



The Cursed
by
Michael Panckridge

Teacher Notes
prepared by **Cath**
Crowley

Readership: Upper primary to
lower secondary

Genre: Fantasy/Adventure

ABOUT THE CURSED

On a stormy night in September, Lewis Watt, a student at Bridgewater College, reads a letter from his absent mother, Amanda. He found it hidden in the desk of his guardian and history teacher, Jonathan Ramshaw. It is full of unbelievable secrets.

Months before Lewis was born, Amanda and Jonathan returned from an expedition to the Amazon. Lewis' father did not. A tribe of invisible natives killed him and captured Jonathan and Amanda. They performed a strange ritual and as a result, Amanda left Brazil knowing that she and her unborn child might one day disappear completely. Jonathan escaped this curse but discovered a casket that enables temporary invisibility.

Amanda reveals in her letter that the curse has begun to take hold. She is disappearing and has returned to the Amazon to beg for a cure. After reading her last words, Lewis is frightened by the storm. He too, disappears.

Jonathan, unable to hide the truth from Lewis any longer, explains that the casket on display in the school library can take visibility and return it as long as the person is completely visible or invisible. Amanda is somewhere in between these states and so the casket cannot help her. Lewis is torn between fear for his mother and excitement about the discovery.

He is not the only one who is excited. A secret organisation called The Light Society, formed in the late 1750s, is watching them. Led by Raymond Brampton, the Light Crusader's aim is to rid the world of evil by killing criminals. The power of invisibility would be invaluable.

Aided by Brampton's company, Masked Enterprises, the society infiltrates the school's council. Some former members are removed. Some are replaced by people wearing synthetic masks so real they allow one person to assume the identity of another. While the Light Crusaders are watching the casket, spy agencies are watching them.

Once Lewis' secret is discovered by Brampton, he is forced to go on a frightening trip to the Amazon. Along with his friend Abby and Jonathan, Lewis outsmarts Brampton. He saves his mother and the other innocent victims of Masked Enterprises.

ENGLISH

PRE READING ACTIVITIES

The Cursed is an exciting adventure story that not only entertains but raises important issues about justice, the environment and the treatment of indigenous cultures.

In order to highlight these points, have students predict:

1. problems that could arise from a corrupt police force.
2. problems that could arise from a group of citizens enforcing the law.
3. problems that could arise if citizens do not enforce the law.

Have students list three ways in which white settlement and industry have had a negative impact on indigenous cultures around the world.

VOCABULARY

Find the meaning of the words listed below. Either write the definition or draw a picture to symbolise the meaning.

Relic (page 57)

Mantra (page 58)

Crusaders (page 56)

Copse (page 78)

Parchment (page 79)

Sinister (page 9)

Casket (page 18)

Synthetic (page 10)

Sacrosanct (page 195)

Rogues (page 3)

Forgers (page 3)

Premonition (page 13)

PLOT STRUCTURE

Timeline

The Cursed is not written in chronological order. Construct a timeline to show the order of important events.

SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS

Prologue

1. Explain two problems that could arise as a result of the Light Society's crime fighting methods.

Chapter 1

Amanda's Letter – Part One

1. List one thing the reader discovers about each member of the Watt family in this chapter.

Chapter 2

School Council Changes

1. List three things the reader learns about Raymond Brampton in this chapter.

Chapter 3

Chalet de Sombras

1. On page 59, Martin Caldor mutters to himself about the lack of light. His comment is a symbol of the Light Society's sinister deeds. What things do we learn about the group in this chapter?

Chapter 4

Amanda's Letter – Part Two

1. On page 64, Amanda asks herself some questions about the tribe. Answer them for her. If you cannot find the answers in the book, write what you believe to be true about the tribe.

Chapter 5

In the Dead of Night

1. Who do you think steals the casket?
2. The man comments on page 75 that invisibility is '...perhaps the most powerful secret that any human had held in mankind's history.' How could invisibility change the world?
3. Name one other invention that has changed the course of history.

Chapter 6

Amanda's Letter – Part Three

1. Lewis is in the middle of a storm at the end of this chapter. What is the storm a symbol of for Lewis?

Chapter 7

Nothing Revealed

1. What do we learn about the curse in this chapter?

Chapter 8

Amanda's Letter – Part Four

1. Why does Lewis disappear?
2. There is a hint in this chapter that Amanda might be in danger before she leaves for the Amazon. What is it?

Chapter 9

The Disappearance of Lewis Watt

1. How does invisibility change Lewis?
2. What doubts does Jonathan have about Martin Caldor?

Chapter 10

The Lure of the Casket

1. On page 143 Lewis says to Jonathan that if they need more of the substance that is in the casket, they should go and get more. What comment is the author making about society's treatment of valuable resources?

Chapter 11

The Back Car

1. In what ways does Lewis prove himself to be a hero in this chapter?
2. In what ways does Raymond Brampton prove himself to be a villain in this chapter?

Chapter 12

Double Crusaders

1. Who are the Double Crusaders?

Chapter 13

Return to the Tribe

1. On page 202 Lewis and Abby both comment on the invisible tribe. How do their views differ?
2. Dr Klinger reveals herself to be Julia. Who is she really?

Chapter 14

River Attack

1. Why does Jonathan doubt that the river attack is the work of the invisible tribe?
2. What is your opinion of the mission's purpose, outlined on page 224?
3. This chapter shows that Lewis has matured. In what way has he done so?

Chapters 15 and 16

Invisible Boy/ The Village

1. Abbey comments in this chapter that the worst fear is the fear of not knowing. List the fears that she and Lewis must confront in these chapters.
2. List the fears that the tribe must confront.
3. What would be your greatest fear if you were in their shoes?

Chapter 17

Unmasked

1. What things are unmasked in this chapter?

Epilogue

1. Who is Martin Caldor, really? Did you suspect this? Give reasons for your answer.
2. Read Amanda's first letter again. Do you have a different impression of Fraser?
3. After reading the book, how many people do you think are cursed in some way?

GROUP DISCUSSION POINTS

Themes

Allocate small groups within the class one major theme in the novel. Have students make a list of events and words that relate to their theme.

Suggested themes include:

Courage

Justice

Friendship

Loyalty

Growth

Fear

Loss

Family

Abuse of the environment

As a class, discuss the comments below.

1. On page 195 Jonathan Ramshaw comments to Raymond Brampton that life is sacrosanct. 'There is no justification for even one life to be lost in order to save the lives of others.' Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Give reasons for your answer.

2. Abby comments on page 185 that the Light Society can't be good 'if they're getting rid of bad people by killing them'. Is this how you view the Light Society? Why or why not?
3. On page 75, Raymond Brampton comments that invisibility is a secret so immense it could change the course of history like nothing else before it. List the ways that invisibility could help the world. List the ways it could hurt the world. Do the positive effects outweigh the negative?

CHARACTER ANALYSIS

Choose one character from *The Cursed* and put them on trial. Question them about why they have made particular decisions throughout the book. Attempt to highlight the positive and negative aspects of the character.

LANGUAGE ACTIVITIES

Metaphors, similes and symbols

Michael Panckridge uses interesting similes, metaphors and symbols throughout his novel.

Have each class member:

1. define the term metaphor.
2. define the term simile.
3. define the term symbol.
4. find some examples of similes, metaphors and symbols in the book.
5. create some new similes and symbols for fear.

(Teacher hint: similes can be found on pages 84, 108. References to the storm representing Lewis' frightening situation can be found on pages 25, 71, 92, and 117. References to how light and darkness symbolise both the good and bad situations that characters find themselves in can be found.)

WRITING ACTIVITIES

1. On page 25, Lewis remembers a memory as a young child being caught in a vicious storm. Write a journal entry about a time when you were frightened. How did you overcome your fear?
2. Lewis is excited about the possibility of being invisible. Imagine you are invisible for a week. Write three diary entries outlining the things that happen to you.
3. Michael Panckridge uses newspaper reports to convey some of the events in his novel. Write the newspaper report that appears in the paper after Lewis' expedition has returned.
4. Using your knowledge from the sections below, write a feature article that explores some of the issues that face the indigenous people living in the Amazon rainforest.

SOSE/HISE

The Amazon

Much of the action in *The Cursed* takes place in the Amazon Basin, situated in the north of Brazil. There are interesting descriptions of the geography of this area and references to the struggles of the indigenous people.

1. Trace a map of Brazil. Mark on it the borders shared with Colombia and Venezuela. Also mark the Amazon Basin, Tefe, San Paulo, Manaus, Boa Vista, the Uraricoera tributary, the Solimoes River and the Sierra Pacaraima mountains. Make sure your map has a title, border, northing, scale and key.
2. Research the tribes that live in the Amazon. What are some of the factors that are threatening their environment? Create symbols to represent these problems and draw them on your map.

SCIENCE

The Amazon

There are many references in the book to animals that live in the Amazon Basin. For example, toucans, macaws, kingfishers, long-tailed spider monkeys, howler monkeys, tree frogs, nocturnal crickets, snakes and piranha fish.

1. Research one animal and create a poster to present the information. Show things such as habitat, diet, life span, appearance and predators. Make sure to include a picture.

Get Creative!

CREATIVE ARTS

1. Since the formation of the Light Society in the 1700s, the members have worn masks to hide their identities. Create a mask that reveals something about you instead of hiding it. For example, if your talent is playing football, create a mask that symbolises this skill.
2. Jonathan Ramshaw trained Lewis Watt for years, preparing him for a time when he might have to fight for his life. One of the ways he prepared Lewis was to familiarise him with a range of electronic gadgets. On page 26 Lewis talks about his tracking device. Design and draw another device that Lewis might find useful in his fight against Raymond Brampton.
3. The Cursed explores the importance of relationships, both family and friends. In Abby's talk on the topic 'dear, special or significant' she uses a photo album to illustrate what is important to her. Collect and display photographs to symbolise the things that are important to you.

About the Author

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Michael Panckridge is the author of the acclaimed Legends and Anniversary Legends series. These series are a culmination of many years of dedicated sports mania combined with an enthusiastic exploration of what boys and girls really want to read.

As an experienced teacher and a parent Michael has a birdseye view on what kids want to read. Sometimes all it takes is a hook into a sport - kids can relate to it and forget they are reading. Same with fantasy. Michael has tapped into that space where readers can sit down and lose themselves in another world.

The Cursed taps into so many of the elements children love: good versus evil, kids against adults and the magical and mysterious world.