



OMNIBUS BOOKS

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Teachers' Notes

The Mapmaker's Apprentice

Tales of the Blue Jade Book 2

Peter Cooper

Teachers' notes by Madeline Holmes

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Introduction

When a coveted position of mapmaker's apprentice is announced Dillen is determined to win the role. A life as a mapmaker would be a life of adventure to parts unknown. But before an apprentice is chosen, the candidates must venture to a perilous mountain pass where a monster dwells and few travellers dare cross. Accompanied by his two friends, Koto and Tajni, Dillen sets out on a test where failure may mean death.

About the Author

Peter Cooper grew up in Woomera, South Australia. He wrote his first book, a science fiction adventure called 'Children of the Empire', when he was twelve years old and continued to write as a teenager, mainly fantasy stories. After a gap of ten years, during which time he finished a degree in Ancient History and another in Electrical Engineering, he took up writing again. His work has been published in anthologies and magazines such as *Andromeda Spaceways Inflight Magazine*, *Antipodean SF*, and Fablecroft's *After the Rain* anthology. *The Mapmaker's Apprentice* is his second novel. Peter blogs at <http://cacklingscribe.blogspot.com>.

Before Reading the Text

Have a lesson about cartography to familiarise students with the process of mapmaking. National Geographic has a terrific guide for students that can be printed out to accompany these notes:

<http://www.nationalgeographic.com/xpeditions/lessons/09/g68/cartographyguidestudent.pdf>.

Reading the Text

Part One

Class discussion: first impressions

Read the initial chapters together as a class and talk about your impressions. Having read the first book in the series, *The Ghost of Ping-Ling*, you may have certain expectations of a fantasy novel. Share your definition of a fantasy novel and see if you can come up with a class definition. Here are some further discussion questions:

- What do you think of the prologue and how it ties in with Dillen's story?
- Does Dillen seem happier than he did when you first encountered him in *The Ghost of Ping-Ling*?
- How has Dillen changed?
- What do we know about the city of Wutao? Look back over the first chapter to see how the author creates a sense of place.
- The traders are unhappy about the closing of the north road to Rassylon through the Sun Pass. Consider the way our society runs and the impact on our lives if Australia were shut off from the rest of the world. What do you think would happen?

Research task: timekeeping

Over the course of a day, how often would you ask or think, 'what's the time?' The way we measure and keep time is incredibly important to our ordered way of life. Imagine for a moment what life would be like if we had no way of measuring time.

The clock tower Dillen is keeping an eye on is a water tower. The first Chinese water tower took six years to build and was designed to show the hours of the day with figures, like the happy bear, popping out of the door. The clock is driven by a water wheel that operates in a continuing cycle. The Wutao clock is an invention of fantasy, but similar water clocks have existed in the past.

Before clocks, humans used the stars and sun to mark the passing of time. Research the history of timekeeping devices and present your findings in an article on your blog. You can choose to present your findings in written form or you may like to record your article in video form, much like an educational documentary.

Literary component: Keeping a blog

Continue the blog you began when reading *The Ghost of Ping-Ling*. Writing down your responses is a good way to order your thoughts and it will prove useful when it comes to later activities, like writing a review of the novel. After each chapter, summarise what happened and write your own response to what you have just read. As well as responding to the plot, make sure to pay attention to other elements like setting and pace. For those of you unfamiliar with the concept of pace, it is how quickly the action or story unfolds. Consider the behaviour of characters and climactic moments (the high point of the story) in the plot. Note how or if relationships change. During your blogging process, come up with a question or discussion about the book for other students to interact with. Make sure you post at least two responses on other blogs in answer to other questions or ideas.

Part Two

Class discussion: quests and journeys

Dillen has his heart set on becoming the mapmaker's apprentice and, as he tells the pork seller, it is something he has dreamed of since he was very young. In fact, he was willing to risk his life to achieve his dream. What do you think about Dillen's potential sacrifice? Is becoming a mapmaker really worth it? Think about Dillen's situation and past history and what a respectable and worthy career would mean to him.

Have a general discussion about quests and journeys as fantasy conventions. Why are quests at the heart of so many fantasy stories? What are the characteristics of a quest? Consider how quests change characters. Can you think of a modern-day equivalent to a quest?

Research component: Mock Interviews

Dillen doesn't know what to expect when he turns up for his interview for the apprentice position. He certainly didn't expect to see so many other candidates. Getting a job can be very competitive and being prepared for the interview is very important.

Make a class list of careers you might be interested in. From the list select one potential career and research what the job actually is and what kind of skills or person it requires. For an example, consider Master Liao's job description of a mapmaker:

The mapmaker, by definition, must go into unexplored territory, places where no civilised foot has ever set forth. He must battle monsters, natives, enemies who seek to lay claim to the land. He must navigate stinking swamps, steaming forests, mountains where the mana is so thick even the rocks grow legs and chase you off steep precipices. And, while he battles all this, he must produce a map – both art and tool in one – an accurate representation of all he sees.

What Master Liao is really saying is that a mapmaker needs to be adventurous and brave and skilled enough to fight off potential foes. A mapmaker must also have a good sense of direction and be healthy and fit. Most importantly, a mapmaker must be a skilled artist with great care for detail.

Here is a list of potential questions and instructions you might be asked in an interview:

- Tell me about yourself.
- What do you do in your spare time?
- Why are you interested in the job?
- Why are you suited for the job?

- What would you bring to the role?
- Discuss your strengths and weaknesses.
- Give an example of a problem you overcame.
- Give an example of where you learned from your mistakes.

Use these questions to help guide your research and practise answering them with your classmates. Your teacher will schedule a mock interview day.

Literacy Component: arguing your case

Consider what we know about the different nations in the book. The Kingdom of Rassylon and the Empire of Shen have an uneasy relationship. Where the Rassylon navy is the source of the nation's power, the Shen have a great army – and both countries could cause significant harm to one another. Their armed forces, by the very threat of what each other can do, ensure a balance of peace between the two nations. If the Kingdom of Rassylon were to amass a land army before the Shen Empire could secure a fleet of warships, the balance would be tipped and the peace might not last long.

Consider the following statement: Peace is created by the threat of war. In three hundred words argue for or against this assertion. If you argued for this statement, you could use history as an example or delve into human nature. If you believe that peace is achieved by other means, you might argue that peace evolves from democracy or education.

It is important to note that the idea is to convince the reader that you are right, so use persuasive words and construct a clear and coherent argument. Make sure the reader knows exactly why you agree or disagree with the above statement. Plan your argument first to ensure your ideas flow logically.

Part Three

Class discussion: character relationships

Character relationships are important to any story as it is these interactions that propel a narrative forward. Consider how the characters are linked in the novel – whether they like or dislike one another, what they are to one another (friends, acquaintances, enemies), what are their motivations, how often their paths cross – and make a map connecting all the characters. Once this is complete use these character questions to prompt class discussions:

- How would you describe Dillen and Banto's relationship?
- Why does Banto take such a strong dislike to Dillen?
- Does everyone have to get along?
- What role do Koto and Tajni play?
- How does Dillen and Koto's relationship change over the course of the story?
- Do you think the trio should have stayed to save Banto and his companions?
- What do you make of the Third Marshal? Do you agree with Dillen's or Koto's assessment of her?

Research task: mapmaking test

Imagine that like Dillen you are being tested for the role of apprentice mapmaker. Working in pairs, your test is to create a map of the school ground and classrooms. You can use the National Geographic mapmaking guide you were given to aid your task. You will need to come up with a scale (like 1 cm = 5 m) and use graph paper to complete your map. If you wish, you can be creative and rename the buildings and the classroom with titles you might expect to come across in a fantasy novel.

Literary component: characterisation

Typically when you read fantasy novels your protagonist will take the form of a hero. Heroes come in all shapes and sizes. Yes, some save the world with heroic deeds but not all heroes are athletic superstars. Heroes can be people who stand up for what they believe in or people who win despite the odds. Heroes are people we admire and look up to. More often than not, the fantasy hero will have a nemesis, a person

they conflict with and who tries to stop them from attaining their goal. Think about the characters in *The Mapmaker's Apprentice* and other fantasy books you may have read. Make a list of qualities you prefer in your 'hero' and in your 'villain'. Then create your own hero and villain for an imaginary story. Write up character profiles that include physical description, relationships, characteristics, likes and dislikes, hobbies, motivations, aspirations, etc.

After Reading the Text

- 1) Have a general discussion about the novel. Here is a list of possible questions to discuss:
 - Did it meet your expectations?
 - Were you surprised by the winning apprentice?
 - Who was most deserving of the apprentice position?
 - Are you satisfied with the ending?
 - What does the story say about a person's capacity to do harm?
 - What do you think of Dillen's newfound sparring ability?
 - Is Banto a bully?
 - What were the novel's themes? That is, what is this novel essentially about and what ideas were explored in the action, the attitudes and the behaviour of characters?
 - How do you foresee the series ending?
- 2) Remember to update your blog one last time with your final musings on *The Mapmaker's Apprentice*.
- 3) Write a review of the novel. Reviews can cover your impressions after finishing a book or your thoughts and criticisms after a long reflection. A good review is entertaining to read. It should be as interesting as the book you are writing about. Basically, you are arguing for or against a book, so keep this in mind when you start to write your own review.

Think back to when you may have recommended or warned against a book or a movie to a friend and what you said. Avoid saying whether something is good or bad and instead look at what you think works and what you think did not work. Maybe if you did not enjoy a book you reviewed, you could suggest who would enjoy it. If you loved a book, remember you are trying to convince someone else to read it. Here are some tools to help you prepare a review:

Words you can use to critique a book:

Realistic	fluent	descriptive	strong
natural	colloquial	poetic	refreshing
gloomy	energetic	thoughtful	sentimental
dull	sad	wordy	amusing
strange	fantastic	complicated	original
fabulous	rollicking	rambling	cool

This is only a small sample of words. There are many more. As a class, you could come up with a vocabulary of criticism.

Elements to consider when reviewing a book:

content	theme	atmosphere
point of view	setting	plot
introduction	climax	characterisation
ending	dialogue	beginning

Extension Activities

- 1) Consider the statement 'achieving a dream is worth risking your life'. In two hundred words argue for or against this assertion. You may wish to use history to support your argument; people have risked their lives on dreams for thousands of years (explorers, inventors, warriors, etc.)

An opposing argument might be that sometimes dreams do not come true or that the risk is too great.

- 2) Write an introduction to a story using your hero and villain you created earlier.
- 3) Write a blurb for *The Mapmaker's Apprentice*.
- 4) Choose a minor character and rewrite a scene from their perspective.
- 5) Choose an important relationship in the book and select the most significant episodes in the relationship. What do you learn about the characters, and the development of the characters and the relationship? Write a short piece discussing how the relationship has changed over the course of the book and all the factors that are involved.
- 6) Find out about the author. You could look online to visit his blog and track down articles or critiques from magazines or newspapers. How important do you think it is to know about the author's background in relation to the novel?
- 7) Select a scene from the novel and present it as a storyboard or as a graphic novel with words or pictures.