

THE ARTIFACT HUNTERS



About the book:

Isaac Wolf can travel through time. But he's also in a race against it.



With tensions in Prague rising at the height of World War II, Isaac Wolf is forced to leave home with nothing more than a small backpack and a pendant in the shape of an eternity knot. His parents believe the pendant will keep him safe--if he can discover what it really means.

This clue leads him to Rookskill Castle, home of the Special Alternative Intelligence Unit where gifted children can learn to harness their powers to support the Allies' cause. With the help of his new friends and an antique watch that allows him to travel through time, Isaac must unlock his own powers and uncover the true meaning of the eternity knot. The only way he can do that, though, is by hunting for a series of magical artifacts that are scattered throughout the past . . . and Isaac isn't the only artifact hunter. Soon he finds himself in a race against a threat just as deadly as the war itself--one that his parents had been trying to shield him from all along.

Age Range: 10 and up

Grade Level: 5 - 6

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About the author--Janet Fox:



Janet Fox writes award-winning fiction and non-fiction for children of all ages. Her published works include the non-fiction middle grade book *GET ORGANIZED WITHOUT LOSING IT*, and three YA historical romances: *FAITHFUL FORGIVEN* and *SIRENS*. Janet's debut middle grade novel *THE CHARMED CHILDREN OF ROOKSKILL CASTLE* received starred reviews from Kirkus, Booklist, Publishers Weekly, and Shelf Awareness, is on a number of state lists, is a Junior Library Guild selection and won SCBWI's Crystal Kite award. Her debut picture book, *VOLCANO DREAMS: A STORY OF YELLOWSTONE* features the science behind the Yellowstone super volcano *THE*

ARTIFACT HUNTERS is a companion book for *THE CHARMED CHILDREN* titled *THE ARTIFACT HUNTERS* and she has several more projects in the wings. Janet is a 2010 graduate of the MFA/Writing for Children and Young Adults program at Vermont College of Fine Arts. A former high school English teacher, former regional advisor for the Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators, Janet lives with her family in Bozeman, Montana.

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Pre-Reading Discussion:

- An artifact is defined as an object made by a human being, typically an item of cultural or historical interest. Discuss how culture and history enhances the mystery and intrigue of artifacts.
 - Study the illustration on the book jacket. Identify the artifacts featured there.
 - If the kids featured on the cover are the artifact hunters, predict why they need to find them. What is at stake if they fail?
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Post-Reading Discussion:

Isaac had made magic happen. Isaac had made a disguise. A shift, that grew out of his startled fear and encompassed them both.

But he didn't know he'd done it.

Not yet (14).

- Examine the peril Isaac has been unsuspectedly thrown into – suddenly separated from his beloved parents during wartime, being subjected to the terror of demonic monster, and being thrown into a familiar world of darkness, dragons, and Seelie Fae. Is he prepared for the quest before him? Explain your answer.
 - His parents seem to have known of an ominous calling placed upon Isaac, their son, a mission involving dark magic. Where and how did they discover this information about their son?
 - In this scene, Isaac's fearful emotional reaction sparked his ability to shapeshift.
 - Consider how shapeshifting in this way changed who Isaac once was and will, ultimately, become.
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As a fae whose heart is filled with desire, Moloch waits for human cruelty and selfishness to tear at the fragile fabric and stretch all the ancient boundaries to breaking. Yet, another hate-filled human war has made the boundaries, those thin places, very, very easy to cross (22).

- Compare Moloch with Isaac. Which character is rooted in strength and purpose? Is Isaac even a fraction of a threat to Moloch? Explain your answer.
 - In this scene, Moloch refers to WWII as the opportune time for him to fulfill his desire to overcome the world with hate and cruelty. Determine how the Nazis mirrored the horror buried deep in Moloch's heart.
 - If artifacts are termed to be historical objects of the past, consider the roles they play in the "fragile fabric" of "ancient boundaries."
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Isaac picked up the watch and turned the crown, setting the timepiece to ticking, closed the face, gripped it tight in his fist so the cold skull dug into his palm, and fell into a whirlwind (87).

- Analyze how his grandfather and father quietly prepared Isaac to eventually travel through time. Make a connection between his grandfather's mechanical and his father's historical references and the quest Isaac has been called upon to do.
 - Explain the importance of not interacting with the past. Why was Isaac warned not to do so?
 - Consider how time travel involves stretching beyond ancient boundaries. List the risks involved in doing so, both to Isaac and to humankind.
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If Isaac was an amplifier, if he could make magic stronger – good and bad magic – he needed to control it at all costs. Because he was sure that not only had evil followed him to Rookskill, he could make – why, he might have already have made – the evil worse (162).

- To amplify means to increase, strengthen, and intensify. Consider the magnitude of responsibility Isaac possessed by owning this type of magic.
- Early in the story, Isaac unwittingly permitted his emotions to cause his to shapeshift. How has Isaac changed since he was separated from his parents?
- Tell why Isaac is the only one who can defeat Moloch. Explain how his magical gift became his ultimate strength.

Writing Activity:

In *THE ARTIFACT HUNTERS*, Isaac learned how to maximize his gift by concentrating on good magic, rather than evil. In fact, he was transformed into good when he did.

Write an essay exploring how Isaac’s magical gift is a metaphor for life, in that humanity becomes what is focused upon.

Author’s Notes:

Though *THE ARTIFACT HUNTERS* is a work of fiction, it is filled with historical facts! Use the consolidated Author’s Notes listed on the following page as inspiration to write a short research paper illustrating how a historical reference was used to enhance the story. Cite pages in which the artifact was referenced in the book. Share your work with the class.



Death's Head Watch:

When I began writing *The Artifact Hunters* a certain historical artifact came to my attention. Scary-looking but also fascinating, a Death's Head Watch that happened to pop up in my research immediately inspired a story having to do with time.

In the 17 th and 18 th centuries, certain pocket watches were housed in a case that resembled a human skull. These watches are creepy, but that was the point – they were meant to remind the user that death is always on the horizon. Hence some were inscribed with the words *memento mori* (remember that you will die).

Time Travel:

Albert Einstein, in his theories of General and Special Relativity, has a lot to say about time. Specifically, Einstein suggests that all time is relative, looking from one fixed point in time or space to another. In addition, gravity affects time by bending space so that objects move on a curved path, causing what physicists refer to as “time dilation”.

Mary Shelley's Frankenstein

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Celtic Mythology: The Faerie Courts.

In Scottish mythology, the Realm of Faerie is inhabited by two types of fae: the “good” and the “wicked”. The good faeries are members of the Seelie Court, and generally get along with humans, playing pranks but also acting in helpful fashion. The Seelie behave in a fun-loving or “silly” way (the word silly is derived from the same root as Seelie).

Prague's Astronomical Clock

Naturally, in a story that features time travel, the Antikythera mechanism, a Death's Head Watch, and a boy from Prague, I felt it was important to include the fascinating Prague Astronomical Clock in the Old Town Square. One of Prague's most well-known and arresting attractions, it is more than a timepiece, and because it dates from 1410, is also the world's oldest operating clock. In addition to an astronomical dial, which follows the cycles of sun and moon, there is, on the hour, the “walk of the Apostles”, and figures flanking the clock that also move.



COMMON CORE STANDARDS ALIGNMENT:

Reading Literature: RL.1, RL.2, RL.3, RL.4, RL.7, RL.10 Writing: W.2, W.3, W.4, W.7

Speaking & Listening: SL.1, SL.2, SL.4, SL.6

Guide created by Debbie Gonzales, MFA

