniuses Pearl and Patrick pull heists all over the world to further their scientific and historical research. Now they've finally achieved their greatest triumph: time travel.

But when they accidentally change the timeline, can they fix their mistake before the shadow group known as T.I.M.E. sentences them to 100 years in the eternal abyss?

A laugh-out-loud, edge-of-your-seat time-travel adventure from bestselling, award-winning Australian author Krystal Sutherland.



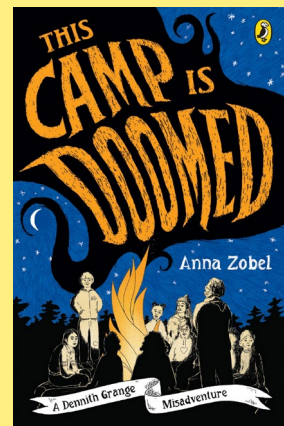
The 113th Assistant Librarian
by Stuart Wilson

Oliver Wormwood is sure his new job in the library will be boring. Until he learns that books hold great power – and danger. By the end of his first day, Oliver has witnessed a death, been frozen by a book and fought off a horde of terrifying creatures.

With only a mysterious girl called Agatha to show him the ropes, Oliver needs to learn fast . . . if he wants to live longer than the 112 assistant librarians before him.

The first book in an exciting fantasy adventure series.

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This Camp is Doomed
by Anna Zobel

A run-down camp in the woods.

No phone reception.

Ten students with untested powers . . .

Céline is seeing conspiracies everywhere. Fionn has a bad premonition about the colour blue. Mr Berg is horrified at the camp's questionable safety standards. Something is definitely not right at Camp Buttress.

This hilarious and quirky book will keep you guessing as the campers try to solve the mystery – and survive.

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Order form

| TITLE | AUTHOR | ISBN | SCHOOL YEAR | RRP | QTY | TOTAL |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|---------------|-------------|--------------|-----|-------|
| <i>The Lost Defenders</i> | Sam Summers | 9781761355059 | 4-7 | \$17.99 | | |
| <i>Time Lions and the Chrono-Loop</i> | Krystal Sutherland and Martin Seneviratne | 9780143779377 | 5-8 | \$16.99 | | |
| <i>The 113th Assistant Librarian</i> | Stuart Wilson | 9781761356315 | 4-8 | \$16.99 | | |
| <i>This Camp is Doomed</i> | Anna Zobel | 9781761047565 | 4-8 | \$16.99 | | |
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