

Navigator

A novel study guide for

The Trumpeter of Krakow

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Life in fifteenth century Poland comes alive in *The Trumpeter of Krakow* by Eric P. Kelly. The story is about the Charnetski family members, who are fleeing their homeland in the Ukraine to meet with the king in Poland. Their house and lands have been destroyed. They carry a hollowed-out pumpkin with them, which is very unusual for the time of year, and the family's troubles continue as they arrive in Krakow. They meet with both good and evil as they settle into life in Krakow.

Higher-Level Questions for Discussion and Writing

While You Read...

1. What do you infer about the rider's intentions on p. 11? What evidence supports your inferences?
2. What do you think Jan Kanty means when he states, "These are dark days when men look with suspicion upon all who engage in investigation whether it be honest or dishonorable, godly or selfish." (p. 65)?
3. What do you think is the "mischief afoot" that is described on page 112?
4. Who do you think has the treasure? Use evidence from the novel to support your response. (p. 126)
5. Evaluate Joseph's decision to sound a warning on page 139. Do you think he made a good decision? Why or why not?
6. Why do you think the Charnetskis did not fall under the spell of the Great Tarnov Crystal or try to gain from its powers? Use evidence from the story to support your response.

Exploring the Story

1. What does the story tell us about life in Poland in the fifteenth century? What information does the author use to describe the Charnetski's way of life? Why do you think the author focuses on the topics of scholarly study during this period?
2. How does the author use foreshadowing to let you know something is going to happen? Give several examples. In each example, did things turn out the way you expected?
3. The author uses a number of similes throughout the novel. Choose a simile and explain why you think the author makes that comparison and how it helped you understand or visualize a character and/or situation.
4. What do you think about the final resting place for the Great Tarnov Crystal? Did the author make a good choice in this resting place? Why or why not? How would you have ended the book?
5. What is the significance of the Trumpeter and the broken notes of the Heynal in the story?
6. What details does the author provide to create the atmosphere of the setting? Could the story take place during another time or place in history? Why or why not?

Meeting the Characters

1. What words would you use to describe Peter of the Button Face and Johann Tring? What traits do the men have in common? How are they different?
2. Select one of the characters from the story and provide evidence that he/she is the *hero/heroine* of this story.
3. “There was magic in the name of Jan Kanty.” (p. 46) Think of a modern day figure who has the same impact as Jan Kanty. Describe their similarities and differences.
4. How does Pan Kreutz change through the novel? What are the influences that affect these changes?
5. “For a second the woman’s heart quailed before the fresh difficulties, but she forgot self at the look in her husband’s face.” (p. 28) What does this statement tell us about Mrs. Charnetski’s character? Use other evidence from the story to support your response.
6. Does Joseph fit this description, “for there is that in a youth which draws him into such fighting.” (p. 179)? Use examples from the text to support your response.
7. Did the king act wisely when he agreed to plea bargain with Peter of the Button Face? Why or why not?

Understanding the Ideas

1. What does this novel demonstrate about the idea of courage? Which major characters demonstrate courage? How do they demonstrate it? What are other ways you can be courageous?
2. “What at first [seems to be] incredible is not necessarily false since truth very often has the appearance of a lie.” (Footnote, p. 169) Explain this quote and apply it to several occurrences in the novel.
3. “Surely never had treasure a safer resting place.” (p. 205) Would this be true today? Provide details to support your response.
4. When we say that something is “too good to be true,” what is meant by that expression? How does this saying apply to this book?
5. The struggle between good and evil is prevalent in this novel. Select several events in the story and explain how they relate to this struggle.
6. Several of the characters lose something important to them in the novel. Select a character and describe his/her loss. How does this change him/her?

Connecting to You

1. On page 20, Joseph is told, “It is a long story, my son, and one that I will tell you at a later time.” Think of a time when you were told, “I’ll tell you later” or “I’ll tell you when you are older.” How does that make you feel?
2. Based on the description of studies at the University, would you want to be a student/scholar during this time period? Why or why not?
3. The father looked down at him in astonishment. “You,” he answered, “you? And how did you find such a place?” (p. 51) Describe a time when you have had a solution to a problem. Did others take you seriously?

4. On page 100, Joseph describes studying and practicing Latin. What is something you have had to practice and work hard at to succeed? Describe the process. Was it worth it?
5. On page 138, Joseph overcame his fear. Describe a time when you have been afraid. Did you overcome your fear? How?

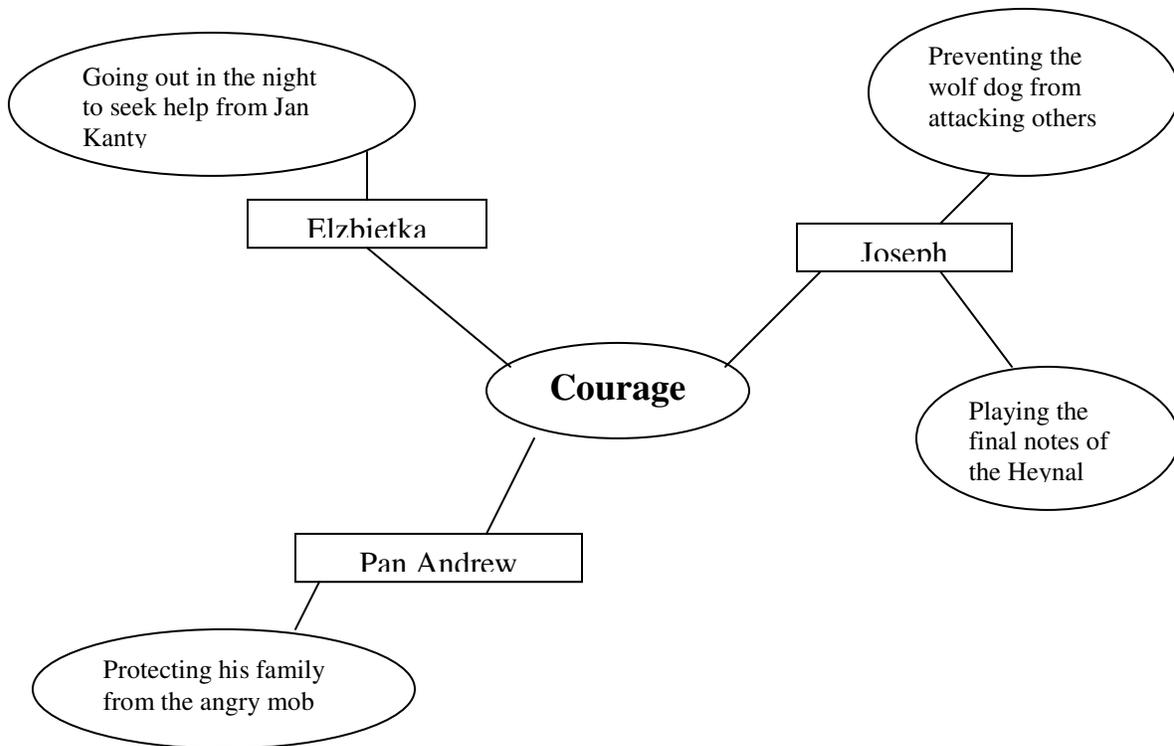
Differentiated Activities for Gifted Learners

- Complete a Literature Web about the novel. Fill in responses to each of the bubbles, using the questions below as a guide.
 - Key Words: What were some words and phrases in the novel that were especially interesting or important?
 - Feelings: What feelings did you have reading this novel? What feelings did the characters have? How were those feelings expressed?
 - Ideas: What was the main idea or theme of the novel? What other major ideas and concepts were important? What message was the author trying to give about those ideas?
 - Images/Symbols: How did the author use description and imagery in the novel? What sensory images came to your mind? How did the author use symbols?
 - Structure: What type of writing was this? What literary and style elements did the author use? How did the structure of the writing contribute to the meaning of the novel?

- Choose one of the following quotations from the novel. Write a persuasive essay in which you discuss whether or not you agree with the ideas expressed, using examples from the novel, other books you have read, or your experiences. Use the Hamburger Model as a guide for your writing, and follow the steps of the writing process to review and revise.
 - “If it is mere curiosity, be assured that knowledge will bring nothing but pain.” (p. 58)
 - “We can’t have too many friends just now.” (p. 60)
 - “Gold – gold – gold – that is what every man wants.” (p. 91)

- Write a book review about the novel. In your review, state and explain your point of view about the quality of the novel, and provide specific details about why you would or would not recommend this book to other students your age. Use the Hamburger Model as a guide, and follow the steps of the writing process to review and revise.

- Create a concept map exploring how one of these ideas is explored in the novel: courage, change, greed, or loyalty. Use specific characters and events to demonstrate how the concept is developed. Then write at least two generalizations about the concept. A sample concept map has been started for you.



- In the story, the king tells about the hero Krakus who defeated the dragon. The castle is built over the cave where the battle took place. Write a legend about the battle of Krakus and the dragon.
- Do a “word study” of one or more of the vocabulary words (listed below) from the novel. Find out the definition of the word, synonyms and antonyms, word stems, and origin. Then try to find at least three other words that use one or more of your word’s stems, and create an example to explain your word (a sentence, an analogy, a picture or diagram, etc.) Use the Vocabulary Web to organize your responses.

conflagration (p. 4)
 quarterstaff (p. 9)
 capered (p. 15)
 cowl (p. 22)
 stalwart (p. 24)
 necromancer (p. 36)
 credence (p. 40)
 ruffians (p. 44)
 subterfuge (p. 52)

knickerbockers (p. 5)
 surliness (p. 11)
 ludicrous (p. 21)
 burgomaster (p. 23)
 quailed (p. 28)
 ramshackle (p. 38)
 alchemy (p. 42)
 derisively (p. 45)
 crucible (p. 62)

nave (p. 76)
casement (p. 84)
pillory (p. 99)
pandemonium (p. 121)
halberd (p. 130)

bequeathed (p. 78)
tempestuous (p. 88)
ruminate (p. 105)
despondency (p. 129)
deft (p. 133)

Interdisciplinary and Research Connections

- Research medieval medical practices. Are there any parallels to current medical practices? What practices were the safest based on what we know now? Which were the most dangerous?
- The Philosophers' Stone is described on page 87. Research information about the stone. Compare it with the Sorcerer's Stone described in the first Harry Potter book.
- Several famous landmarks are mentioned in the novel, including Wawel Castle, the Church of Our Lady (St. Mary's), and The Cloth Hall. Find out more about each of these places, including their history and what visitors can see at these sites today. Then decide which of these places you would most like to visit if you could choose only one on a trip to Poland and write a persuasive essay explaining why. Some websites are listed in the resources section to help get you started.
- Eric P. Kelly refers to several historical figures in the book, including Jan Kanty (John Cantius), Nicholas Copernicus, and Ivan the Great. Choose one of these figures and research their historical contributions. Why did the author choose to include real people in this work of fiction? How does it help tell the story?
- Read another book that involves a mystical object or legend. Then create a Venn diagram to compare *The Trumpeter of Krakow* and the other book.

Resources

Teacher resources

- Baskin, B. H., & Harris, K. H. (1980). *Books for the gifted child*. New York: Bowker.
- Boyce, L. N. (1997). *A guide to teaching research skills and strategies in grades 4-12*. Williamsburg, VA: Center for Gifted Education.
- Center for Gifted Education. (1998). *Guide to teaching a language arts curriculum for high-ability learners*. Dubuque, IA: Kendall/Hunt.
- Miller-Lachmann, L. (1992). *Our family, our friends, our world: An annotated guide to significant multicultural books for children and teenagers*. New Providence, NJ: R. R. Bowker.
- National Council of Teachers of English & International Reading Association. (1996). *Standards of learning for the English language arts*. Urbana, IL: Author.

Paul, R. (1992). *Critical thinking: What every person needs to survive in a rapidly changing world*. Rohnert Park, CA: Foundation for Critical Thinking.
VanTassel-Baska, J., & Little, C.A. (Eds.). (2003). *Content-based curriculum for high-ability learners*. Waco, TX: Prufrock Press.

For further reading – some other books you might enjoy by Eric P. Kelly

The Golden Star of Halich: A Tale of the Red Land in 1362

At the Sign of the Golden Compass: A Tale of the Printing House of Christopher Plantin in Antwerp, 1576

The Christmas Nightingale: Three Christmas Stories from Poland

Useful websites:

<http://www.virtualsalt.com/litterms.htm> (a glossary of literary terms)

<http://www.m-w.com> (Merriam-Webster Dictionary site)

<http://www.rootsweb.com/~polczest/history.html> (Krakow History)

<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/mpolo44-46.html> (The Tartars)

<http://www.learner.org/exhibits/middleages/morhealt.html> (Medieval Medicine)

<http://www.crystalinks.com/philosopherstone.html> (The Philosophers' Stone)

<http://www.krakow-info.com/castle.htm> (Wawel Castle)

http://krakow.warsaw1.net/krakow_sightseeing (Krakow Sightseeing)