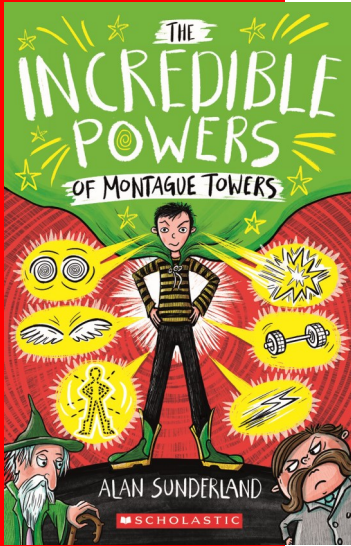


THE INCREDIBLE POWERS OF MONTAGUE TOWERS

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At the Our Lady of Sorrows Home for Lost Children, Montague Towers is looking forward to reading books uninterrupted and watching TV with no complaints, while the Sisters and the other children are off on their seaside holiday.

Montague never imagined that instead of repairing chairs, he would be responsible for stopping the evil mastermind Bentwordle in his tracks. Monty is just an ordinary boy, after all. The six different powers that the 'retired' superhero the Cape gives him over six different days should surely help him with his mission, right?

The Incredible Powers of Montague Towers is a fun caper about heroics being more than 'super' enhancements, and making sense of a world where good and evil, and justice, are not always clear-cut.

STUDY NOTES

- When Montague Towers first meets the Cape, he refers to him as a 'strange, not-really-a-wizard person'. (p 13) Review this scene and how the Cape is described. Do you think how we see things shapes whether we believe something is real or unreal? What makes Monty begin to doubt his logical conclusion that the Cape must be a crazy person? Do you think it is easy to 'see' the truth instantly?
- 'You can fly perfectly well without one. A cape is just for show. Real superheroes don't need stuff

Study notes written by
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like that.' (p 113) Consider the following:

- ◊ Why do you think the Cape says this? What do you think real superheroes might need, if not a cape?
- ◊ Thinking about the Cape, and other superhero characters and stories you know, why do you think superheroes do indeed wear costumes? What might be the benefits of doing so in front of the public (eg anonymity, recognisable symbol)?
- ◊ Have a class discussion about popular superheroes and villains. Discuss their costumes and gadgets. Why do you think their creators selected certain symbols, colours and objects to associate with particular heroes and villains?
- 'Montague was realising being invisible isn't as easy as it might seem.' (p 39) Identify other instances in the novel where Monty and the Cape's superpowers don't work so smoothly? Do you think superheroes can rely on superpowers alone? What are some of the other characteristics/skills that Montague uses against evil and in difficult circumstances? Can you think of other attributes that may be useful for a hero to have?
- Montague is given six different superpowers over six days, each lasting only 24 hours. Why do you think the author chose this rather than give Monty fixed abilities? What storytelling opportunities does this create (eg humour, self-reflection)?
- Identify the common elements of a superhero story. Which of these are included in **The Incredible Powers of Montague Towers**? How does the novel celebrate superhero tale conventions as well as play with the reader's expectations of the genre? Find examples.
- 'Montague decided that the Cape of Justice was much easier to listen to when he was talking about the good old days. All his hesitations and vagueness disappeared, and a twinkle appeared in his eye.' (p 61) What do you think might be the reasons for this?
- Re-read Arthur Macarthur's letter (pp 159–161). Do you think that he is a good or bad person after reading this? Why? Do you think his reaction to events could be seen as understandable?



- Use the Arthur Macarthur plot and Bentwordle character to discuss nature and a modest life versus commodities and greed. Introduce students to other texts that explore these themes, such as Joni Mitchell's 'Big Yellow Taxi'.
- 'Crime is, you know, well, a strange thing ... The most unlikely people become caught up in it, in the most unlikely ways.' (p 64) Discuss this statement in relation to the novel. Consider Arthur Macarthur's story. Is 'right and wrong' always black and white? Do you think people in power and authorities are always fair and just?
- Why do you think heroes in stories are often orphans (Montague Towers, Batman, Superman, Harry Potter)? What might be some challenges that heroes face that don't involve supernatural elements?
- 'That's what they always say in books, and movies too. But this is no book. This is no movie. This is real. Of course I'll get away with it.' (p 206) Think about the books you read and movies you watch. Does good always win in the end? Do you think story outcomes differ from those in real life? Why or why not?
- Pick a superpower. Write a story about yourself or another person with this superpower. Some things to consider when writing your story are advantages/disadvantages of the power, other useful attributes, villains and allies, a character backstory, heroic challenge(s), costumes, jokes, possible catchphrases. Final stories can be collected into an anthology.
- Ask students to bring in a comic, or alternatively provide some for them. How is this medium different from a plain-text novel? Have students identify the features they see used in the comic form: mixed media (text and illustration), sound effect representations, different-sized panels, different fonts, varied balloon shapes, panel direction, captions, off-panel dialogue. Pick a spread and analyse how the techniques used convey particular meanings and effects.

