

A Curriculum Guide to

Keeper of the Lost Cities, Book Four: *Neverseen*

By Shannon Messenger

About the Book

Sophie and four of her best friends are on the run again! With help from the mysterious Black Swan rebels, they avoid punishment from the elves' council at a secret location. After a short break to strengthen their abilities, the five plunge back into danger as they seek a cure to the plague that's devastating the gnomes. Their pursuit leads them to bleak Exillium, a school for wayward teens, and then in Ravagog, the land of the ogres. Who can they trust? Can they even trust each other? Sophie makes new friends and allies but loses others in the perilous quest to make her adopted magical world a better place.

Discussion Questions

Setting

These discussion questions align with the following English Language Arts Common Core State Standards: (RL.4–7.1)

1. Sophie stays in Alluveterre for a while, thanks to the Black Swan. What is Alluveterre like and how does she get there? Who is with Sophie in Alluveterre? Who does she meet there? Describe what life is like for Sophie and her friends in their new home.
2. Why do Sophie and her friends go to Exillium? Describe the school, its coaches, its students, and its curriculum. What are some of the results of their time at Exillium? How does Sophie help the school?
3. Sophie and her friends secretly enter Ravagog to find the cure for the plague. Explain who lives there and what Ravagog is like. What is the relationship between the ogres of Ravagog and the Neverseen?

Character

These discussion questions align with the following English Language Arts Common Core State Standards: (RL.4–7.1, 3)

4. Keefe changes over the course of the story. What are the problems he's dealing with? Describe some of his emotions, giving specific examples. Talk about his decisions at the end of the book related to Sophie and the Neverseen, and why you think he made them.
5. In the end, Calla sacrifices herself and says she's happy to do it. Describe her in terms of appearance, personality, and skills. How does she help Sophie? Why does Calla make the sacrifice and what are its results?

6. Tam becomes an important character in the story. Describe what he's like when Sophie first meets him and why the friends have doubts about him. What are his powers? What does he have in common with Sophie?
7. Provide examples of Linh's power and when it proves important. Analyze the relationship between Linh and Tam, who are twins. How do they help each other? Name times when they disagree.
8. Della stows away on the trip through Florence. How does she manage it, and why does she want to accompany Sophie and her friends? Describe Della's personality, her skills, and the role she plays in the plot.
9. Alvar turns out to have a surprising secret. What do Sophie and the rest learn about him? Discuss why he might have made the choice he did about the Neverseen. Does the story provide any foreshadowing about his secret?

Plot

These discussion questions align with the following English Language Arts Common Core State Standards: (RL.4–7.1) (RL.5–6.5)

10. Sophie learns more about the Black Swan in the course of the story. Explain what she learns, including the identities of some of the Black Swan collective. How does her view of the Black Swan change?
11. Describe the origins and purpose of Project Moonlark, pointing to specific evidence in the text. What is a moonlark and why was the project named for it? Discuss places where the project and moonlarks come up in the novel.
12. Why does Oralie give Kenric's cache to Sophie? Give details about the cache and its history. Talk about the times that the cache is significant in the story and what makes it important. How else do secrets affect the plot?
13. Give a step-by-step description of how Sophie and her allies infiltrate Ravagog to try to get the cure for the plague. What role does each of the friends play? How do they use their strengths and work together? Discuss how successful their actions are.

Theme

These discussion questions align with the following English Language Arts Common Core State Standards: (RL.4–7.2, 3)

14. Oralie says Kenric believed Sophie was “the spark of change our world needed.” What do you think Kenric meant? Discuss how Sophie could be the spark of change. Talk about times that one person in history sparks an important positive change.
15. When Sophie is annoyed with Timkin, she remembers Mr. Forkle saying that their world needs checks and balances. She thinks, “Why shouldn't the Black Swan have similar

voices of opposition?” Identify different characters in the book who provide voices of opposition at different times and discuss whether those voices are helpful

16. Sophie says to Keefe, “What I’m trying to realize is that it’s okay to be different.” What prompts her to say this to him? Discuss ways that the two of them feel different from their friends. How can being different prove to be an asset?

Language

These discussion questions align with the following English Language Arts Common Core State Standards: (RL.4–7.4, 6)

17. The author uses strong verbs to paint vivid pictures of action in this story. Choose an exciting scene in the novel and write down its strong verbs. Analyze how the verbs help energize the scene.
18. Identify the narrative point of view and why the author made that choice. How would the novel have been different as a first-person narrative? What does the extended use of italics signify in the text?

Extension Activities

Florence: The Cradle of the Renaissance

Sophie and her friends encounter famous historic aspects of Florence, Italy. As a class, make a list of those aspects such as landmarks, artwork, or people. Have students, working in pairs or small groups, choose one aspect of Florence and research it. They should share their findings with the class in a multimedia presentation.

Take a Trip

Share some travel articles from newspapers and magazines with your students. Then have each of them write a travel article as if they had visited some of the places Sophie encounters in the novel. They should draw on descriptions in the story and add to them, using vivid language. Have students share their articles in small groups.

Is a Much Longer Life Better?

The elves and other creatures live much longer than humans. Mr. Forkle reflects that if humans lived longer and “could see a bigger picture, they would not destroy themselves and their planet in the same way.” Have students discuss this idea in small groups and come up with a list of five pros and five cons of humans living for hundreds of years.

Wave the Banner High

Sophie and her friends receive pins that correspond to their abilities. Have students choose one of the magical abilities like Telepath, Empath, Technopath, and so on. The student should design a colorful banner that expresses the ability, with the option of incorporating the colors and symbols of the pins. Hang the banners and have students explain their choices.

Sophie’s Journal

Have students write entries about the last five chapters of the book that Sophie might write in her journal. The entries should mention events and focus on how Sophie feels about them. Have them include an entry for after the book is ended that expresses what Sophie thinks will happen next.

Guide written by Kathleen Odean, a former school librarian and Chair of the 2002 Newbery Award Committee. She gives professional development workshops on books for young people and is the author of Great Books for Girls and Great Books about Things Kids Love.

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