

A Curriculum Guide to

***Keeper of the Lost Cities***

By Shannon Messenger

**About the Book**

Sophie Foster, who lives in San Diego with her family, just doesn't fit in. She's a lonely twelve-year-old prodigy with a photographic memory and a secret ability to read minds. So she's thrilled to learn of a place where she might belong: a vibrant world of elves who live in Lost Cities like Atlantis. But moving there isn't easy. Even in the Lost Cities, Sophie stands out among her new friends because of her mysterious upbringing and amazing telepathic talents. Her past and her powers lead Sophie into dangerous adventures as she tries to help those she left behind—even when it puts her own life at risk.

**Prereading Questions**

What does it mean to belong? Does belonging to a group or society require conformity? Can you belong and still maintain your individuality?

**Setting**

The following questions contained in this section particularly address the Common Core State Standards: (RL.4-7.1) (RL.4-5.3)

1. Compare the Forbidden Cities of Earth and how humans live there to the Lost Cities and how the elves and the other creatures live there. How are the two places and their inhabitants alike? How are they different?
2. Edaline explains to Sophie that the world of Lost Cities is “talent-based.” What talents does Sophie have and what can she do with them? What special abilities do her friends have? Find evidence of how important the talents are at Foxfire school. Name some of the other talents, and what people with them can do.
3. Describe Foxfire, Sophie's new school. What does it look like? What are the grade levels? How do Mentors and students interact? What classes does Sophie take? Compare Foxfire to your school, analyzing how they are similar and different.
4. Alden says of Grady and Edaline, “They run an animal preserve at Havenfield, so they always have all kinds of exciting things going on.” Describe the preserve, some of the animals in it, and examples of the excitement. What does the preserve tell the reader about Grady and Edaline? What does it convey about the world of the Lost Cities?

**Plot & Structure**

The following questions contained in this section particularly address the Common Core State Standards: RL.5-6.5

5. The novel opens with a preface showing a scene later in the book in which Sophie has been kidnapped. What is the purpose of the preface? How might it affect a reader? How does it foreshadow the kidnapping and other elements of the story?
6. The first chapter also introduces many of the book's themes and foreshadows plot and character. After finishing the novel, go back and look closely at pages 1 and 2. What do you learn about Sophie, her personality, and how she's treated by those around her? How are these elements developed later in the book?
7. Many chapters in this book end with cliff-hangers, that is, paragraphs or sentences that leave the reader hanging. Find some examples of cliff-hangers and analyze how they create suspense. For each cliff-hanger you consider, find where and how the suspense is resolved, either in the next chapter or later in the book. Why does the author use cliff-hangers?

### **Characters**

The following questions contained in this section particularly address the Common Core State Standards: RL.4-7.3

8. Even in the Lost Cities, people feel strong emotions such as jealousy, anger, and grief. Find evidence of these feelings in characters other than Sophie. What role do strong feelings play in moving the story forward? Give specific examples.
9. What is Sophie's relationship to her human family? Give examples of how it is revealed in words and actions. How have her special abilities affected her family life? What is her relationship with her human family after she moves to the Lost Cities? How does it affect the plot?
10. Describe Sophie's relationship with Grady and Edaline. Why did Alden suggest she live with them? Why is Sophie's presence hard for Grady and Edaline? How does their relationship change throughout the book and what's it like at the end?
11. In chapter 43, Stina tells Sophie something about Biana that hurts Sophie's feelings. What does Stina tell her and why? How does Biana's attitude toward Sophie change during the story? Give specific examples. Why does Biana's view change?
12. Compare Fitz and Dex. How are they similar? How are they different? How do the two boys feel about each other? How does each of them feel about Sophie? Compare their families, too. Give evidence for your answers.
13. Describe Bronte and his role in the plot. Why is he so powerful? Why does he oppose Sophie? Do things get better between them?

## **Themes**

The following questions contained in this section particularly address the Common Core State Standards: RL.4-7.2

14. Sophie has always felt different, like “a freak.” Why did she feel that way when she lived among humans? Find places in the story where she struggles with feeling different and lonely. Fitz tells her that being with the elves is “where you belong.” Discuss if she feels at home among the elves, and if so, how that is conveyed in the novel.
15. Secrets are important in this book. What secrets does Sophie have to keep in the human world? In the elf world? How do the secrets affect her relationships? What secrets does Alden keep from her, and why? Sophie has secrets she doesn’t know herself. Explain how that is true and how it affects the plot.
16. Another theme concerns helping other people. How does Sophie help her new friends and how do they help her? What is Sophie’s attitude toward humans and what steps does she take to help them? What are the attitudes of different elves toward helping humans? Find specific examples.

## **Language & POV**

The following questions contained in this section particularly address the Common Core State Standards: (RL.4-7.4) (RL.5-7.6)

17. Describe the narrator’s point of view in this novel, pointing to specific examples that show it. Besides describing events, does the narrator reveal the characters’ emotions and thoughts? If so, which characters?
18. The author uses imagery about light throughout the book. The name of the lost city, Lumenaria, comes from *lumen*, the Latin word for “light.” Read what Fitz and Sophie say about the school name, Foxfire, in Chapter Seven. Find other examples of light imagery. Why is light so important in this story? What does it symbolize?
19. As you read, make note of examples of alliteration used throughout the book. For example, near the end of the fourth chapter, Sophie feels “a whole new world of worries” press down on her. After leaving Atlantis, “Their bubble bobbed on the breeze.” Chapter Fourteen ends with her dreaming of “a life filled with friends and fun and finally belonging.” What purpose does the alliteration serve? Do the different sounds evoke different feelings or images?

## **Activities**

### **Wall of Wonderful Images**

Have students find similes, metaphors, alliteration, and other images in the book that create vivid pictures in their minds. Have them draw or paint some images, including the words and page numbers. Create a Wall of Wonderful Images with the artwork. Once all of the pictures are posted, have a group discussion about what categories the author draws her images from such as nature, machinery, and so on.

### **Fakebook Fun**

Sophie gets to know a lot of people at her new school and home. Have students choose Sophie or another character and create a Fakebook page for them. A Fakebook page looks like a Facebook page but doesn't require logging into Facebook. Students can include a drawing for the character's profile picture, list their friends, and put remarks on their time line. They can list what music, movies, or books the character might like. Fakebook is part of ClassTools at <http://www.classtools.net/FB/home-page>. NCTE's ReadWriteThink also has a social networking profile tool at <http://www.readwritethink.org/parent-afterschool-resources/games-tools/profile-publisher-a-30243.html>.

*Guide written by Kathleen Odean, a former school librarian and Chair of the 2002 Newbery Award Committee. She gives professional development workshops on books for young people and is the author of Great Books for Girls and Great Books about Things Kids Love.*

*This guide, written to align with the Common Core State Standards ([www.corestandards.org](http://www.corestandards.org)) has been provided by Simon & Schuster for classroom, library, and reading group use. It may be reproduced in its entirety or excerpted for these purposes.*