

The Dangerous Business of Being Trilby Moffat

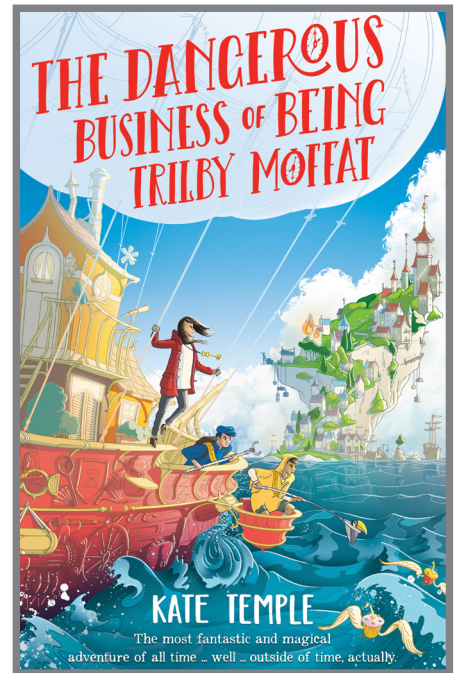
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RECOMMENDED FOR: Upper Primary



SYNOPSIS

This is NOT just any old book. THIS is a legal document. It contains a truthful record of how Trilby Moffat was accidentally promoted to the most important job that ever existed. The job of Time Keeper.

A mystery illness is making people bake ancient cakes, speak dead languages and then fall asleep and never wake up. When Trilby Moffat's mother catches this strange sickness, Trilby must find her only other surviving relative, a 300-year-old aunt who lives in a secret antique shop on the edge of time.

Ahead of Trilby lies an unusual inheritance, an opportunity that will never be repeated and a man in a top hat who will try to kill her . . . more than once.

This is the story of how one ordinary girl finds herself on a deliciously fast-paced adventure, fleeing to an island where time doesn't exist, cats are particularly rude and cake is always on the menu. Here she will take on the most treacherous job of all time. Well . . . outside of time, to be precise.

THIS IS THE DANGEROUS BUSINESS OF BEING TRILBY MOFFAT.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Kate Temple has had many dangerous jobs – from making hatpins out of darts to climbing ladders at midnight. Now Kate is in the dangerous business of writing books for children. She has written more than twenty books with her writing partner, Jol, and *The Dangerous Business of Being Trilby Moffat* is her first solo book. Kate lives in Sydney with her two children. When she is not writing, Kate enjoys eating cake, and so do the characters in this book. Find out more about Kate at: <http://katejoltemple.com/>.

STUDY NOTES

HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES (HASS)

- The idea of a child being left to embark on adventures and solve mysteries is a common narrative convention in children's literature. Not only does Trilby's mother succumb to a sleeping sickness but her great-great aunt Thumbelina Mince suddenly dies leaving her to confront the evil Mr Colin on her own. How does Trilby cope? What skills does she possess? Who assists her in her journey?
- As in most stories for young people Trilby develops new confidence in grappling with challenges in this novel. How does she change in the course of the narrative?
- Duty, self-sacrifice, bravery, honesty and empathy are all values shown in this novel. Invite students to locate quotes

in the novel which illustrate any of these values.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

- This novel is written in third person, past tense with Benjamin the thylacine as the narrator. How might it have been different had Trilby written it in first person?
- ‘Now you may be wondering how I am able to recant the details of the terrible mess that is to follow – after all, I was not on the boat. The short answer is: it is my job to know these things. I am the narrator. If you would like the long answer, you will need many more hours and a marshmallow cupcake or seven.’ (p 66) This is an example of metafiction wherein the narrator is discussing his role and limitations as a narrator. How does his self-reflection engage the reader’s attention?
- This novel is an example of fantasy and magical realism in which reality and fantasy collide and overlap. Detail in fantasy helps to create a convincing secondary world. Arcane details regarding several subjects are mentioned throughout the book, for example:
 - Food:
 - ‘olden-day treats like bleeding eel or sparrow’s feet’ (p 7)
 - ‘a flamingo-tongue pie’ (p 11)
 - ‘a jellyfish pie.’ (p 16)
 - Places:
 - Lost in Time Antiques on Nowhere Else Pier (p 14)
 - the Island Between Time.

What other details made this world come alive for you?

- Narrative Conventions of fantasy (or mythic dimensions) include:
 - Hero Invested with Special Powers: Trilby was an ‘ordinary’ girl until she was thrust into the role of heroine when her great-great aunt Thumbelina dies and leaves her to take on the mantle of Time Keeper.
 - Turning Point: ‘This moment is known as a fork in the road.’ (p 63) Read the rest of this paragraph on p 63 and discuss what it says about this particular narrative convention.
 - Quest: The Time Guild’s role is ‘to protect the Passage of Time’ (pp 97–8) but they haven’t been doing that well and need Trilby’s assistance as the Time Keeper to help them to do their job better.
 - Clues: ‘This was exactly where Trilby Moffat wanted to be. To be precise, she wanted to be between the letterboxes marked B and C.’ (p 172)
 - Logic of Secondary World: ‘I have not approved any fires. Any fire here is unauthorised, unofficial and without permit. Therefore, it doesn’t exist.’... ‘Time. A fire cannot burn without time.’ (p 161)
 - Time and Space Overlap: On the Island Between Time no time passes at all. ‘It was incredible to think that all these places, all these times, existed simultaneously—*islands floating on the sea of time.*’ (p 172)

What other narrative conventions of fantasy did you observe in this novel?

- What symbolism did you notice in this novel?
- Literary devices can contribute to meaning in evocative ways. Read the below passage and identify the forms of literary device which contribute to its meaning:

‘In Trilby’s hands the object hovered and danced. It smelled like warm rocky mountains and riding your bike down a country lane on an autumn afternoon. It felt like bedtime stories, reading in the bath and her mother’s smooth hands. It was balmy and light and, under that dark heavy coat, it transported Trilby to a far-away place that was foreign, but which she instantly understood completely. She was filled with a knowledge that felt old and also new—green like the shoots of spring leaves on an ancient tree.’ (pp 183–4)

 - Find other examples of the following literary devices:
 - Simile
 - Metaphors
 - Personification.
- Discuss the meaning and relevance of the aphorisms which appear in this book, for example, ‘As I often say, a frog

without a cigar is just a toad in fine trousers.’ (p 29)

- Discuss with students the idea of organising a library by mood. Try to classify a range of your favourite books by mood.
- The novel is filled with examples of Trilby’s obsession with crosswords, such as: “Valuable!’ baulked Mr Colin. ‘Yes, you know, like, important, significant, prized or cherished,’ said Trilby, exercising her love of thinking in crossword clues.’ (p 60) Each chapter title contains a crossword clue. Invite students to complete this crossword quiz. The answers are on p 216.
- Wordplay can be fun and there are lots of examples throughout the novel. How many can you find?
- Benjamin refers to ‘A nuisance of fluffy white cats’ (p 119). What other collective nouns for cats are there? Brainstorm collective nouns for other animals as well.
- There are many different types of humour in this novel including:
 - Sarcasm
 - Irony
 - Exaggeration
 - Black Humour.

Identify different types of humour in the novel and find examples to match the titles above.

- Strong beginnings and endings to chapters are one way of structuring a narrative, for example:
 - Beginning: ‘I’ve seen this door before!’ exclaimed Trilby. (p Ch 12, p 100)
 - Ending: ‘This tiny, cold, wet girl is Trilby Moffat. She’s the new Time Keeper. She’s here to save us!’ (Chapter 10, p 91)

Which other opening or closing sentence was particularly gripping, in your opinion?

- Suspense is the key to any narrative’s structure. What elements of suspense were used in this narrative?
- Description in setting can be evoked via a complex range of literary devices. Read the description of the Island Between Time on pp 83–84. Discuss the devices used in this passage.
- Draw up a character chart and find key quotes which give a clear picture of any of the major or minor characters in the story, and isolate events that demonstrate their natures. Then write a brief character study of the person using the quotes and events to illustrate the points made in your summary.
 - Which character was most intriguing and why? Which character would you like to have heard more about?
- Write an acrostic poem using the letters in TIME KEEPER.
- Write a diary entry as if written by Xipil about meeting Trilby.
- Write a poem in ballad form about Trilby’s adventures in this novel. This could also be a group activity in which each student contributes a verse.
- The cover of this book has a ‘retro’ aesthetic suggestive of children’s adventure stories of the past, which is in keeping with the ‘timeless’ quality of this story. Design a new cover for this book.
 - What other title might the book have had? Why did you choose this title? Design a cover based on this new title.