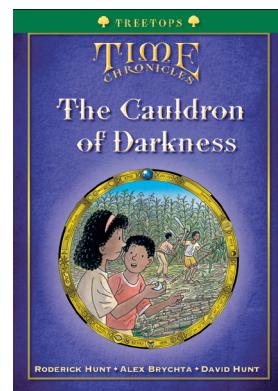


Stage 12+

# The Cauldron of Darkness

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## 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?*

## Speaking, listening and drama

- Discuss what Mortlock might say to Wilf, Wilma and Tyler about the events and their actions. Ask the children to think about how he might react to Wilf and Wilma pretending to be slaves and joining them at work on the plantation. Ask: *How might he react to Tyler disobeying his instructions?* Draw up a list of their ideas for reference. Ask the children to work in role as Wilf, Wilma, Tyler and Mortlock. Ask them to role play a debriefing session held by Mortlock on the children's return to the Time Vault.
- Ask the children to focus on Caleb Capstick. In small groups, ask them to discuss why he preferred life as a pirate rather than being a slave. Encourage them to imagine the conditions under which both slaves and pirates lived. Ask volunteers to sit in the hot seat as Caleb. Tell the volunteers, as Caleb, to persuade the others that he should not be handed over to the British Navy or the overseers.

## Writing

- Refer the children to Tyler's report on page 45 again. Ask the children to imagine that Tyler came face to face with his father. Discuss what he might say to him and why. Ask them to think about what Tyler's father might say.
- Tell the children that they are going to write Tyler's recount of such a meeting. Model how to write a first person recount on the board, for example, *When I first saw my father I was surprised that he looked...*
- Remind the children to use reported speech rather than direct speech and discuss verb phrases to use, such as *he told me, he said, I explained etc.*
- Encourage them to explain how Tyler felt about the meeting.

## Links to the wider curriculum

### History

- Research the history of the slave trade and key figures in abolishing it. Ask them to write a brief biography about, for example, William Wilberforce or Harriet Tubman.

### Geography

- Locate the West Indies, Britain and West Africa on a map. Ask the children to find out about 'the Triangular Trade' and chart the route taken by the ships in the slave trade.

### PSHCE

- Make a painted and decorated Saxon parchment using coloured inks or paints with decorated letters and other illustrations.

### RE

- Ask children to find out how important religion was to people in the movement to abolish the slave trade, such as the Quakers, William Wilberforce, Harriet Tubman.

