



DISCUSSION GUIDE



**“Up there with
Skandar and
Impossible
Creatures.”**

MEL TAYLOR-BESSENT



MAGICALIA

JENNIFER BELL

ABOUT THE BOOKS

Now on the second instalment, the *Magicalia* series by acclaimed author Jennifer Bell is the perfect read for young fantasy fans. Packed with imagination and fast-paced action, it's ideal for emerging and confident readers, and offers huge scope for exploration and follow-on activity with reading groups. In book one, *Magicalia: A Race of Wonders*, Bitsy Wilder and her best friend Kosh are starting to get ready for their long-awaited trip to Paris when a giant horned hamster crashes through Bitsy's house and kidnaps her dad. With a whole world of magic to understand, and a secret history they knew nothing about, they must enter a deadly race to uncover the truth if they are to stand any chance of rescuing him. In book two, *Magicalia: Thief of Shadows*, Kosh is accused of being the notorious Shadowsmith thief, and he and Bitsy must go into hiding before Kosh is arrested. Determined to prove his innocence, Bitsy, Mateo and Kosh set out to find the real villain. But they have something the Shadowsmith desperately wants, something the conservatoire also needs for protection. Can Bitsy, Kosh and Mateo figure out the true culprit before time runs out and someone catches them? Brimming with fantastical creatures, incredible magic, daring escapes and a hunt around the world, this series is a surefire hit for young readers.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Londoner **Jennifer Bell** worked as a children's bookseller at a world-famous bookshop before becoming an author. Her debut novel, *The Uncommoners: The Crooked Sixpence*, was an international bestseller. She is also the author of *Agents of the Wild*, an adventure series for younger readers; *Wonderscape*, which was selected as a Waterstones Children's Book of the Month and is inspired by some of her favourite heroes from history as well as her love of gaming; and *Legendarium*, which celebrates incredible legends from around the world. *Magicalia: Race of Wonders* is the first in an exciting new fantasy series. Find out more about Jennifer at www.jennifer-bell-author.com or say hello on Twitter @jenrosebell and Instagram @jenbellauthor.

GENERAL INTRODUCTION:

This guide is designed to provide discussion points and activities encompassing both *Magicalia* books, and where questions are specific to a book, it uses the first in the series. If you and your group are looking only at one of the later books you may wish to think about some questions specific to that text, to supplement the following. There is a huge amount to explore in the stories, from the world of magic the author creates to the nature of family and first impressions. The creativity in the book is a great launch point for readers to start exploring their own ideas, but equally there are weighty elements to discuss outside of the fantastical elements of the book. With lots of real-world inspiration for locations in the book, too, there's something for any reader to explore and be inspired by.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Getting started:

What did anyone in the group like about the book? Why? Encourage members to expand on their answers. Was the book what they were expecting? Why? Did it remind anyone of anything else they've read or seen?

1. Bitsy

"Bitsy's hand trembled as she finished reading. 'Kosh, this is about me.'" – p.33

How does the author show the reader Bitsy's personality? How would anyone describe Bitsy? What makes her a good protagonist? (Check understanding of "protagonist", as required.)

2. Kosh

"Perhaps one of your grandparents is a conjuror, like you said before. We can investigate together. I'll help you." – p.179

How does Kosh complement Bitsy? Are they a good team? Why? How does the author hint at storylines that might follow in later books?

3. Magicores

"They're powerful beasts conjured from emotional energy. That particular species is conjured from greed." – p.11

What did group members think of the magicores? Did anyone have a favourite type? Why? How do the characteristics of the magicores relate to the emotions that help to generate them? How does this differ from other sorts of magic group members have read or seen in stories? Are there similarities?

EXTENSION: Challenge group members to invent their own magicores, based on emotions. What would they be called? What would they look like? What would their magical powers be? Create profiles for each magicore and present back to one another.

4. Farthingstone

"'Long ago,' Giverna went on, 'a meteorite landed on a remote island in the Atlantic Ocean.'" – p.44

Who can remember how the first magicores were discovered? What does the name "farthingstone" suggest to anyone? What might it mean? If the farthingstone is a meteor that changes people at a cellular level, what does that suggest about space and the possibilities in the universe? What might it be like to be "cosmodynamic"?

5. Hunter Guild

"For hundreds of years, hunters have attacked us, stolen from us and spied on us." – p.46

Discuss how the various guilds came to exist – what were the traits and skills that went into each guild? Why was the Hunter Guild banished from the conservatoires? What does it say about politics and power that even after the battle at the end of the book, the other Guilds are unwilling to accept the Hunter Guild? Are the qualities of the Hunter Guild good qualities? Necessary qualities?

6. Magical travel

"It's the fastest way for conjurors to travel inland. Now, where am I taking you?" – p.63

What are the different means of magical travel in the book? Would group members rather travel by ozoz, or by the root-network? Why? Why is the root-network that Bitsy's mum created important in the novel?

7. Magicalia

"Embossed in gold letters on the front cover was a single word: *MAGICALIA*." – p.25

What is "Magicalia"? Why is this the name of the book? Bitsy has her mum's special edition with notes that only she or her dad can read, but what makes an edition of a book special? Who has a special edition of a book? What makes it special when a different copy has the same words in it?

8. Riddlejax

"During those years, an imposter was in charge of the conservatoire – a man who called himself *Riddlejax*." – p.95

What do we learn about who Riddlejax is? Does his name suggest anything to the group? Does it reflect the unknowns about him? Does "Riddlejax" sound like a hero? A villain? Why?

9. Giverna

"Giverna winked. 'Conjurors have magicore-means of getting everything done. Watch and learn.'" – p.49

Why does Giverna secretly support Riddlejax? Are there any clues earlier in the book that she might be a traitor? Did anyone suspect her? Why?

10. Arkwright's Gyrowheel

"'And here we have the first Chancellor of the European Conservatoire of Conjuring,' Chancellor Hershel said with pride, 'Gilander Arkwright.'" – p.97

Look up the name "Arkwright" together – what does it mean? Is it a fitting name? Why? Now look at the words in "Gyrowheel" – what does this suggest? Why has Arkwright created the Gyrowheel? What's his purpose? And why does he then hide it, once completed? What does this say about power, even with the best intentions?