



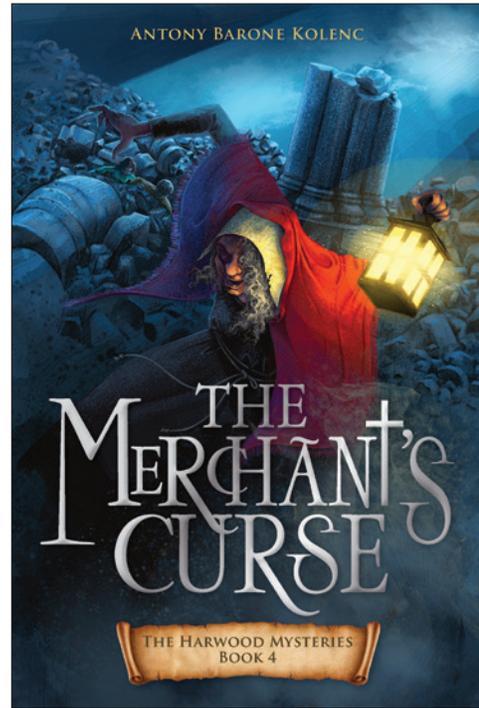
Before Reading

Explore the “How to Read Historical Fiction” section on pages vi and vii. Do some brief online research about life in twelfth-century England and in a typical abbey of that time. Watch a video, view illustrations, or read an article to gain some historical context.

During Reading

Think about the following questions:

- How does Xan’s familiarity with Holy Scripture influence how he sees himself and others? How does Scripture influence how I see myself and others?
- How are various characters affected by vanity? How does vanity drive their decision-making? How does vanity impact their self-perception? How does vanity affect how I see myself?
- What characters in Xan’s life are witnesses to their faith? How does their witness affect Xan? What witnesses of faith influence me in my life? How? Am I a witness to faith to someone else?



After Reading

Ask yourself questions such as the following:

- How does Xan’s trust in God affect how he responds to challenges and setbacks? What actions by other characters reflect whether they do or do not put their trust in the power of God and his will?
- Does Xan’s reception of the Sacrament of Reconciliation bring about a change of heart, or conversion, in him? If so, what is the change? If not, what changed his mind about how to save himself and Godric?
- Is Xan a witness to faith to the other characters? What do we see of Xan’s prayer life? How does my prayer life compare with what we see of Xan’s?
- Which characters turn away from their vanity-driven pursuits? Why do they turn away? What events provoke the changes? What vanities in today’s world tend to separate us from God?