



Teacher Notes

The Lost Book of Magic

by Amelia Mellor

Publication details

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Reader ages: 8-12 years

Themes

- Magic
- Family
- Recession
- Trust
- Puzzles
- Identity

About the Book

It's 1895, Melbourne is in crisis, and Pearl and Vally Cole's father has suggested the unthinkable: it might be time to close the grandest bookshop in the world.

When a ghostly visitor offers Pearl magic that could save her home, she seizes her chance. But her new friend is not what he seems, and the unstoppable magic in the palm of her hand comes at a terrible cost.

Vally can see just one way to save Pearl before she is lost forever. He must call upon the sinister magician who nearly destroyed the Cole family two years ago.

But the Obscurosmith only performs the impossible for a price ...

Reunite with old friends, solve fiendish puzzles, and find five lost treasures from across the globe in this sweeping adventure that concludes the story of *The Grandest Bookshop in the World*.

About the Author

Amelia Mellor began her writing career as her secondary school's resident playwright in Year 11. As part of her creative writing course at the University of Melbourne, she completed a thesis on the reinvention of the Industrial Revolution in children's fantasy literature. Her debut novel, *The Grandest Bookshop in the World*, has won an Australian Book Industry Award, an Indie Book Award, a NSW Premier's Literary Award and a Booksellers' Choice Award. When she isn't writing, Amelia enjoys hiking, gardening and drawing. She can be found at authorameliamellor.com or walking the streets of Melbourne.

Before Reading:

- Look at some photos of Cole's Book Arcade. Describe it. What kinds of stories do you imagine could take place here?
- Read the blurb aloud. What does it tell you about the book? Can you identify the person, place and problem?

- If possible, read the first two books in the series, *The Grandest Bookshop in the World* and *The Bookseller's Apprentice*, and consider the questions they leave unanswered that you might expect to find in Book 3.

Comprehension questions

- When is the book set? What does the phrase 'times are bad' mean in the context of the story?
- What is your first impression of the bookshop? What are some of the things that set it apart from the surrounding shops?
- What is the Arcade's principal rule?
- Why do the Coles want to move to Sydney? How does Vally feel about that? What does Pearl say when she finds out? Do you think she's right?
- Who wanted to trap the spirit who helps Pearl? Why is this something that Pearl and her family 'remember but don't discuss' (p18)?
- What is the one thing that Magnus Maximillian can't do?
- The Obscurosmith calls Pearl 'a rascal after [his] own heart' (p28). How does this make her feel? Why?
- Do you trust Autonomous Wraith? Why/why not?
- What does Pearl see when she accesses Autonomous' memories? What do his memories tell her?
- Who is Miss Kwon? Why does Mr Pyke call her for help?
- How was Autonomous created? What do he and Pearl have in common? How are they different?
- If you were building a body from scratch, what would you incorporate into it and why?
- How does Pearl describe the feeling of being inside the new body that Autonomous has created?

Comprehension questions cont.

- What makes Autonomous set Pearl free?
- Near the end of the book, Pearl observes that Autonomous seems 'closer to truly sorry than Pearl had ever known him to be' (p301). Do you think he is truly sorry? Why/why not?
- How does Pearl best Mr Maximillian?

Literacy

Historical fiction

- *The Lost Book of Magic* is a work of historical fiction, which means that it takes inspiration from real people, events and places although the story overall is made up. What other historical fiction stories have you read (or watched, or listened to)?
- The book is set in Melbourne in 1895, when the city was going through an economic downturn. Where can you see evidence of this?
- Imagine that you are a writer, and you want to write a story set in the past. Where would you go to find out what it was like? Which details would you want to be accurate?
- Discuss the kind of research that writers of historical fiction do, and the different places that we can find out information (interviews, photographs, Trove, libraries etc). How do we know which sources we can trust? What kinds of details are we looking for?
- Is the novel purely historical fiction, or does it cross over into other genres as well? If so, which ones?
- You can read more about the real-life bookshop on Amelia Mellor's website here <https://www.authorameliamellor.com/the-grandest-bookshop-in-the-world> and in the book's Historical Note.

Point of View (POV)

- Point of view is the perspective through which an author tells a story. Broadly, there are three different POVs – first (I/me), second (you), and third (he/she/they). Within these categories, there are different ways to use POV for different effect, including third person limited and third person omniscient. Discuss the difference

between each POV and why authors might choose one over another. What POV is *The Lost Book of Magic* told in? How do you know?

- Whose perspectives does Amelia Mellor alternate between in order to tell the story? Why do you think she has chosen these particular characters to focus the events of the story through?

Final reflections

- Why are bookshops so important in communities?
- What do you think will happen next to Pearl and her family?
- Are you satisfied with Mr Maximillian's end? Do you think he's sealed away for good?

Creative Activities

- Get a map of Melbourne and make a list of all the places mentioned in the book. Write a sentence that describes what happens in each place. What are these buildings now? If you wanted to set this story now, where would you set it? Why? Rewrite a scene from the book in a place that you find magical.
- The Arcade contains many magical places – the Fernery, Wonder Land, the Lolly Shop, the Endless Wonders. Which is your favourite? Why? Design your own stall to go inside Cole's Book Arcade. What would it look like? What would be inside? Build a 3D model of your stall and line them all up in a classroom arcade display.
- Rewrite a scene from the book using a different character's point of view. What insights does writing from this POV give you?
- What code does the Obscurosmith use to scramble the first scroll? What other codes and puzzles does he use? Choose one of the codes from the book to write your own secret message for a friend.