

A Classroom Guide to the Bestselling Series

RANGER'S APPRENTICE

by
John Flanagan

Curriculum
Connections,
Discussion
Questions,
& Extension
Activities

APPRENTICE TO ONE,
HERO TO ALL

PRAISE & ACCLAIM FOR THE RANGER'S APPRENTICE SERIES

★ "Flanagan expertly juggles the overall plot line . . . that culminates in a hard, suspenseful battle."

—*Kirkus Reviews*, starred review

"With fast pacing, plenty of action, sympathetic characters and entertaining dialogue, this knightly adventure offers readers enjoyment without condescension."

—*Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books*

★ "The last few years have seen the publication of many fantasies, but few have the appeal of this original story."

—*Booklist*, starred review

"An exciting tale of battle and honor."

—*Publishers Weekly*

"The well-paced plot moves effortlessly toward the climax, letting readers get to know the world and the characters gradually as excitement builds. A pleasing finish should leave readers eager to share the future adventures of the Ranger's apprentice."

—*School Library Journal*

★ "A winning formula that should prove out to a long, steady run for this series."

—*Kirkus Reviews*, starred review

"Flanagan's deft character portrayals and well-paced story will engage readers, and the ending will leave them clamoring for the next volume."

—*Booklist*

"Will's vivid world will entice fantasy readers who are drawn by the lure of high adventure carried out by believable, down-to-earth heroes."

—*Booklist*

A Classroom Guide to the RANGER'S APPRENTICE SERIES by John Flanagan

WITH ITS BREATHLESS PACE, CAPTIVATING STORYLINE, AND SUSPENSEFUL ADVENTURE, the Ranger's Apprentice series by John Flanagan has truly made its mark on young readers. Perfect for boys and girls alike, the books in this series have proven to be excellent choices for reluctant readers *and* avid book lovers. The materials included in this booklet will help you introduce the series into your classroom lesson plans. From ideas for leading book clubs and literature circles to character studies and historical research projects, the enclosed activity prompts will inspire you to enter the world of Ranger's Apprentice—a series that is not only classroom compatible but classroom—and student!—friendly as well.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Get to know the author, John Flanagan! Begin your literature study of the Ranger's Apprentice series with an author study unit. Visit his websites, read his bio, and enjoy the entertaining and informative Q&A we've included in this booklet.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Pair or group your students and let them express and defend their opinions on all six Ranger's Apprentice books and on the series as a whole. Discussion questions are included for all six books.

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

Enrich your Ranger's Apprentice-based classroom unit by taking advantage of the extension activities we've included for each book in the series.

CLASSROOM CONNECTIONS: READING, WRITING, AND RESEARCHING

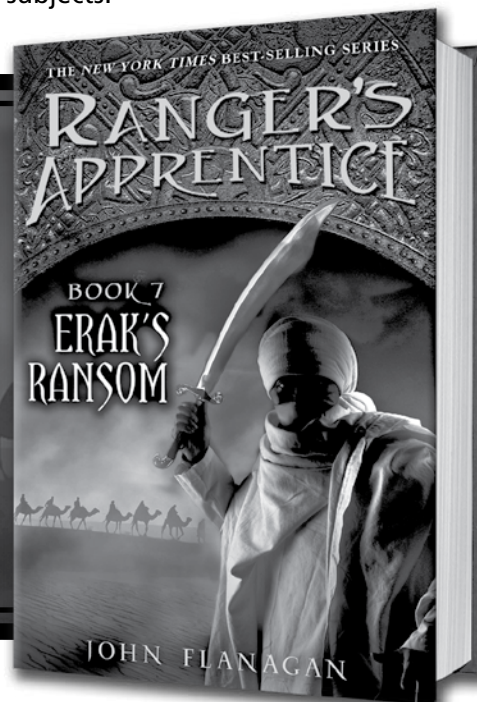
Encourage group and independent projects across all areas of classroom study with reading, writing, and research activities. From history and language arts to multimedia and creative writing, the Ranger's Apprentice series provides the perfect opportunity to introduce trade books into classroom learning and required curriculum subjects.

SPECIAL SNEAK PEEK!

An Insider's First Look at

Book 7: Erak's Ransom

How far does loyalty take you? If you're a Ranger, the boundaries are endless. In this epic new adventure in the global bestselling series, time takes a step back—to when Will was still an apprentice. After Erak, the Skandian leader, is kidnapped, Will, Halt, the young warrior Horace, and the princess Evelyn venture to lands unknown to rescue their new ally. The desert is brutal, unforgiving, and home to tribes that will just as soon kill a foreigner as look at him. For Will, lost and on the verge of death after a sandstorm, survival has never been more precious. But he will need to do more than just survive if he is to save his friends from an unspeakable fate.



Available Spring 2010!

Visit www.penguin.com/teachersandlibrarians
for a sneak peek at the first chapter of Book 7!



About the Author

A former advertising and television writer, JOHN FLANAGAN is now known for writing the Ranger's Apprentice fantasy books for young readers. Flanagan grew up in Sydney, Australia, took to writing early, and eventually caught on as an ad agency writer. Later he moved to television and, with co-writer Gary Reilly, created the sitcom Hey Dad! The show was a long-running hit on Australian TV. Initially, Flanagan was inspired to write the Ranger's Apprentice series as a series of short stories to encourage his son to read (the character of Will is loosely based on him). Mr. Flanagan currently lives in the northern beach suburb of Manly in Sydney, Australia, with his wife. When he's not writing books, he enjoys playing his guitar and mandolin, scooting around his neighborhood on his 150 cc motor scooter, paddling his kayak around Sydney Harbor, and spending time with his four grandchildren.

Visit www.rangersapprentice.com and www.penguiun.com/rangersapprentice to learn more about John Flanagan and the Ranger's Apprentice series.

Get to Know Author John Flanagan

Q: What inspired you to write the Ranger's Apprentice series?

A: Originally, I wrote a set of short stories for my son Michael, to get him interested in reading. This was many years ago and I set them aside. About ten years later, I found them again and decided to turn them into a book. I didn't realize that book would become a series of (currently) 8 volumes.

Q: In the series, the Rangers serve as a special intelligence force to the king of Araluen; what was your inspiration for this elite troop?

A: A lot of people assume I was influenced by the Rangers in Lord of the Rings. Actually, my rangers were based on two groups: The Texas Rangers, a small group whose influence and reputation far outweighed their numbers, and the U.S. Army Rangers of World War II. The U.S. Rangers were modeled on the British Commandos, but I thought Ranger was a better term for a medieval setting.

Q: How has your vision of the series changed as it's developed throughout the books?

A: I'm not sure that it has. The characters have grown and developed, as have their relationships with one another. But that's their doing. I'm just the chronicler. I do as they tell me.

Q: What are the biggest challenges of writing a series?

A: Finding a good spot to break between two books, without having people howl at me, "That's a terrible cliffhanger!" There has to be a sense of completion, but at the same time, a sense that the story will continue.

Q: Do you have a favorite character? If so, who is it and why?

A: Well, it'd be easy to say Halt. Most people like him. And he does amuse me. At the moment, I'm quite partial to Tug. But overall, I like Horace. He's very useful and a linear thinker, as opposed to what I call Will's butterfly mind. He provides a necessary balance and common sense.

Q: How many books do you anticipate there will be in the series?

A: I haven't set a limit. If I have an idea that will progress the characters, I'll write it. But I don't want to find myself jumping up and down on the same spot, as it were.

Q: While the setting for the Ranger's Apprentice series is a mythical world, there are many similarities to the real world around the time of the middle ages in England, Europe, and Scandinavia. What inspired you to place your story in such a similar setting?

A: I grew up in Australia through the 50s and 60s. At that time, we were steeped in English and European culture and history. Our books tended to be English, not American. In addition, I loved reading mythology – Greek and Norse – and military stories. I guess I've always been interested in military subjects. In the 50s, it seemed that everyone who participated in World War II put out a memoir. I read most of them.

Q: Many of the adventures the characters encounter are great action sequences with detailed fighting scenes. Did you spend a great deal of time researching to get those battle scenes accurate?

A: My research has been ongoing for most of my life. As I said, I've always been interested by military history and well-researched novels with a military background.

Q: In most traditional stories that involve a hero's journey, the hero's mentor must die for the hero to complete his growth. Do you agree that this is necessary?

A: If this is a trick question to get me to tell you what happens in Book 9, it's not going to work. But no, I don't think it's necessary. It might make for a strong dramatic concept.

Q: Though your American fan base is largely boys, there are a growing number of girls who are reading and enjoying your books. What elements of the series do you believe attract female readers?

A: I'm not sure I agree that the fan base is largely boys. Easily 50% of the emails I receive are from girls. The first two fan letters I received were from two girls in Victoria, Australia. They still write to me. I think girls like the strong female characters in the books. And Will is a pretty attractive hero, as well.

Q: What's the best part of writing for adolescents and teens?

A: They're more willing than adults to get on the net and e-mail you, telling you what they like and don't like about the books. So far, luckily, I've had more likes than dislikes. But it definitely keeps you in touch with your audience in a way unknown to authors of an earlier generation.

Q: What do you believe are the underlying themes or universal truths to be found in the Ranger's Apprentice series?

A: I set out to entertain. Now you want truths and themes? I guess the eventual triumph of good over evil. I don't know that it always happens, but it should. Then there's loyalty, courage, and the sense that anyone can do anything if they really set their minds to it.



Book 5: The Sorcerer of the North

Several years have passed since the apprentice and his master, Will and Halt, first met, and Will is finally a full-fledged Ranger with his own fief to look after. The fief seems sleepy—boring, even—until Lord Syron, master of a castle far in the north, is struck down by a mysterious illness. Joined by his friend Alyss, Will is suddenly thrown headfirst into an extraordinary adventure, investigating fears of sorcery and trying to determine who is loyal to Lord Syron. As Will battles growing hysteria, traitors, and most of all, time, Alyss is taken hostage, and Will is forced to make a desperate choice between his mission and his friend.

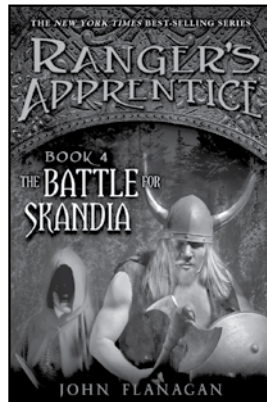
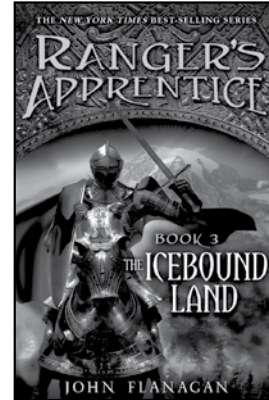
Discussion Questions

- Upon arrival at his assignment as the new Ranger in the fief of Seaclyff, Will discovers that the military have not prepared themselves adequately. Why does Will feel this is a dangerous situation? Do you agree with his assessment?
- After adopting an abandoned and abused dog, Will struggles to name her. Why might this decision be such a difficult task for him? Does this indicate anything about his character?
- Why does Will choose to travel disguised as a jongleur rather than in his Ranger's gear? What does he hope to accomplish? Do you think he'd be more successful if he were more forthcoming about who he really is? Why or why not?
- Although Alyss serves as a helpful ally to Will in his investigation, he seems concerned about her presence at Macindaw Castle. Why is he fearful? Predict and share what you believe could happen to Alyss.
- The "Black Art" believed to be practiced by Malkallam is blamed for Lord Syron's illness. Do you agree? Why or why not?

Extension Activities

- As a way to disguise himself so that he can be more successful in his investigation, Will poses as a jongleur as he travels to the north to investigate. Research the role of the jongleur in history; what did these people do? What purpose did they serve and who was their chief audience? Be sure to consider the descriptions in the text of how Will carries out this disguise. Using the details learned through this study, draw a comparison between a traditional jongleur and Will's portrayal of one.
- In *The Sorcerer of the North*, elements of superstitious beliefs abound. All characters are affected in some manner; for example, the villagers refuse to travel into the forests because they believe a sorcerer controls the land. Research medieval superstitions. What were some of the most common ones? How are these similar to those presented in the novel?
- Some of the villagers believe Lord Syron's mysterious illness might be caused by his son, Orman. He is mistrusted because he is a self-proclaimed scholar who spends his time studying rather than serving as a warrior and leader of men. Investigate the role of scholars during the medieval era. Who were the traditional scholars of the time? What is the major difference between their scholarship and that of Orman's?
- Use the Internet to find examples of character analysis charts and create a character map for one of the following characters: Orman, Keren, or Malkallam. Be sure to consider the textual evidence presented about your selected character in *The Sorcerer of the North*.

Classroom Connections: reading, writing, and researching



Creativity-based Prompts

**Perform a
Readers'
Theater!**

**Create
movie
trailers!**

**Make a
battle map!**

- Write and perform a Readers' Theater production of one of the six books in the Ranger's Apprentice series. Assign each student a different part to play—whether they're an actor or the narrator or part of the set crew, encourage the whole class to get involved! Have a group of students design a playbill with a summary of the story action, the names of the characters, bios of the actors, etc. Then invite students' parents' and other classes in your school to attend the performance!
- Previews of coming attractions in the movie industry are known as trailers. After putting students in groups, have them design a book trailer for the Ranger's Apprentice series or for a particular book in the series. Begin by having them create a storyboard, detailing which scenes they intend to incorporate in to their trailer. Before filming, have students create a script, select costumes and props. Next, have them create the book trailer using the Microsoft's Photo Story program. Post the finished trailers to Youtube.com or Teachertube.com or host a "Night at the Movies" in your school library and invite students to bring their families to watch their trailers.
- Using textual details from one of the novels, have students create a topical map of an important battle well as any other important story content. Allow students to preview the maps created by John Flanagan and found at www.rangersapprentice.com.

Character-based Prompts

Learn life lessons!

- Encourage your students to make thematic connections! Have students consider the following themes: *loyalty*, *courage*, *ingenuity*, and *perseverance*. Place students in small groups, and assign each group a theme to consider. Next, have them find examples from the books in the series that support this theme. Create a sample Life Lesson Chart filling in information under the following column headers: *Theme*, *Supporting Evidence from Text*, *How Does This Theme Relate to My Life?* After modeling this lesson, have each group create a Life Lesson Chart about their featured theme.

Discover your dream job!

- Though Will's slight physique keeps him out of Battleschool, his first choice for apprenticeship, his build turns out to be just the ticket for Ranger work, which combines survival skills and keen powers of observation with the ability to move about unseen. Have students create a chart noting the different qualities needed for each trade. Given the options afforded to these characters, which career would they be most interested in pursuing? Begin by having them list ten skills they possess or qualities about themselves (example: "I am good at listening to others" or "I am quick to solve problems"). Next, have them consider their career options and then create a basic résumé and letter of interest explaining their qualifications for the career for which they would be most interested.

Design a T-shirt!

- One of the strengths of the Ranger's Apprentice series is the number of fully realized characters. Have students select a favorite character and create a character analysis T-shirt. Have them identify the literary elements used by the author to describe the character, and then create a visual representation of the character traits. The front of the T-shirt must include the book title, author name, and the character's name, picture, and description. The right sleeve must list the character's strengths and the left sleeve should list the character's weaknesses. List internal and external conflicts, figurative language, and the story's climax on the back of the T-shirt.

Creative writing!

- Alyss, Horace, Will, and Evanlyn all take steps toward independence. Alyss must go on her first independent mission and stand up to rude landholders. Horace and Will are left to fend for themselves when Gilan rides back to the castle alone. They learn to trust themselves and their decisions. Evanlyn has to pretend to be mately leads them to greater independence. Provide your students with the following writing prompt: *Think of a time in your life when you've had to do something new. Maybe the experience was a little frightening or maybe you had to try something on your own for the first time.* Create a flip book with a panel for each of the young characters and one for yourself. Write the characters' names on the front of each flap and one for yourself. On the underside of each panel, write one full paragraph detailing what that character did in the book to gain independence and have more self confidence. Go back to *The Burning Bridge* and find a quote that supports your statements about each character. Parenthetically include a quote from you or someone you know about your experience.



Additional Classroom Connections:

reading, writing, and researching

Research-based Prompts

Create an historical trading card!

- In *The Ruins of Gorlan*, while discussing Will's father, Halt tells Will, "Don't judge a man by his position in life." To what extent does our family history drive our ambitions and pursuits? Have students choose a historical figure who also came from humble beginnings and research how their choices and actions guided them to achieve greatness. Next, have students create a double-sided baseball-style trading card which features the following elements: image or photo of person and biographical information, including date of birth, death, where they resided, and important contributions.

Design your own code of chivalry!

- In *The Icebound Land*, Horace rides with Halt to find Will. As they travel across the country, Horace learns what it is to become a knight. Through this process he understands more about honor, loyalty, and courage. Although when he first gets his shield, he uses it as a front for others to see him as a knight, he quickly adapts to his new station. Using the Internet, have students research Codes of Chivalry. After reading the statements of belief that knights lived by, have students select four in which they also believe. Next, have them write an essay in which they explain why they chose the four codes and how they honor those codes in their lives today. Finally, have them create or draw a coat of arms for the shield that would be theirs if they were a knight. The four beliefs must be symbolically represented in each quadrant of the shield. Have them come prepared to explain what the symbols represent and how they relate to their beliefs.

Research famous heroes!

- Many of the characters in the Ranger's Apprentice series face opportunities to make decisions that have profound impact on others. By choosing to act, they save the life of another. An example from *The Icebound Land* is Erak's choice to assist Evanlyn and Will run away. Why would he do this? What risk does he take on by helping them? Research people in history who have put themselves at great risk by helping others escape. Create a PowerPoint featuring a famous rescuer. Consider the following: general biographical information (where the person was born, lived, etc.), life before making the decision to rescue, who were the people most affected by the rescue, what was life like for the rescuer after making this decision, consequences of actions). Have students present to each other, and as a culminating activity, have students create a journal about commonalities among these rescuers.

Create a medieval newspaper!

- While the setting of the Ranger's Apprentice is a mythical world, it parallels the time period most recognized as the Middle Ages. Using what they've learned from the novels and research, have students create a medieval newspaper. Divide students in pairs and have each pair select a topic of research. Possible topics include knighthood, the Black Death, fortress systems, tournaments, medieval music, medieval games, and medieval medicine. Each pair will write an article pertaining to their research area, and after undergoing revision and editing, articles can be assembled into a newspaper.

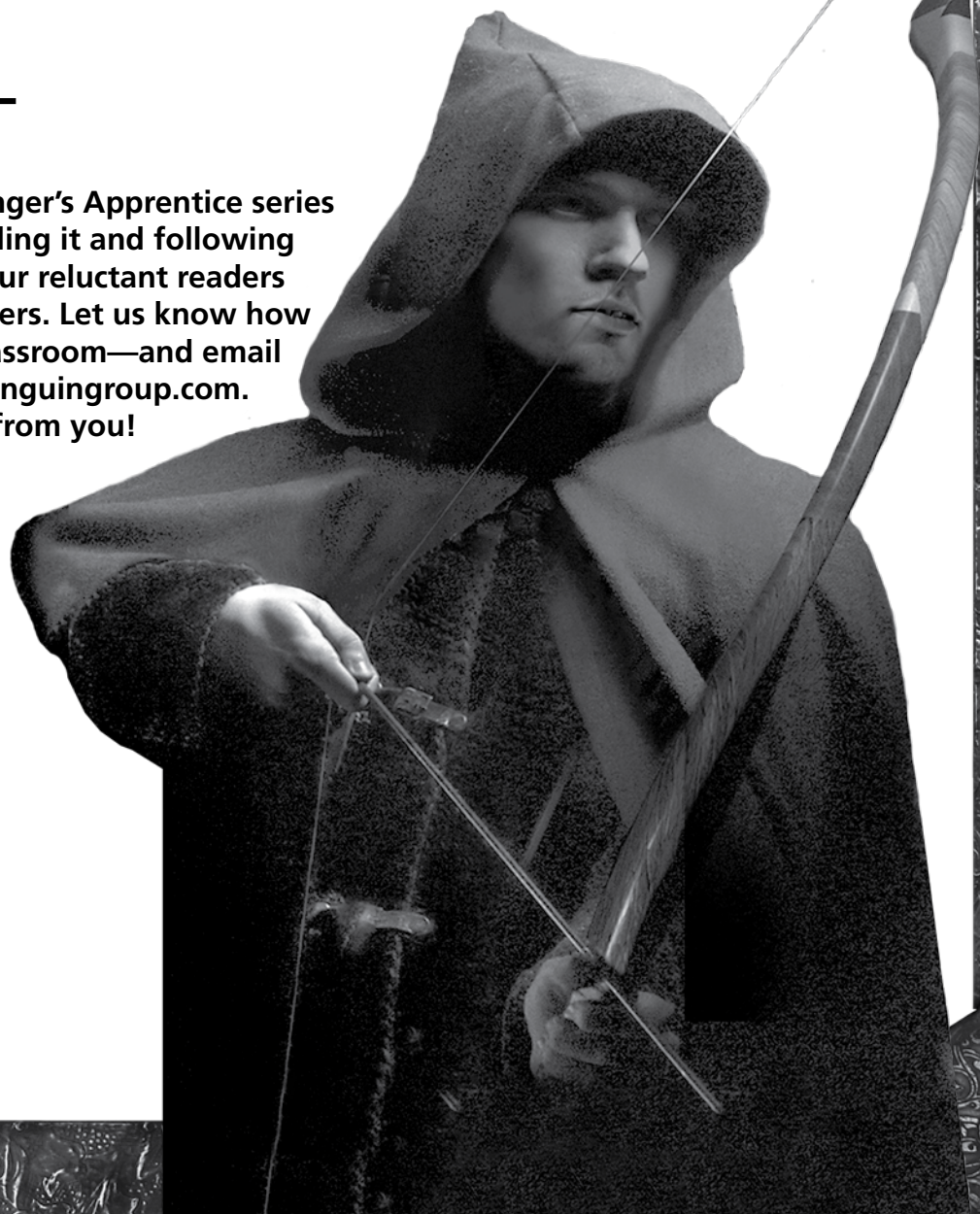
**Research
slavery &
serfdom**

- After Will and Evanlyn arrive in Skandia, they are sold into slavery by the Jarl, Erak. While Evanlyn is assigned to work as a kitchen servant, Will is sent assigned a position in the yard, the most dangerous of all of the slave assignments. Flanagan paints a disturbing portrait of slavery, where slaves are coerced by other slaves, and stupefying drugs are used to keep them under control. Have students consider the following:
 - While slavery didn't exist in most of Europe in the Middle Ages, much of the peasant population was bound by a feudal arrangement known as serfdom. Research the institution of serfdom during the time period. After learning about this institution, have students find ten facts about serfdom. After listing each fact, have them analyze whether this quality is similar or different than the reality of the characters in the series.
 - The use of slavery was very common for the Vikings, Flanagan's inspiration for the Skandians. Using a graphic organizer, have students analyze the similarities and differences between those enslaved by the Skandians and those enslaved by another conquering group.
- In the Ranger's Apprentice series, Flanagan's female characters are smart, confident, and independent. Have students investigate the roles of women during the Middle Ages, specifically examining domestic roles, social and cultural contributions. Design a magazine cover which might be featured for women in the Middle Ages.

**Design a
magazine
cover!**

AND REMEMBER— HAVE FUN!

The thing that makes the Ranger's Apprentice series so great is that kids love reading it and following Will's adventures! Engage your reluctant readers and challenge your avid readers. Let us know how you use this guide in your classroom—and email us at schoolandlibrary@us.penguinroup.com. We look forward to hearing from you!



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APPRENTICE TO ONE, HERO TO ALL



Book 1: The Ruins of Gorlan
HC: 978-0-399-24454-4
PB: 978-0-14-240663-2
Ages 10 up • Grades 5 up



Book 2: The Burning Bridge
HC: 978-0-399-24455-1
PB: 978-0-14-240842-1
Ages 10 up • Grades 5 up



Book 3: The Icebound Land
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Book 4: The Battle for Skandia
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Book 5: The Sorcerer of the North
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Ages 10 up • Grades 5 up



Book 6: The Siege of Macindaw
HC: 978-0-399-25033-0
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Available August 2009



COMING SPRING 2010!

Book 7: Erak's Ransom
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