

QUENTARIS

QUEST OF THE LOST CITY



The Spell of Undoing
by Paul Collins

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THE SPELL OF UNDOING

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This latest book, set in the fantastic magical city of *Quentaris*, is filled with action and excitement with many enticements by the author, Paul Collins, to keep the reader absorbed.

Quentaris is now adrift and sailing about whilst seeking to return to its former site. However it is most vulnerable and subject to attack from its enemy Tolrush. Tab Vidler is an orphan and member of the Dung Brigade but is thrown out by the strict Mrs Figgin. She has to make her own way and uses her wit and resourcefulness to save the city.

After many adventures and courageous actions her dream is realised when she is accepted into the Magicians' Guild. Tab falls from grace, however, and it takes another brave attempt, calling on all her powers of mind-melding with other creatures, to rescue single-handedly her beloved city from the grip of Tolrush once more. Quentaris is able to escape through a vortex into another parallel world.

Paul Collins' and Michael Pryor's series is a fascinating high fantasy fiction creation that will be eagerly read by many young adults who will be engrossed by the antics of Tab and the other Quentarans and follow their fortunes with great interest.

LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

- What is the source of power and energy for cities in this novel?
- Note two or three things that Tab has never before experienced in her life.

Opening

- What ingredients does the author use to get the reader interested in this story?

Title

- How does the novel get its name?
- What was the *spell of undoing*? (54)

Setting

- Describe where this story is set
- Make a map of Quentaris listing some street names

Genre

- How would you best explain the type of story this is if you were describing it to a friend?
- What features make this story the genre you have indicated?
Jot down some evidence to support the conclusion you have reached.

Characters

- Do a brief pen portrait of Tab Vidler and the role she plays in this novel touching on her background, situation, character, attributes and achievements
- Make a list of four other characters in this novel and write a few lines about two of them
- Jot down the names of some of the minor characters and put down a few words to describe them

Vocabulary

The author uses words to enable the reader to feel he/she is in another and different world from the one we are familiar with

- Make a list of concepts and words, hints and happenings and ideas that indicate this.
- Describe some of the creatures that inhabit this world
- Use the following words in a sentence to show you know their meaning:
pompously (10), remuneration (12), disgruntled (12), oscillated (15), fastidiously (19), despondently (78), balefully (79), articulate (127), ominous (131), loyalty (133), prodigious (139), beleaguered (160), voracious (182), sceptical (20), scurrilous (21).
- From the story, make a list of words that pertain to navigation

In the English language there are many words that sound the same but are spelt differently

- Explain the difference in meaning between the following words:
horde (41) / hoard; reigned (60) / rained; borne (160) / born;
principle (170); principal
- Find out the word used IN English for these
- Make up a list of your own of these words
- Comment on the language used in this novel:
a) by the author b) by different characters

Increase your vocabulary:

By looking up words you do not know the meaning of, or examining the use of words that are used in a different context from what you are familiar with, you can see how to use language more widely in your own speaking and writing

Plot

- Tell the story to a friend in your own words

Consider the passage of time in this novel.

- Make a time-frame showing this

Series

Quantaris: The Spell of Undoing is another in a series of high fantasy stories. Look at the idea of a series of books and consider why books are done in such a manner

THE CRAFT OF WRITING

Paul Collins uses many graphic words and passages to involve the reader and make his story vivid.

- Choose two passages from this novel that particularly impressed you and write a little about what you found attractive about them.
- Consider the purpose of chapter headings.
- Find a passage that you found gripping and read it out to the class.
- Choose a descriptive portion and comment on its ingredients and effect.
- What are breaks in the text designed to do, do you think?
- Look at the way in which chapters finish and make some observations about what the author is doing.
- Examine the way in which the author uses adjectives: *sepulchral* light (39) *lambent* glow (110)
- Find some more examples of adjectives from the text and write them down and assess the impact they have on the creation of a scene, person or atmosphere.
- The author uses similes to make his writing come alive. For example: screaming *like a banshee* (47); looked *like the coiled intestines of some enormous beast* (49); *like a gigantic whirlpool turned upside down* (49) Use such vivid words to enhance your own writing
- Find some instances where Paul Collins uses emotions in his writing and state what the effect of their use is in the part you have found.
- Look at what strategies writers use to encourage readers to read on
- List some of these that you found in this novel and share them with the rest of the class

Writing

On pages 93 and following there is a description of a sword fight.

- Write your own account of a sword fight using appropriate terms.

Choose one episode from the story where characters are speaking or holding a conversation.

- Briefly describe who the characters are, the situation they are in and comment on the dialogue used.
- Write a review of this novel for your local newspaper. Send it to the editor and see if you can get it published.

Speaking/Listening

- Find sections from the novel that portray: action, hope, fear and read these portions out to the rest of the class.

Discussion

- Using **QUENTARIS: QUEST OF THE LOST CITY: THE SPELL OF UNDOING** by Paul Collins as a starting point, discuss the following: power, choice, trust, change, magic, torture, inspiration, rules, blame, betrayal, dress.
- What are spells?
- Talk about the way in which society is structured in Quentaris
- Discuss what the illustrations in this novel contribute to the story

Ending

- Make some comments about the way in which this story concludes.

About the author

Paul Collins is best known for his fantasy and science fiction novels, of which he has written numerous stories and several series. Paul has been short-listed for many awards for his fiction and has won the William Atheling, inaugural Peter McNamara and the Aurealis awards.

Research

Make up a ten question **Quentaris** quiz and try it out on your classmates
What does the word *motley* mean? What is its origin?
Find out more about the origin and function of Guilds

There are several means to explore other aspects of Quentaris: Quest of the Lost City.

On page 47 there is a cross reference telling you where to find out how Fontagu was blackmailed into invoking the *Spell of Undoing*.

And on page 129, it says you can find out how Torby became a prisoner of the Tolrushians

- Go to www.quentaris.com to find out the answers to both these questions AND other things ... and much more ...
Discover more about the author Paul Collins at:
www.paulcollins.com.au AND learn about more good books to read at:
www.fordstreetpublishing.com

Notes: Nancy Mortimer

