

ABOUT ASHTOWN BURIALS



THE SMITH FAMILY may have an ordinary name but they don't have an ordinary life. Cyrus and Antigone have been raised by their older brother, Daniel, ever since they lost their dad and their mother fell into a coma. But that all changes when a bizarre man named Billy Bones arrives, bearing their inheritance: a set of magical keys. The younger Smiths set out on a quest to understand their family heritage, a quest that includes joining an ancient order of immortal explorers that has members from both history and mythology, such as Amelia Earhart, Ponce de León, and Arachne of Greek mythology. Their enemies? Also immortals of historical and mythological note. The wildly imaginative plot, epic world-building, and a cast of characters who have stepped out of the past make Ashtown a series that adventure and book lovers should not miss!

CONNECTING TO COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS

The Standards used in this guide are examples from the fifth grade. If teaching another grade, you may want to visit the Common Core State Standards website at CoreStandards.org to locate the equivalent standards for your grade.

SPEAKING AND LISTENING STANDARDS

Comprehension and Collaboration

- 1a. Come to discussions having read or studied required material; explicitly draw on that preparation and other information known about the topic to explore ideas under discussion.
- 1b. Pose and respond to specific questions by making comments that contribute to the discussion and elaborate on the remarks of others.

READING STANDARDS FOR LITERATURE

Key Ideas and Details

- RL 1. Quote accurately from a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.
- RL 2. Determine a theme of a story, drama, or poem from details in the text, including how characters in a story or drama respond to challenges or how the speaker in a poem reflects upon a topic; summarize the text.
- RL 3. Compare and contrast two or more characters, settings, or events in a story or drama, drawing on specific details in the text.

Craft and Structure

- RL 4. Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative language such as metaphors and similes.
- RL 6. Describe how a narrator's or speaker's point of view influences how events are described.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Mark LaMoreaux



N. D. WILSON is the bestselling author of the 100 Cupboards series and *Leepike Ridge*. Now he writes at the top of a tall, skinny house, where he lives with a blue-eyed girl he stole from the ocean, their five young explorers, two tortoises, and one snake.

IN HIS OWN WORDS

When I was young, I loved Narnia and Middle-earth. I still do. But something always bothered me about those fantastic stories, something about me. I was American. I grew up running through wheat fields, playing baseball, climbing in haylofts, and worming my way through the chutes of old, rusted-out combines. And I loved all that too. But who I was didn't seem to fit with the stories that fed me.

Now that I'm able to write my own stories, I can bring those two parts of my imagination together—the part that dreamed of wardrobes, and the part that shot at crop-dusters with a cork gun. Magic can find you behind an old barn in Kansas. Ancient mysteries might just be hidden beneath the ridge beside your slow, American creek. At least that's where the adventure begins.

ALSO BY N. D. WILSON



COMING SOON: *Muck Flats*

ASHTOWN BURIALS

Educator Guide
Grades 3–7

Includes Common Core State Standards Correlations



★ “Wildly imaginative
and action-packed.” —*Publishers Weekly*, Starred

THE DRAGON'S TOOTH



BOOK TALK

For two years, Cyrus and Antigone Smith have lived with their oldest brother, Daniel, in a dilapidated hotel. Then a strange old man who calls himself Billy Bones arrives and changes everything the Smiths have ever known about their past. He gives them magical keys and a tooth with powers beyond their wildest imagination. Less than twenty-four hours later, Billy Bones is dead. The motel has burned, and Daniel is missing. Determined to save their brother, Cyrus and Antigone join an order of explorers who have long served as caretakers of the world's secrets, keepers of powerful relics and jailers to immortal criminals who have terrorized the world for millennia.

The Dragon's Tooth

PB: 978-0-375-86396-7 • HC: 978-0-375-86439-1 • EL: 978-0-375-89572-2

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What is life like at the Archer Motel before Billy Bones shows up? How does his appearance change everything for Cyrus and Antigone?
2. What does Billy Bones give to Cyrus? Describe the objects and their magical powers. Which would you most like to have? Why?
3. Describe Ashtown. Why must the kids get there within a certain time? What obstacles do they face on their journey? Which characters help them once they've arrived and have accepted the oath?
4. Why is their path more difficult than most acolytes, to the order? What must they learn to become full members and be able to accept their inheritance?
5. Describe the battle and the results of it in the end. Which characters are true allies? Which ones are false? What happens with their mother and brother? Did they meet the standards for acolytes? What will happen next?

READING STRATEGY FOCUS

POINT OF VIEW: The view from which a story is told
In reading partners, discuss how the story would

be different if told through the eyes of each of the characters listed in the chart below.

DR. PHOENIX	DANIEL	BILLY BONES	NOLAN	RUPERT

DISCUSS: How does point of view influence what a reader thinks or understands about events and other characters in the story?

VOCABULARY: Use the following words in these sentences. Good readers can often use the context to figure out the meaning of words.

allies underprivileged solemnly
shivered quivering

1. But I can swear to you as _____ as a judge, they will not find him.
2. The station wagon rocked and smoked in the _____ air.
3. You are in desperate need of _____.
4. Turning away before his brother could answer he _____ out into the rain.
5. This is a terrific opportunity for a pair of _____ siblings.

THE DROWNED VAULT



BOOK TALK

Many at Ashtown are calling Cyrus and Antigone failures, or worse, traitors. They have lost the Dragon's Tooth to Dr. Phoenix, who is using it to murder the long-lived heroes known as the transmortals. Desperate to make things right, the pair set off to find the Dragon's Tooth only to come face to face with an epic, evil force of mythological proportions. Can they steal back the Dragon's Tooth and survive to return it? And will they be able to save their friends, themselves, and their reputation?

The Drowned Vault

PB: 978-0-375-86397-4 • HC: 978-0-375-86440-7 • GLB: 978-0-375-96440-4 • EL: 978-0-375-89573-9

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. At the beginning of the story, what have Cyrus and Antigone lost? How does this make others feel about them? How does this affect how Cyrus and Antigone feel about themselves? Why do you think they feel that way?
2. Cyrus and Antigone live in new rooms in Ashtown. Can you describe the rooms? Who used to live there? Do Cyrus and Antigone like living there? Why or why not?
3. How do the Smiths and their friends try to defeat Dr. Phoenix? What obstacles do they encounter?
4. Who does Cyrus free from an underwater grave? What must Cyrus do in order to free this person? What tools does he use?
5. Who is Oliver? How is he important to this story? How has Oliver changed by the end of the novel?

READING STRATEGY FOCUS

ASKING QUESTIONS: Answering discussion questions is a great way to help us uncover what a story is about. But discussion questions don't always have to come from a textbook or a teacher! Asking our own questions about the story and trying to answer those questions can help to make us better readers.

TRY IT OUT! Have your students come up with their own questions about the novel that help them learn more about the story. Fill in the following blanks to help. Have your students swap their questions and answer each others. When they are done have them discuss what they learned.

Who _____?

What _____?

Where _____?

When _____?

Why _____?

How _____?

EMPIRE OF BONES



BOOK TALK

Hunted and on the run, Cyrus and Antigone search for allies, while rampaging transmortal fight to open every Burial at Ashtown and release ancient powers. Meanwhile, the criminal Dr. Phoenix, freshly risen from the ashes of his old body, promotes chaos and the birth of his engineered new race even as radical members of the Order work to unleash long-forbidden weapons. Cyrus and Antigone must solve the puzzle left by Billy Bones, who made them his heirs. But what did they inherit, exactly? Will it be enough to stop the evil nemesis and the extraordinary powers he holds?

Empire of Bones

HC: 978-0-375-86441-4 • GLB: 978-0-375-96441-1 • EL: 978-0-375-89574-6

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why is the Smith family on the run? What wounds do they carry (both physical and mental) from their previous battle with Dr. Phoenix? Who else must they worry about now?
2. How do they finally solve the puzzle of the paper globes? What will they actually inherit from Billy Bones?
3. What does Dan dream about his brother, Cyrus? How would you feel if someone believed this was possible of you? Do you think it could influence Cyrus's choices?
4. Describe the way Radu Bey is gaining power as seen through the eyes of a mail delivery girl, Mercy Rios. What does he feed on? How can he be defeated? Where do Rupert and Cyrus go? Who do they "drop" along the way and why? List the chain of events that happen because of their visit.
5. Describe the last battle of the book. Who would you consider to be victorious? What weapons and powers were used and by whom? Which part was your favorite and why?

READING STRATEGY FOCUS

ALLIES AND ENEMIES: "Look to the motives and what you know about character." This is Rupert's advice to Cyrus in chapter 8 as they fly toward their fate. It's really great advice for him and for readers, too. If you understand a character's motive (or desire) then you can predict how they might act. Fill out the following chart as you read the novel and identify a key quote that proves whether that character acts as an ally or enemy to the Smith family.

CHARACTER:	MOTIVE:	ALLY OR ENEMY:	PROOF:
ARACHNE			
BONIFACE			
RUPERT			
FLINT			
NOLAN			
DIANA BOONE			
GILGAMESH			
RADU BEY			
NIFFY			
STERLING			
QUICK			