

Prometheus High #2: The Books of the Dead

AUTHOR

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RECOMMENDED FOR: Lower Secondary



SYNOPSIS

A frantic rooftop race.

Alchemy lessons on a zeppelin.

A booby-trapped pyramid . . .

Just the start of semester two at Prometheus High.

Athena and Marceline are going to extreme lengths to unearth Marceline's past—if their foolhardy plans don't get them expelled.

Godfrey's lonely without his friends, so when Emily asks him for a favour he's eager to help. But is her request all that it seems?

Meanwhile, no-one has noticed the threat growing on the airship *Atet*, as an ancient monster of unsurpassed power and fury is about to awaken . . .

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Stuart Wilson lives in Melbourne, with his wife and son. An omnivore when it comes to consuming stories, he reads too many books, watches too many films and plays too many videogames. Like Athena, he also chews on his lip when he's nervous. He is now the co-owner of a top-floor apartment. And lots of his neighbours own cats. And there's a storm brewing. So he's just waiting for the right moment.

STUDY NOTES

BEFORE READING

- Look closely at the front cover. What do you think the plot will be about based on the image you see there?
- What genre do you think the book is? What elements on the cover give you that impression? Can you think of other books that might be in the same genre?
- Compare the cover to the first book in the series—*Prometheus High: How to Make a Monster*. How has the designer made the series follow a similar look? What elements are similar?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS AND ACTIVITIES

- Why do you think the author opted for this mode of storytelling? How do you think it enriches our understanding of the characters? For instance, having the perspectives of both Athena and Marceline helps us better understand the tensions within their friendship, and the reasons for Marceline wanting to hide her secret from Godfrey. It also gives us insight into both a Creator and a Creation's way of thinking.
- Think about how the story would have been if it was written all through Athena's POV, or all through Marceline's POV. How do you think this might affect how we, as readers, engage with the story and understand the motivations of all the characters? Have a go at rewriting a small excerpt of a chapter that isn't from Athena's or Marceline's POV and compare the differences. Which is better?
- Animals were very important in Egyptian life and religion. How many animals with significance can you name? Why do you think animals held such importance to the Ancient Egyptians?
- Egypt has been plundered over the years for its treasure and historical artefacts. Can you name other countries where this has happened?
- Look up Giza and the great pyramids on a map. Draw your own map of the area, featuring all the important locations in the story—including the fictional ones! Don't forget to include the mooring tower the *Atet* is tied to and the locations that are only mentioned briefly, like the graveyards, solar barge museum and roads to Cairo.
- Draw a floor plan of the Great Pyramid as it really is, then add the fictional parts too, like the Khonsu door, secret paths, traps, tomb guardians and chambers.
- Pick one of the pharaohs or queens mentioned in the story, research them and write a short biography of them and their reign. (For example: Tutankhamen, Amenhotep III or Queen Tiye.)
 - Design a sarcophagus for the pharaoh or queen you researched above. Try to include symbols that are meaningful to that person's life and achievements.
- '[E]very time you take a mummy out of its tomb, you risk awakening them. It can happen by accident, like that time in the British Museum, or it can happen on purpose, as we saw with the sinking of the *Titanic*.' (p 26) Through the character of the Professor, the author is suggesting that a Creation could have sunk the *Titanic*. Research the *Titanic* and find out what happened to this ship on its maiden voyage. Then write a scene imagining how this could have happened if a Creation was responsible.
- Research airships online. Then draw a cross-section of the *Atet*. Make sure you label the different areas of the ship and try to follow the descriptions of the vessel that are included in the story.
- Do you think a character's name can affect what the reader thinks of them? For example, what impression do you get when you find out the main character's name is Athena Strange? Do you think the author has chosen that name deliberately? What do you think it symbolises?
 - Can you find examples of a character suiting their name in *The Books of the Dead*? (They don't have to be main characters either!) Find two examples of names reflecting the character's personality and draw a mind map showing why you think this might be so. For example, why do you think the author named one of the new teachers Theo Pagonis? What does his name mean? How does his name reflect his personality and his status within the story?
 - Can you find examples of characters being given names to provide extra layers to the story or to create humour?
- Why do you think diaries or journal entries are something he includes in the story?
 - Keep a diary for two weeks. After that time, look back at the entries in a critical way and work out which entries were the most interesting and why. What makes them stand out from other days in the diary?
- Look at the styles of writing used in *The Book of Creators*. What makes the diary entries different from the writing used for the main part of the story? (Take note of things such as vocabulary, tone, sentence structure and format.)
- Imagine you are a Creator and write your own entry in *The Book of Creators*. Don't forget to include information about your Creation and concerns and worries you might have about the whole process.
- Research Þridrangar lighthouse. Why do you think the author has used this location as a setting?
- Do you think that Marceline and Athena could have handled the situation with Godfrey differently? How do you think the story would have changed if they had told him about their plans to break into the Bibliotheca Alexandrina from

the start?

- Have you ever kept a secret from a friend? Do you think there is ever a time when keeping a secret would be okay? Why or why not?
- Athena puts her life in danger several times to help her friend. Do you think Marceline understands the sacrifice Athena has made? How does Marceline show her thanks?
- Brainstorm the ethical considerations of resurrecting the dead. How would you feel if you were brought back by a Creator without consent? In pairs, or as a class, discuss the pros and cons of this practice. For example, a pro could be better improving health outcomes and learning about history. Once you have done this, place yourself in the shoes of a Creator. How would you go about making sure what you were doing was ethical? Prepare a checklist.