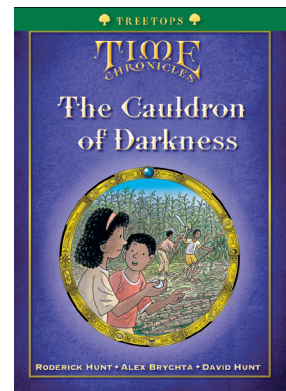


Stage 12+

The Cauldron of Darkness

Written by Roderick Hunt and illustrated by Alex Brychta

Teaching notes written by Gillian Howell



Historical background

- The story takes place in the West Indies in about 1792, during the time of the slave trade. Slaves were forcibly taken from Africa to work in the sugar cane plantations owned by wealthy British men in the West Indies. At that time, piracy was a constant problem around the Caribbean islands. Many escaped slaves became pirates to survive.
- In this story, Wilf and Wilma, whose ancestors came from the Caribbean, go back in time to prevent the Virans changing their own future existence.

Group/Guided reading

Introducing the book

- Ask the children to discuss the cover illustration. Ask: *Where do you think the story is set and why? Which Time Runners feature in this story?* Ask them to read the back cover blurb.
- Ask the children what they think 'this time it's personal' means. Ask: *What sort of dangers might Wilf and Wilma face?*
- Talk about the slave trade for a few moments and ask the children what, if anything, they already know about it.
- Turn to pages 46 and 47 and read the brief history of the slave trade to familiarise the children with the background of the story.

Reading the book

- Ask the children to read the story independently, pausing occasionally to discuss what they have read.
- Support children who need it when they meet new or challenging vocabulary; for example, you may wish to explain what *vigilant* means on page 4 and *eliminated* on page 5.
- At the end of Chapter 1, ask the children what they think 'the Viran way' means. Ask them to speculate on how the Virans could destroy the children without revealing themselves.
- At the end of Chapter 5 ask the children what they think the Viran's plan is. Ask: *Why does Wilma think she knows?*

Returning to the book

- Look back at Chapter 1 together. Ask the children what they think 'the Darkness' is. Ask them how the Darkness and the Virans communicated with each other.
- Ask the children if there were any twists to the plot that surprised them in the story. Look together at page 37. Ask: *What do you think Wilf and Wilma are thinking at this moment?*
- Ask what might have happened if Tyler hadn't transported himself back to that time. What do the children think Mortlock will say when they return to the Time Vault?
- Turn to page 45 and ask the children to read Tyler's report. Ask: *How did he feel about the events?*

