

Sophie Quire and the Last Storyguard

BY JONATHAN AUXIER



ABOUT THE BOOK

It's been two years since Peter Nimble and Sir Tode rescued the kingdom of HazelPort. In that time, they have traveled far and wide in search of adventure. Now they have been summoned by Professor Cake for a new mission: To find a twelve-year-old bookmender named Sophie Quire.

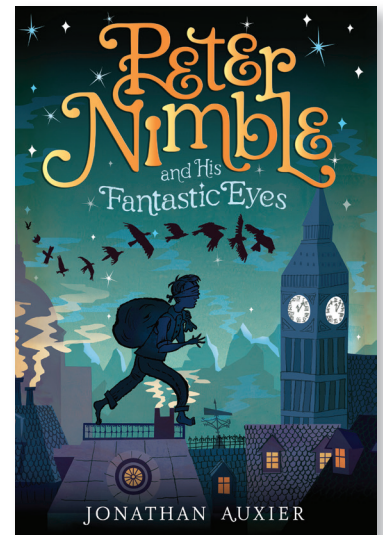
Sophie knows little beyond the four walls of her father's bookshop, where she repairs old books and dreams of escaping the confines of her dull life. But when a strange boy and his talking cat/horse companion show up with a rare and mysterious book, she finds herself pulled into an adventure beyond anything she has ever read.

Praise

- ★ "This novel should be in the hands of every human young enough at heart to be enchanted by the written word." —*Kirkus Reviews*, **starred review**
- ★ "... rife with suspense, droll and poignant moments, and the occasional brutal confrontation, Auxier's worthy, absorbing follow-up is also a thought-provoking look at classic literary tropes, including their fanciful, sometimes darker, nature and themes... Ultimately, this affecting, compelling story stands on its own, embodying and highlighting the power and impact of tales well told—and why they endure." —*Booklist*, **starred review**
- ★ "In the grand tradition of Cornelia Funke's *Inkheart* and John Stephens's *The Emerald Atlas* comes this companion novel to Auxier's *Peter Nimble and His Fantastic Eyes*. ...This author so clearly views books as the elixir of life, and this conviction oozes out of the text....A fantastically done fantasy that will be enthusiastically embraced by middle grade bibliophiles." —*School Library Journal*, **starred review**
- ★ "Exceptional character development, even minor characters display vulnerability, interesting quirks, and depth. The major characters, even the villains, shine, with layers revealed through actions and very natural dialogue." —*Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books*, **starred review**

Author

Jonathan Auxier is the bestselling author of *The Night Gardener* and *Peter Nimble and His Fantastic Eyes*, which the *Wall Street Journal* called "as delightful a magical story as readers . . . and *The Night Gardener*, which earned three starred reviews. will hope to find." He teaches children's literature and lives in Pittsburgh with his family. www.thescop.com.



Age range: 8+

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

- Within this guide, opportunities to have discussions and complete activities are shared. The vocabulary section will focus on word choice and vocabulary choices of the author. The next section, Classroom Activities & Discussion Questions is loosely separated into four sections (Who, What, Where, and When) just as *Sophie Quire and the Last Storyguard* is.

Spoiler Alert: One set of questions within the Where section includes connections between *Sophie Quire* and its companion *Peter Nimble*. If you have not read *Peter Nimble*, some of the questions may be spoilers.

- At the end of the guide, Common Core State Standards' Anchor Standards are listed that can be met when the books are extended using the activities and discussion questions.
 - Because the book is appropriate for a wide range of grades, anchor standards are shared to allow teachers at each level to match with their grade level.

VOCABULARY

- Adverbs are description words used to describe a verb, adjective, or another adverb. For example, by saying "... as Sir Tode returned from his chase, his small horse hooves clapping merrily against the stones (p. 22)" allows the reader to hear the hooves quite differently than just "small horse hooves clapping against the stones." Jonathan Auxier uses adverbs throughout *Sophie Quire* to ensure that the reader can experience the imagery of what is happening in the story. Some examples are: irrevocably (p. 22), valiantly (p. 335), eminently (p. 386) and ceaselessly (p. 437). What other adverb examples can you find within the story? How do adverbs change your reading experience?

Extension: The author also uses adjectives, words that describe nouns, to help with imagery. Revise the following sentences by adding adjectives and adverbs to make the sentences more descriptive:

- The dog ran down the street.
- The girl went shopping.
- The cat was sleeping.

After refining the sentence, switch your sentence with a partner and draw each other's sentences. This will show you how descriptive you were when writing. Did you add enough description in your sentence?

- In addition to adverbs and adjectives, Jonathan Auxier used very precise word choice throughout *Sophie Quire*. As you read the novel, complete a list of words as a class, in a vocabulary notebook or a digital version of a vocabulary notebook, which the students do not know. Try to limit to tier 1 (basic words) and tier 2 (words that appear frequently in many different disciplines) words. Make sure to include students in the creation of the list to ensure the words you are teaching are unknown and ones that interest them. For each word selected, follow Robert Marzano's Six-Step Vocabulary Instruction.

1. Provide a description, explanation, or example of the new term.
2. Ask students to restate the description, explanation, or example in their own words.
3. Ask students to construct a picture, symbol, or graphic representing the word.
4. Engage students periodically in activities that help them add to their knowledge of the terms in their notebooks.
5. Periodically ask students to discuss the terms with one another.
6. Involve students periodically in games that allow them to play with terms.

Resources: http://www.altonschoools.org/media/pdf/Marzano_Vocab.pdf

<http://www.ascd.org/publications/educational-leadership/sept09/vol67/num01/Six-Steps-to-Better-Vocabulary-Instruction.aspx>

<http://education.ky.gov/curriculum/conpro/engla/Documents/MarzanosSixStepsFlipBookVocab.pdf>

Some fun words found within the text:

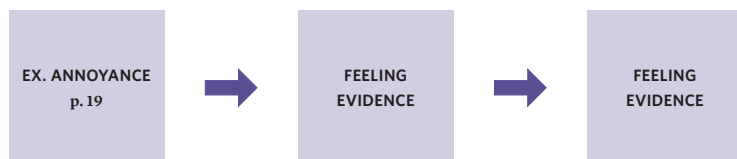
<i>sentries</i> , 5	<i>invigorating</i> , 50	<i>tuberous</i> , 127	<i>emaciated</i> , 251	<i>wrenching</i> , 350
<i>lupine</i> , 7	<i>erudition</i> , 71	<i>unconscionable</i> , 142	<i>albeit</i> , 282	<i>imperceptible</i> , 351
<i>compatriots</i> , 11	<i>evading</i> , 78	<i>demeanor</i> , 156	<i>reveries</i> , 292	<i>pragmatic</i> , 372
<i>gallant</i> , 15	<i>derelict</i> , 85	<i>dithering</i> , 158	<i>scrivener</i> , 311	<i>impending</i> , 377
<i>interloper</i> , 17	<i>impervious</i> , 92	<i>disdainful</i> , 161	<i>abyss</i> , 323	<i>trivialities</i> , 391
<i>riffled</i> , 19	<i>liberating</i> , 108	<i>relish</i> , 191	<i>petrify</i> , 327	<i>endeavor</i> , 397
<i>retort</i> , 20	<i>hapless</i> , 116	<i>pungent</i> , 196	<i>unbridled</i> , 328	<i>revulsion</i> , 439
<i>verbatim</i> , 25	<i>poised</i> , 118	<i>frivolous</i> , 212	<i>toiled</i> , 335	<i>astute</i> , 442
<i>stupefying</i> , 32	<i>alluding</i> , 123	<i>scop</i> , 245	<i>plight</i> , 336	<i>digression</i> , 443

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

WHO

Sophie Quire

- Why does Sophie feel like an outsider in her own town?
- Why does Sophie react with anger when she is “rescued” by Peter? (p. 20)
- Sophie won’t talk about her mom with Peter—why do you think this is? (p. 25)
- Sophie uses the word NEVER very strategically and feels it has great power. How does she use the word originally? How does she change her use? Why is the word NEVER so powerful?
- When Sophie throws the silkworm at Taro, she yells, “I’m sorry!” Why does she yell this? What does this tell you about her character? (p. 122)
- On p. 204, you see a change in Sophie’s feelings for Peter. How does her feelings change throughout the book? How does Peter’s feelings change? Create a flow map for each character showing the different stages their feelings went through with evidence from the text to support your conclusion.



- On p. 359, Sophie blames the loss of some characters on herself. Do you believe it is Sophie’s fault? If so, why? If not, who do you blame?
- Why did Sophie not say goodbye to her parents? Why is she inclined to leave? (p. 444)

Peter Nimble

- What did Peter say on p. 135 that made Sophie attack him? What did this scene tell us about Peter and Sophie’s characters?
- Sophie observes many scars on Peter’s back (p. 251). What do these scars tell us about the life Peter has led? Do you believe the scars are from his adventures or from his time as a thief?
- When Peter went to retrieve the four books, he was quite scared. What made him so nervous when he had done so many things like this in the past? How did Sir Tode help him overcome his fear? Why’d the distance between the lamps seem to get smaller? (p. 402-405)
- At the end of *Sophie Quire and the Last Storyguard*, Peter no longer wears his blindfold. Why does he now feel comfortable without it? Who helped him get used to it? Why would he want to be able to see now?

Prigg

- Use resources to teach about totalitarian dictatorships. One good resource is the “Rise of Totalitarian Dictators” PowerPoint created by Georgetown Independent School District (<http://www.georgetownisd.org/site/handlers/filedownload.ashx?moduleinstanceid=16063&dataid=29093&FileName=Rise%20of%20Totalitarian%20Dictators.ppt>) as well as the You Tube video “Rise of Totalitarian Dictators” (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IPENFS7--y8>). How is Prigg’s ideas of destroying “nonsense” similar to totalitarian dictatorships like Hitler and Stalin?

Extension: Both Prigg and totalitarian dictators use propaganda to their favor. How did history’s dictators use propaganda to spread their hate? Did it help them in their endeavor? How did Prigg’s propaganda help him with the zeitgeist?

- What does Prigg say is the reason to fear all the nonsense in his world? What ends up being the true reason why?

Madame Eldritch

- Was there any foreshadowing when we originally meet Madame Eldritch that she was more powerful than was let on? (p. 31-32)
- *The Book of Who* directed Sophie to Madame Eldritch when she asked, “Who in Bustleburgh knows what to do with *The Book of Who*?” However, Madame Eldritch turns out to be quite dangerous. What could Sophie have asked the book instead?

Extension: What makes Madam Eldritch so dangerous? How was she a part of Sophie’s success in the end?

WHAT

- Prereading reflection activity: Have students journal answering the questions: What is a book? How is a book powerful?
- What would compel the author to begin the book with an introduction by a narrator in 2nd person? Who do you think the narrator is? (p. 3-4)
- What is Sophie’s dad’s first reaction when he sees *The Book of Who*? Why? (p. 61)
- What are rhetorical questions? (p. 49) Why is Sophie surprised to receive an answer to her question?

- What would you choose if given the dilemma on **p. 143**?
- On **p. 147**, Professor Cake uses the term Dead Certain to describe mindless people who are just pawns in the progress of their world. Are there people in real life that you can compare to Dead Certains?
- Throughout *Sophie Quire*, Jonathan Auxier made sure that his readers could picture the story. He did this by not only having precise vocabulary (see Vocabulary section) but also by using figurative or descriptive language to ensure imagery. Some examples are:

Simile: “This thought made [Sophie] feel less like a book mender than an undertaker—dressing corpses for a funeral.” (**p. 33**)

Imagery: “The light from the pregnant moon reflected off the river as it flowed into Grimmwald.” (**p. 85**)

Personification: “The paths through the forest were muddy and narrow, many of them choked with ivy and weeds.” (**p. 181**)

What other sentences can you find within *Sophie Quire* that are filled with figurative and descriptive language? How does this type of language enhance your reading experience?

- If you had access to all four of the books, what would you ask the books?
- Scrivener Behn has tattoos all over his body that allow him to speak and understand any language (**p. 322**). Why is this important to his line of work?

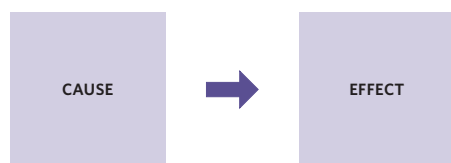
Reflection: If you could speak and understand any language, what would it be and why?

- What was Prigg’s ultimate plan at Pyre Day? Why did he believe that destroying all stories would eliminate all “nonsense” in the world?

Reflection: What would happen if all fiction was eliminated from the world? What would we be missing out on? What would be considered nonsense, and what would be considered scientific?

- What made the zeitgeist swallow Prigg? (**p. 398**) Why’d it go after the town? (**p. 440**)
- Sir Tode gives titles to his adventures such as “A Leap of Faith” and “The Crackling Inferno.” If you were to break up *Sophie Quire and the Last Storyguard* into different adventures, how would you break it up? What would you title each adventure?
- What has primarily changed in the town of Bustleburgh? Compare and contrast the town and its people from the beginning to the end of the book.

Extension: Create a cause and effect graphic organizer stating the causes for the changes within the city.



WHERE

Allusions (Where have you heard this before?)

- The mythology of the mandrake root includes many superstitions including the fear of a mandrake’s scream. On **p. 112**, Sophie realizes that Taro is a mandrake root. How has Madam Eldritch captured him without being killed by his scream?

Extension: Where else have you read or heard about mandrake roots?

- The baron had many fantastical creatures within his menagerie (**p. 196**) and many different types of magical beings reside at The Last Resort (**p. 307**) including some that are unique to Auxier’s book, some that are versions of actual creatures, and other creatures from mythology. Which of the creatures did Auxier invent? Which of the creatures are versions of real animals? And which creatures come from mythology?

Extension: If the creature/magical being came from mythology, what myths/stories have you read that you know these creatures from? What do you know about the creatures?

- Nixies are sirens who can shapeshift into the fears of those near them (**p. 271**). This is both similar and different to sirens in most myths. How are nixies different than sirens in stories such as *The Odyssey* by Homer and *The Sea of Monsters* by Rick Riordan?

Extension: What other mythological creatures have you read about that are similar to nixies?

Connections: Where *Peter Nimble and his Fantastic Eyes* and *Sophie Quire and the Last Storyguard* meet

- Peter’s personality in *Sophie Quire* is quite different than it was in *Peter Nimble* which took place 2 years prior. Why do you think Peter changed? How has he changed?
- What words would Peter use to describe himself now?
- What words would Sophie use to describe him?
- Sophie and Peter are both heroes in their books, but they go about it in very different ways. Create a compare/contrast graphic organizer comparing and contrasting Sophie and Peter’s personalities and takes on life.
- Why is Peter still blindfolded even though he now has his emerald eyes? (**p. 15**)

- On **p. 206**, Sir Tode is not pleased to come face to face with clockwork. He has a similar reaction when he encounters an ape on **p. 215**. Why does he react this way?
- How was Peter's experience on The Last Resort similar to his experience on the raven's nest in *Peter Nimble*? How are the two structures alike?

WHEN

- When Peter enters Sophie's story (**p. 15**), how is Peter perceived by Sophie? How does Peter view himself?
- When Peter turns away on p. 38, what does this hint at? When you read **p. 265**, check your prediction. Were you correct in what the foreshadowing meant?
- When the fourth Storyguard appears on **p. 331**, were you surprised? Was there any hints throughout the story that would have helped you predict?
- When Sophie enters the zeitgeist's mouth to kill it, she enters "The Crackling Inferno" and lives; however, like Sir Tode points out, we do not actually know what happened inside the zeitgeist. Write a short story from Sophie's point of view with what happened inside of the zeitgeist while on Akrasia's back. Use clues from when they escape to help you determine what happened.

Extension: Trade stories with a peer and peer revise by helping them add more detail to their story. Point out places where they could add more imagery.

- When the narrator states that "a fondness had formed between [Sophie and Peter]—the sort of fondness that might one day grow into the stuff of legend and song," what does this mean? What do you predict is going to happen with Sophie and Peter?

COMMON CORE STANDARDS

COLLEGE AND CAREER READINESS ANCHOR STANDARDS

Key Ideas and Details

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.1 Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.3 Analyze how and why individuals, events, or ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.

Craft and Structure

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.4 Interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text, including determining technical, connotative, and figurative meanings, and analyze how specific word choices shape meaning or tone.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.5 Analyze the structure of texts, including how specific sentences, paragraphs, and larger portions of the text (e.g., a section, chapter, scene, or stanza) relate to each other and the whole.

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.9 Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics in order to build knowledge or to compare the approaches the authors take.

Vocabulary Acquisition and Use

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.L.4 Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases by using context clues, analyzing meaningful word parts, and consulting general and specialized reference materials, as appropriate.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.L.5 Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.L.6 Acquire and use accurately a range of general academic and domain-specific words and phrases sufficient for reading, writing, speaking, and listening at the college and career readiness level; demonstrate independence in gathering vocabulary knowledge when encountering an unknown term important to comprehension or expression.

Text Types and Purposes

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.3 Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details and well-structured event sequences.

Production and Distribution of Writing

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.5 Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach.