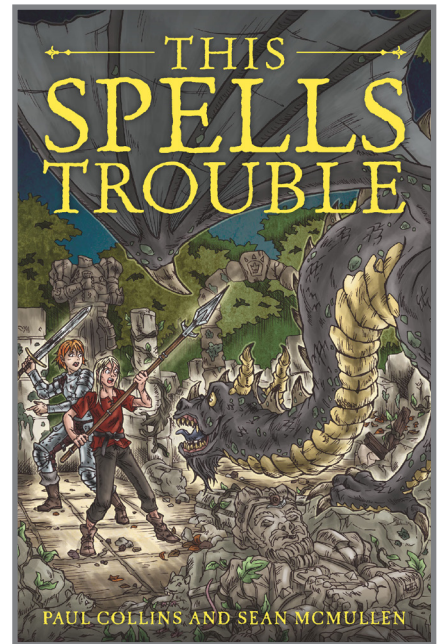


This Spells Trouble

AUTHORS

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RECOMMENDED FOR: Lower Secondary

SYNOPSIS

When unwilling wizard apprentice Winston repeatedly demonstrates his superior powers and intelligence, which far outstrip those of his lazy master, Faramond, problems are bound to follow. And when the pair get caught up in the designs of the powerful Summoner, Yolantha, and her plans for The Black Tower, things only get worse. Add into the mix a headstrong and wilful girl on a mission, a dangerous dragon and a very clever demon, Winston's mission to rescue the enslaved beings of his world become a matter of life and death. All in all . . . this spells trouble.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Paul has written many books for young adults. He has many strings to his bow. He's been an agent, publisher, writer and editor. He is best known for his fantasy and science fiction titles in The Jelindel Chronicles and The Quentaris Chronicles.

Sean McMullen is one of Australia's top science fiction authors, with nominations for the Hugo and BSFA awards, fifteen other awards, and works published in over a dozen languages.

STUDY NOTES

BEFORE READING

- Use clues in the cover art to predict genre, setting, character, plot and any possible theme/s.
- What other similar books have the students read? What similar movies have they watched? Compile a class list for further reading.
- The title is what type of literary device/figurative language? In this instance it also has a double meaning. Ask the students what they think that might indicate ie. magic.
- Read the blurb. Were the students' predictions about the plot based on the cover correct? Discuss as a class.

WHILE READING

ENGLISH

Vocabulary

- There are many words used throughout the text that may be unfamiliar to the students. Have them select from the below list and ask them to attempt a definition based on the context and then compare with the actual meaning, after checking a dictionary.
 - swooned p 3
 - cutlasses p 13

- flatulent p 18
- indecipherable p 44
- hedgerow p 54
- wayfarer p 62
- turgid p 79
- unscathed p 103
- cloying p 163
- languidly p 208
- chivalrous p 269.

Have students select another unusual word and play 'What's the Story?'. Each player offers three different meanings to their chosen word. One is true, one is half-true and one is false. Others must try to work out which is the correct meaning.

- There are several significant words (often used as spells/incantations) that have Latin or Greek roots. Research the original root for the following words and construct lists of other words which use the same root:
 - igienisen
 - vortextrias
 - valiant
 - delictiar fugoris
 - alpha
 - beta
 - gamma
 - delta.

Have students create their own 'signature spells' using a word or words that use a root from Latin or Greek.

[Combined lists are freely available on the internet]. They could also devise a finger movement to trace the symbol for their spell. They could then illustrate the finger movement in an art piece.

- The word 'iffryt' is very like the Arabic word 'ifrit'. Do some research to see how the two are connected. Write and draw a description of an iffryt (this could be Elvar).
- There are a many 'occupations' mentioned throughout the text. Use the below list and select five to investigate further. Write a definition for each.
 - merchant
 - journeyman
 - scribe
 - tinker
 - tinsmith
 - carter
 - jester
 - mercenary
 - chronicler
 - freebooter
 - theologian

Choose one of the occupations/trades and create a 'Positions Vacant' advertisement.

Structure/Plot

- Discuss the characteristics of the quest plot in narratives. Have students write their own definition and give examples they know from their own reading/viewing.
- Use a copy of the map to plot the comings and comings of the characters.
- Conflict is the struggle between two forces in a narrative. It may be external or internal. Identify conflict/s in the story and classify according to type.
- Write your own blurb for the book.
- Hold some mini-debates on significant quotes such as:

- 'Winston had not yet learned that "older" usually meant more foolish rather than wiser, but no older person was going to admit it.' p 29
- 'Winston, [who had] decided that life was just a collection of problems strung out between cradle and grave.' p 155

Characters

- A foil [character] is one that contrasts to another. It is usually a secondary character, and one which highlights the traits/qualities of the first. Identify any in the text and describe how the authors achieve this.
- Choose a character and create a profile for them.
- Create a character web which illustrates how the characters in the story are connected with each other.
- As a class, brainstorm the characteristics of heroes and villains and construct a generic profile for each.
 - Are there characters that are not wholly one or the other?
 - Can either change to a different type?
 - Create a list of heroes/villains pairings from students' suggestions.
- 'Griffid looked old even though he was fairly young for a dragon. His black and grey hide was blotched by lichen, and the teeth that had once crunched through the expensive armour of famous knights were now yellow because he didn't eat enough wood. His silver wings and immense body remained buried under the vines.' (pp 34–35) Use this description of Griffid in the above quote, along with any other references, to draw or paint him.

HASS/SCIENCE

- 'A world that is a globe—a world that is flat (on top of a dragon's head) . . .' (pp 276–277) Answer these questions, after some research:
 - Who first suggested the idea that the earth was round?
 - When was it proven and by whom?
 - What is the spherical shape of the Earth called?
 - Scientists usually list seven reasons that prove the Earth is round. What are they?
 - Why do some people still believe the Flat Earth theory?
- 'Because Wilderclaw's Second Law of Relative Motion states that a body within a freely falling body will be denied the influence of gravity.' (p 288) Is this an actual scientific fact? Research to find out about free-falling.
- Boar hunting is a sport with a long history across many cultures. Do some research and write a short report on this. Compare what you find with the descriptions of Winston's hunting methods.

AFTER READING

- As individuals or as a paired activity, create a board game based on the book's events. This might include such features as 'chance' cards and could be based on the map.
- Some means of transportation mentioned in the text include: sand cart with chicken legs, enchanted carpet, carried by iffryt (Elvar) or dragon and levitation castings. If you could choose one, which would it be? Write a short piece describing a journey you would make, making good use of figurative devices, creative description and rich language.

AUTHOR OF NOTES

SUE WARREN