

QUENTARIS

QUEST OF THE LOST CITY

The Equen Queen

by Alyssa Brugman

This book is the next title in the high fantasy series dealing with the fate of Quentaris that is popular amongst young adult readers. This second series is contiguous, illustrated and deals with the same characters throughout so that the reader is familiar with them and can identify with them.

Quentaris is now a sky-city and prone to attacks from others in the rift worlds.

Tab is the strong young female protagonist and her skills and personality ensure that there will be many adventures and action with a difference in this exciting 'other world' of Quentaris. Her city, which is adrift, meets up with another that seems friendly enough and wants to trade. However, once the citizens all have a precious gem in their possession given to them by the sky-traders, there is evidence that perhaps things are not what they seem and an amazing plot unfolds.

Alyssa Brugman's story is full of interesting concepts and the reader will be engrossed as they follow the dangers that face Tab and her fellow citizens. Young adults will become involved in the way she faces up to the challenges posed by the Loraskians, the equens, and her friend the dragon Melprin. They will eagerly follow her fortunes as she interacts with people in power in Quentaris who court her because of her daring and special gifts.

LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

- What indicates Quentaris is new to sky-trading? (p4)
- Outline the concept of sky-cities
- Who is Kel and what have his people done?
- What happens at this point in the story when Tab tries to use her special powers of mind-melding with animals? (p31)
- What does Tab learn when she goes to the sky-traders' city? (p38)
- How does Tab feel when she contemplates the treasure she has discovered? (p96-7)
- How did the Loraskians' scream affect everyone in Quentaris?
- Outline the power of the mood stones (p115)
- Name one skill that Tab's 'gift' gives her (p145-6)

- What are the things that lead to eternal life? (p162)

Vocabulary

- What does the term *bigwigs* mean? (p3)
- Find the origin of *bigwigs*
- Note the term *bolts* of fabric
- What is a *familiar*? (p95)
- Explain the meaning and significance of the following words as they appear in the story:
 - curlicues
 - fracas
 - sconces
- Compile a list of words to do with navigation in connection with the present situation of Quentaris
- Make a list of words that only have meaning within the context of this story
- Devise some words of your own that could fit in this series about Quentaris

Title

- How does the book get its name?

Genre

- How would you classify *The Equen Queen*?

SPEAKING / LISTENING

- State why defences are important for Quentaris
- From the text, find passages that portray the following and read these out to the rest of your class:
 - smells
 - body language
 - horror
 - fear
- Look for, and read out, a piece that you found poignant
- Relate how Tab imagines a rich person lives (p92)
- Describe the equens and their lives
- Do a review of this novel for your local radio station

Discussion

- Talk about the following as they appear in the novel: the importance of:
 - trade
 - food

- games and sport in society
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- Have a class discussion, based on the story, on these subjects:
 - greed
 - dreams
 - resources
 - communication
 - motives
 - friendship
 - magic
 - waiting
 - negotiation
 - humour
- Talk about:
 - instinct and the part it plays
 - different ways of seeing and thinking
 - how people behave in a crowd
- Find examples from the text of hidden agendas and discuss these
- Comment on how females are portrayed in this story

WRITING

- Describe the protocol for the formal feast that Tab and her friends attend (p20)
- Write about the things that are important to the people of Quentaris
- Outline Tab's feeling towards Melprin and her relationship with the dragon
- As Tab Vidler, describe a day in your life saying who you meet, what you do and how you go about your normal activities
- Go on to write further about how you tackle the unusual and unforeseen

THE CRAFT OF WRITING

- Examine the way in which Alyssa Brugman conveys emotions such as sorrow (see page 58); find other instances of the way feelings are conveyed in the text
- Look at the use of body language in writing – there is a *wink* on page 78
- Search the text for other examples
- Look at the way different chapters end: for example chapter 3 and chapter 5
- Make some comments about what the author does here and the purpose of such strategies
- Authors use similes, which are figures of speech that compare one thing with another – often two unlike things – to make scenes and characters come alive. Similes often begin with *like* or *such as* or *as if*. An example of a simile used by Alyssa Brugman on page 53 is: 'His eyes took on a dreamy look *like a dog scratching an itch*' and another, on page 57: 'It smelt sickly, *like overripe fruit*, and cloying *like turned*

cream' and on page 72: 'Just the thought of it created a big lump in Tab's throat, *as if she had swallowed an apple whole*'

- Look for others and use similes in your own writing to make it more graphic

Plot

- Tell the story of *The Equen Queen* by Alyssa Brugman to a friend

Atmosphere

- Choose a portion from the story that you felt creates a good atmosphere
- Read this to the rest of the class, stating your reasons for choosing it, and then analyse how the author made this scene effective

Setting

- Give a brief outline of the places and atmosphere where the novel is set
- Compose a paragraph indicating the structure of society and how the city of Quentaris is run and showing how society is ordered and the roles of different people. Indicate the different trades and occupations that exist and the creatures that inhabit the city
- Make up a map of Quentaris showing what you imagine it might look like and naming some of the places within the city as ascertained from the novel

Characters

- Tab Vidler is the main character in this story
- Write a profile of her outlining her special skills, her way of approaching things, and her abilities and strategies for handling different situations and some of her experiences
- Indicate who the following characters are and jot down a few words that best describe them:
 - Kel
 - Chak
 - Tab's friends
 - Torby
 - Verris
 - Fontagu
 - Florian
 - Vrod
- Describe the equens: their life-cycle and their role in this story
- Outline the importance of *Tattoo*
- Describe the Loraskians

Presentation

- Consider what makes a person pick up a book and want to read it

- Look at the way *The Equen Queen* looks: examine the cover and make some observations about it – look at the title, the illustrations, the type, the blurb, the design – all lead to an overall impression that attracts a reader
- Mock up a cover of your own for this series
- Consider what the illustrations add to the book as a whole
- Look at the details opposite the contents page and see how many people are involved in the design and illustrations of this book
- Make some observations and comments about the novel as a whole

About the author

Alyssa Brugman has written many titles that have received numerous accolades.

The Equen Queen is her first venture into fantasy writing. You can find out more about her and her work by reading her other books listed opposite the title page of this novel, reading her biography, and going to www.alyssabrugman.com.au

Research

- Find out more about:
Guilds and their role
Children's games and chants
- Go to www.quentaris.com to find out much more about this series that is edited by Paul Collins and Michael Pryor
- Find out more about the publisher Paul Collins by going to: www.paulcollins.com.au
AND learn about more good books to read by looking at the titles listed at the back of this novel and going to: www.fordstreetpublishing.com

NOTES: Nancy Mortimer