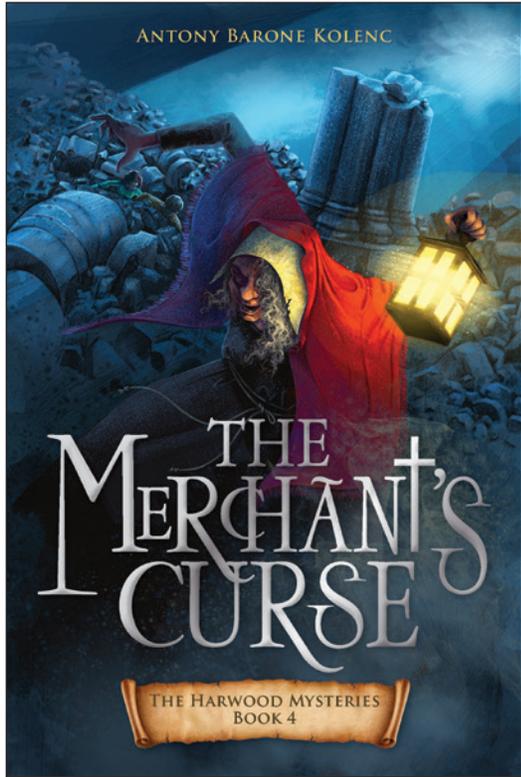




LITERACY COMPANION



The Merchant's Curse • The Harwood Mysteries, Book 4 • by Antony Barone Kolenc • ISBN 978-0-8294-5427-7



CONTENTS

Word Study 2

Comprehension 3

Plot 4

Vivid Characters and
Story Details 5

Character: Perception
versus Reality 6

Text-to-Self Connection 7

Continue Thinking
and Learning 8

NAME

DATE



Word Study

debris (p. 3) garbage, something cast off
stench (p. 12) very bad odor
commotion (p. 17) a noisy disturbance
reputable (p. 17) worthy of trust
homely (p. 20) having an unpleasant or plain appearance
agile (p. 22) flexible and quick
squandered (p. 30) wasted
throng (p. 33) a large crowd
ailment (p. 34) a sickness or disease
admiration (p. 37) a feeling of approval or appreciation
loathing (p. 39) a feeling of hatred or intense dislike

valiant (p. 47) having or showing courage
sever (p. 48) to cut off
perilous (p. 49) risky, full of danger
petrified (p. 53) too scared to move
malice (p. 66) the desire to do something mean or cruel
prevail (p. 67) to win
intervene (p. 137) to interrupt, to change or stop something
ordeal (p. 138) a terribly upsetting experience
infamy (p. 155) a reputation for evil

To explore more terms used in *The Merchant’s Curse* and their meanings, read pages 221–222 in the book.

Deepen your understanding of one of the words from the list above by completing the graphic organizer below.

| Word | Synonym | Antonym |
|--------------------------|---------------------------|---------|
| Definition | | |
| Sentences from the novel | In your original sentence | |

Comprehension

Answer the following questions in the space provided.

1. What is the name of the city in which the story takes place?

2. Whose life did Xan save at the ruins of the Cathedral as the novel begins?

3. Where had Xan first seen the woman referred to as “the witch”?

4. What kinds of things does Uncle William sell at his shop?

5. Who is Uncle William’s business partner at the beginning of the novel?

6. How much older than Xan is Nigel?

7. What two people are believed to be cursed?

8. Who is responsible for the curses?

9. In fact, what made those who are thought to be cursed ill?

10. What event causes Christina to see herself in a different light?

Plot

Sequence of Events

The order of events in a novel is called the plot. In the boxes below, number the events from *The Merchant's Curse* in the order in which they occurred from 1 (the first) through 10 (the last).

Godric, Nigel, and Xan run into the witch in the village.

Godric becomes ill.

Xan becomes ill.

Nigel proposes marriage to Christina.

Christina compares herself to a bird.

Xan solves the mystery of the curse.

The true identity of Lord Randoul is revealed.

Nigel and Xan go to the witch's dwelling.

Xan sees the witch for the first time.

An earthquake destroys Lincoln Cathedral.

Below, complete the letter Xan was writing to his friend Lucy on page 81 by telling her about one of the events listed in the activity above. Include Xan's thoughts and feelings about the event.

My truest friend, Lucy,
I enjoyed receiving your letter. I hope the rules are
not too difficult there.

Your friend,
Xan

Vivid Characters and Story Details

The Characters and Story Come Alive

Authors make stories more vivid by using adjectives. An adjective is a word used to describe a person, place, thing, or idea. Each group of words below lists four adjectives used to describe a character or place in the novel. Circle the adjective in each group that does not belong with the others.

- | | | | |
|----------------|-----------|------------|----------|
| 1. pleasant | horrid | ghastly | hideous |
| 2. luxurious | opulent | simple | majestic |
| 3. suspicious | quizzical | skeptical | naïve |
| 4. dilapidated | decrepit | flawless | ruined |
| 5. jovial | silent | boisterous | witty |

Christina’s Disguise

1. What does Xan mean when he says the following to Christina?

“You have a good and kind heart, though at times you disguise your best qualities.” (p. 136)

2. List at least three instances when Christina “disguised” what Xan believes to be her true kindly nature.

Character: Perception versus Reality

It was said that no man had ever seen the Master face-to-face and lived. (p. 44)

Xan was terrified by the mysterious Master. The existence of the Master and the appearance of his men, Mort and Ivo, at Uncle William’s shop frightened Xan and caused him to doubt his uncle’s word.

Below, in the box labeled “Before,” draw a picture that represents what Xan may have imagined the Master looked like before they met. In the box labeled “After,” draw a picture that represents what Xan saw when he met the Master. On the lines below the boxes, describe the difference between the two.

| The Master | |
|--|--|
| Before | After |
| | |

Text-to-Self Connection

Character Connections

Identify a choice made by either Xan or Christina in *The Merchant's Curse*. On the lines below, print the name of the character, the character's choice you identified, and why you agree or disagree with it.

Shining Examples

Xan often calls to mind things Lucy and Father Andrew have done or said in the past and reflects on how each of them might respond to a situation he is experiencing. In the space below, list two people in your life whose advice or example you look to when facing a challenge or decision. Below each name, describe a time when you followed their example or advice. If there are not two people in your life you would like to include, list historical figures or fictional characters whose example you follow instead.

Continue Thinking and Learning

POINT OF VIEW In a novel, the author lets us “hear” the inner thoughts of the character or characters. A character’s inner thoughts are called interior monologue. *The Merchant’s Curse* is written from the point of view of Xan. We hear his interior monologue and see things from his point of view. Rewrite a scene from the novel from the point of view of either Nigel or Christina that includes his or her interior monologue. Does seeing the action in the novel from the perspective of another character change your opinion of the character or make you see the character in a different light?

FORTRESS Architecture plays a big part in the Harwood Mysteries series, including in *The Merchant’s Curse*. Use the description of the Master’s fortress in Chapter 19 to make or draw a model or drawing of this unusual dwelling. How does the appearance of the fortress protect those who live there? What do the other dwellings mentioned in the novel tell you about the characters who live there?

FAIRY TALES Xan was concerned that the sheriff’s man would not believe that the witch had cursed them because it sounded more like a fairy tale than a true story. Research the characteristics of the fairy tale literary genre. Then read or reread popular fairy tales, such as Goldilocks and the Three Bears, Jack and the Beanstalk, and the Emperor’s New Clothes. Why do you think that some people remain so fond of fairy tales?

MAKE A PREDICTION Xan meets Reginald when he goes to the Master’s fortress. What do you predict is the relationship between Reginald and the Master? If he is the Master’s son, as Xan speculates, what part might Reginald play in the next book in the Harwood Mysteries series? If he is not the Master’s son, what other connection might he have to the Master or to the other characters in the story? Compose an eight-panel graphic novel-style story that illustrates your prediction. Use dialogue bubbles and text to support the images in each panel.