

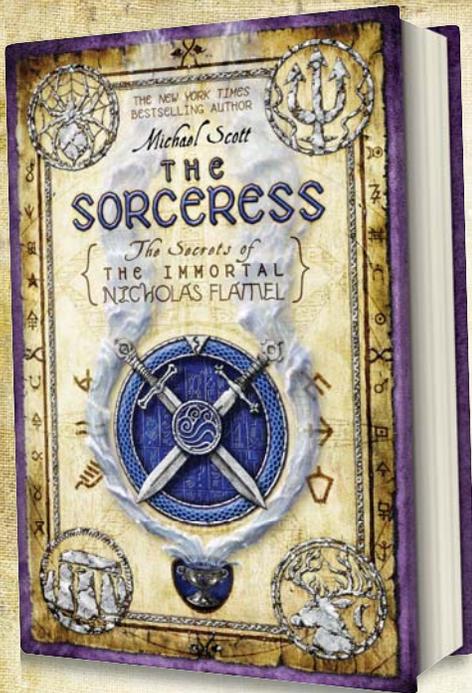
READERS GUIDE

Michael Scott

THE SORCERESS

The Secrets of
THE IMMORTAL
NICHOLAS FLATTEL





Grades 7 up
Delacorte Press HC • 978-0-385-73529-2
GLB • 978-0-385-90515-2
Listening Library unabridged CD • 978-0-7393-8055-0

ABOUT THE BOOK

Josh and Sophie Newman, 15-year-old twins, have been newly awakened to magical powers through their association with Nicholas Flamel, the immortal 14th-century alchemist. In *The Alchemyst* and *The Magician*, the twins accompany Flamel from their home in San Francisco to Paris, seeking ways to acquire the elemental powers of fire, wind, air, and water and to escape the Magician, Dr. John Dee, who follows them relentlessly. Flamel's powers and immortality are fading because Dee has stolen the codex, the magical book that contains the secrets of life.

In *The Sorceress*, Flamel's wife Perenelle has been imprisoned on Alcatraz Island by Dee. Through her own sorcery and cunning, Perenelle manages to stay alive until the team of Machiavelli and Billy the Kid arrives to finish her off. The reinforcements she expects—Scathach and Joan of Arc—have

become lost in time, but Perenelle finds unlikely help from another source.

Josh and Sophie acquire another elemental magic from the ancient Gilgamesh, aided by the Saracen Knight Palamedes and William Shakespeare. But time is running out for Nicholas and Perenelle Flamel because they are aging fast. Can they bring the twins to their full awakening before they lose their immortality?

PRE-READING ACTIVITIES

- ♀ The author introduces many characters in this series that are actual historical figures. Have students research the following names: Nicholas Flamel, Perenelle Flamel, Dr. John Dee, Juan Manuel de Ayala, Sebastien Le Prestre de Vauban, William Shakespeare, Niccoló Machiavelli, Billy the Kid. Make a chart of facts that can be proven about these people and the stories that have been told about them.
- ⚡ Special places play an important role in these books. Look up information about each of these places and discuss their special characteristics: Alcatraz Island, Mount Tam, Stonehenge, Notre Dame Cathedral.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- ♁ Why is Nicholas Flamel afraid to enter London? Why is it so important that he bring the twins to England?
- ✂ What does Nicholas mean when he says to Josh, “The line between confidence and arrogance is very fine . . . and the line between arrogance and stupidity even finer.” (p. 19) Where does Josh display arrogance and/or stupidity?
- ♁ The Genii Cucullati says “Humani no longer believe in our kind. That makes us invisible . . . and invulnerable.” (p. 19) What does the creature mean? How is Nicholas able to stop it?
- ♀ Dr. John Dee and Niccoló Machiavelli are called “uneasy allies.” (p. 25) What have you learned about them that explains why they detest each other and yet work together? Are they allies because of the Elders or because they share a common goal?
- ♁ What is the significance of the Ouroborus symbol that is used to summon Dee and Machiavelli? What is the importance of Litha, the Summer Solstice?
- ☉ Sophie muses, “Mankind simply didn’t want to believe that there was magic in the world. Not in this age of science and technology.” (p. 44) What recent events can you think of that may have been caused by a “magic” that mankind did not believe in?
- ♁ How do the twins feel when they learn that Sophie could be consumed by the Witch of Endor’s memories and that there have been other sets of twins in the past that Nicholas has tried to “awaken”? Is Nicholas sure that they are the true “twins of legend”?
- ♁ Discuss the ways in which Josh is affected by being awakened by Mars Ultor in the last book. How does he use his skill of strategy to fight the battles in this book? What does Sophie mean when she says, “Battles are won by men. Wars are won by strategists.” (p. 95) What does Josh remember his father saying to him that helps him in this battle?
- ♁ Why is Mars called Ultor, the Avenger? Why does Dee go back to the Catacombs to see Mars? What is the relationship of Mars to Bastet and to the Witch of Endor?
- ♁ What does Palamedes mean when he says that Dee is “that most dangerous of foes: he is absolutely confident that what he is doing is right.” (p. 70) Is Nicholas Flamel confident that everything he is doing is right? Why does Josh still feel admiration for Dee?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS (CONT.)

- 8 When Shakespeare says, “Remember, at the heart of all magic is imagination . . .” (p. 223) What does he mean? How does his magic skill differ from that of Nicholas or Dee? Why does he insist on fighting the Wild Hunt?
- ♃ Does Perenelle defeat her enemies more with sorcery or with cunning and intelligence? Why does she show compassion for the Morrigan and release it? Why is Nereus a threat to her?
- ♁ Compare the characters of Machiavelli and Billy the Kid. In what ways are they similar and in what ways are they different? Do they trust one another? How is Perenelle able to trick them when they come to Alcatraz?
- ♁ What does Josh learn about Dee when their swords connect?
- ♁ Perenelle tells the ghost of de Ayala that she and Nicholas could have destroyed Dee when they fought him at other times, but they did not. What stopped them? Why does Perenelle say, “Immortality is a curse”? (p. 314)
- ♁ What part does Gilgamesh play in the story? Why does he have the magic of water? How is water both the lifegiver and the deathbringer, as Gilgamesh says? Discuss why water may be more important than earth, air, or fire.
- ♁ What does Gilgamesh mean when he says, “It is only when no one remembers that you are truly lost and forgotten. That is the true death.” (p. 397) Why is he portrayed in the present as a homeless person?
- ♁ What does Palamedes mean when he says, “Impatience and stupidity claim more victims than any weapon”? (p. 440) Why does Josh not go back for the sword Clarent? What has Josh learned in the course of this book?
- ♁ Machiavelli prides himself on his cunning. He knows there are disagreements among the Dark Elders and says that it “reminded him of the good old days of the Borgias.” (p. 372) What does he mean?
- ♁ The twins, Josh and Sophie, are often referred to as “the two that are one; the one that is all.” (p. 483) What does Gilgamesh mean when he uses that phrase to refer to the swords in the final chapter?

POST-READING ACTIVITIES

- ♀ Michael Scott has said that “Every story starts with an idea, but it is the characters that move that idea forward.” Discuss the ideas, or themes, in this story, and how the characters move those ideas forward.
- ♁ Discuss your predictions for the next volume in the series. How will Scathach and Joan escape from the past? How will Perenelle aid the twins? Will Nicholas and Perenelle survive to help the twins to their full awakening?
- ♂ This series of books imagines an Elder Race of ancient beings that existed before the human race and are around today, plotting to take over the world. What other books and films have you encountered that have similar beings and how do they compare to the Elders of this series?

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

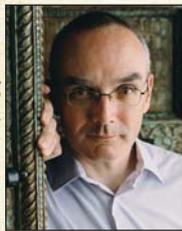


Photo Credit © Perry Hagepian.

MICHAEL SCOTT is one of Ireland’s most successful authors. He writes for both adults and young adults. A master of fantasy, science fiction, horror, mythology, and folklore, he was hailed by the *Irish Times* as “the King of Fantasy in these isles.” He lives and writes in Dublin, Ireland. Learn more about Michael Scott at www.dillonscott.com

INTERNET RESOURCES

Alcatraz Island
www.nps.gov/alcatraz/

Mt. Tamalpais State Park
www.mttam.net

Stonehenge
www.britannia.com/history/h7.html

Encyclopedia Mythica
www.pantheon.org

The Alchemy Lab: Nicholas Flamel
www.alchemylab.com/flamel.htm

The John Dee Society
www.johndee.org



www.thealchemist.com
www.randomhouse.com/teachers

Prepared by Connie Rockman, Children’s Literature Consultant, adjunct professor of children’s and young adult literature, and editor of the H. W. Wilson Junior Book of Authors and Illustrators series.

Random House Children’s Books • School and Library Marketing
1745 Broadway, Mail Drop 10-4 • New York, NY 10019 • 05/09