

Literacy Skills Teacher's Guide for Midnight Magic by Avi

Book Information

Avi, Midnight Magic
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In the Kingdom of Pergamontio in 1491, Mangus the Magician and his apprentice are summoned to the castle of King Claudio to determine if his daughter is indeed being haunted by a ghost.

Award: NCTE Notable Children's Books in the Language Arts; State Award; Young Reader's Choice Award/Nominee

Topics: Countries/Regions, Italy; Horror/Thriller, Ghosts/Spirits; Mysteries, Magic; People, Royalty; READNOW - Demco Media Turtleback Books, Demco Media - Read Now Grades 9+; READNOW - Renaissance Learning, RLI - Grades 6-8 (Theme: Surviving); Recommended Reading, California Recommended Lit., English, 6-8; Recommended Reading, IRA/CBC Choice; Recommended Reading, YALSA Quick Picks for Reluctant YA

Main Characters

Count Scarazoni an evil traitor who plots the death of Prince Lorenzo and plans to marry Princess Teresina so that he can become the new king

Fabrizio the twelve-year-old boy who is Mangus the Magician's faithful servant; he does his best to help his master

King Claudio the Thirteenth king of the Kingdom of Pergamontio in 1491; he is not a strong king and is swayed easily by Count Scarazoni's advice

Mangus a magician who has been punished by the king for doing magic; he has now been summoned by the king to use his magical powers to help the king's daughter

Prince Lorenzo/Rinaldo son of King Claudio and heir to the throne; he fakes his own death and returns to the castello disguised as a kitchen boy in order to expose Scarazoni as a traitor

Princess Teresina the ten-year-old daughter of King Claudio and Queen Jovanna; she does not want to marry Scarazoni and conspires with her mother and brother to expose Scarazoni's true nature to her father, the king

Queen Jovanna wife of King Claudio; an intelligent woman who wants to save the Kingdom of Pergamontio from Scarazoni's clutches

Signora Sophia Mangus's loving and faithful wife

Signore Addetto Princess Teresina's tutor, who suggested the scheme that Scarazoni marry Teresina so that Scarazoni could become king; he met an untimely death at the hands of Scarazoni

Vocabulary

crenellated having indentations

hoax a trick or deception

parapet a low wall along the edge of a roof

siege an attempt to capture a town or fortress

thwarted to prevent the accomplishment of something

Synopsis

When Mangus the Magician is summoned to the castello of King Claudio, he and his only servant, Fabrizio, fear the worst. Mangus has already been tried for and has confessed to being a magician. Under threat of torture, he declared he would never practice magic again. His life was spared by the king, but he is under house arrest and is watched constantly. Count Scarazoni, the king's closest advisor, has come to escort Mangus and his servant to the castello with great secrecy. At the castello, Mangus and Fabrizio learn that ten-year-old Princess Teresina insists that she has seen a ghost. The king wants Mangus to use his wizardry to free his daughter from the ghost. Mangus insists that he has no magical powers and that he does not believe in ghosts, but he agrees to find out the truth for the king.

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At the castello, Fabrizio learns that Prince Lorenzo is missing and feared dead. He also discovers that Count Scarazoni has made a plan to marry Princess Teresina in order to become the new king. With the king's approval, the wedding is to take place in two days. Scarazoni has hopes that Mangus will prove that there is no ghost so that the wedding can take place as planned. Princess Teresina has other plans, however. She knows that Scarazoni is a traitor, and she does not want to marry him. She secretly asks Fabrizio to convince his master that the ghost is real. She knows that her father will then postpone the wedding. Teresina arranges for the ghost to appear when Fabrizio is with her. She convinces him that it is the ghost of her brother, who she says was killed at Scarazoni's order. Prince Lorenzo has actually faked his own death and has returned to the castello, posing as Rinaldo, a kitchen boy.

Unknown to Mangus and Fabrizio, Teresina, her mother and her brother are working together to expose Scarazoni as a traitor. Using a candle and a silver plate in the chapel, they project the "ghost" on a wall in the hallway. Through various interviews and information he receives from Fabrizio, Mangus figures out the trick and confronts Teresina with his discovery. After some discussion, they agree to work together to expose Scarazoni.

Mangus gathers King Claudio, Scarazoni, Queen Jovanna and Princess Teresina in the hallway where the "ghost" has previously been seen. Using his magic tricks and the help of Fabrizio, Mangus causes the "ghost" to appear and denounce Scarazoni. The king has the count arrested and thrown into the dungeon. Prince Lorenzo can now reclaim his rightful place as heir to the throne. Mangus is pardoned and receives a generous pension.

Open-Ended Questions

Use these open-ended questions as the basis for class discussions, student presentations, or extended writing assignments.

Initial Understanding

How did Mangus react when he was first summoned to appear at the castello and then later, at the castello, when he learned the reason for his summons?

When Mangus was summoned, he was very fearful. He became pale and trembled. At the castello, he denied practicing any form of wizardry. He protested when the king called him a magician. He spoke bitterly when the count reminded him that he had been found "guilty of brewing the stews of Satan." He agreed to help the king by using his reasoning abilities. He cried and expressed a sense of hopelessness in his chamber in the castello. He told Fabrizio that he did not think he could do what the king asked.

Literary Analysis

Throughout the book, Fabrizio is being pulled in several directions by the different demands and expectations of other characters in the book. List each character who expects something of Fabrizio and tell what the character wants Fabrizio to do or not do.

Mangus asks Fabrizio to stop performing magic tricks. He also asks him to watch Scarazoni during the interview with the princess and to find out more about the missing statue. Princess Teresina wants Fabrizio to convince Mangus that the ghost is real. She wants him to talk Mangus into viewing the ghost when it appears next. She also tells him to keep their meetings a secret. Queen Jovanna instructs Fabrizio to report anything that the princess says to him but to tell no one else. Rinaldo asks Fabrizio to use his magic to help achieve the downfall of Count Scarazoni.

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Inferential Comprehension

When Count Scarazoni arrives to take Mangus to the castello, the insignia on the carriage has been concealed. Once inside the castello, Scarazoni tells Mangus to cover his face with his hood. He stresses the need for secrecy. Why do you think Scarazoni and the king feel such a need to keep Mangus's visit a secret?

Mangus has been tried for wizardry and has been forced to repent of the crime of performing magic. Now the king wants him to use this same wizardry to free his daughter from the ghost. The king does not want the people of his kingdom to know that he is seeking help from the very man he has already punished for being a magician. King Claudio also wants to protect his daughter. If people learn that she has seen a ghost, they might believe her to be mad. If the servants of the castello were to learn about the ghost, they might become frightened and leave the castello.

Constructing Meaning

What did Rinaldo say to convince Fabrizio that he was really the Prince Lorenzo?

Rinaldo told about Scarazoni's plan to have the guard kill him on the way to Rome. He explained how he thwarted the guard's attempt on his life and had the man imprisoned. He said that he sent his own garments, torn and covered with blood, to make everyone believe that he had been killed. He went on to say that he disguised himself as a servant and found employment at the castello. Using the secret passages, he met with his sister and hatched a plot to expose Scarazoni. He said that he hadn't informed his father the king about what Scarazoni had done because he had no proof. It would be his word against Scarazoni's. He told Fabrizio that he had destroyed the candles because he thought the ghost would be more believable if he played the part. He had his sword and said he would have killed Scarazoni, if necessary.

of the castello is given. Have students reread the description and draw a picture of the castello based on the description. It may be helpful to have books with pictures of castles in them available for students to view.

Identifying Reading Strategies Throughout the book, Mangus and Fabrizio quote wise old sayings. Ask the students to choose one of the sayings and write a fictional short story that explains the saying. The saying may or may not appear within the story itself.

Making Predictions At the end of the story, Fabrizio is reading tarot cards again. He has already turned over one card. Have the students predict what the rest of the cards will be based on information presented earlier in the book. Then have them brainstorm as a class about what could happen next in the book or in a sequel based on what cards were revealed.

Recognizing Details The "ghost" in this story was made by projecting light through colored glass. Have students reread Mangus's description of the trick (pages 186-189) and draw a diagram to show how the trick was performed. If possible, provide students with flashlights and mirrors and suggest that they experiment with casting an image of their own.

Teachable Skills

Recognizing Setting In Chapter 3, a description