

Teachers' Guide

The Cronus Chronicles

Shadow Thieves ► The Siren Song ► The Immortal Fire

About the book:

Charlotte and Zee uncover a mystery that is leading all of their friends to become seriously ill. Their quest for the cure leads them to a not-so-mythical Underworld, where they face rhyme-loving Harpies, gods with personnel problems, and ghosts with a thirst for blood. They discover on their journey that the fate of every person- living and dead- is in their young hands. In her dazzling debut for young readers Anne Ursu weaves a tale of myth and adventure, danger and magic that will keep readers engrossed until the very last secret is revealed.

About the author:

Anne Ursu was raised in Minnesota and currently lives in Amherst, Massachusetts with her husband and cats. *The Shadow Thieves* is the first in a trilogy. For more, visit www.cronuschronicles.com

Pre-reading:

What do you know about the Greek myths? Why do you think these stories have been passed down for thousands of years? What is the underworld in mythology? Who presides over it?

Discussion Guide:

1. Describe Charlotte, both her physical appearance and her personality. How does she get along with her parents? Her peers? Would you be her friend? How would she fit in at your school? What are her strengths and weaknesses?
2. Why is Zee sent to his cousin's house? How do kids from Charlotte's school treat him? Why? Is his presence good for Charlotte? Why? How does their friendship develop over the course of the novel?
3. Where is the door to the Underworld? Why do you think the author picked this location? Who is the Messenger? Who are the men in the tuxedos?
4. How is Hades portrayed in this modern story? How have things changed in the Underworld since its beginning? What does this inspire Philonecron to attempt?
5. What is Zee's relationship with his grandmother? What do grandparents offer that parents can't? What is your own best memory with a grandparent? How does Zachary seem to expand and open up only when he's with his grandmother?
6. Why don't Zee's parents believe he has anything to do with the sudden illness? Would your parents believe you? What would you do?
7. What is the Piper Flu? Who is getting it? What is really happening? Why are they attacking children only?
8. How does Charlotte describe Mr. Metos? How is he involved in the story? What happens to him? Why is he destined to be a part of the story?

9. Are you familiar with the original Greek myths? How does this affect your reading of the text? How does Ursu play with the original characters and settings of the myths? Which original myth is your favorite? Why?
10. Reread page 311 that describes Zee bringing the army to life. What does Zee feel for the first time in his life? How can power corrupt and control people? Do you think power is more important or more intoxicating than fame? How are fame and power connected? Why do people become obsessed with them?
11. Explain the major events in the Underworld. What happens to Philonecron and his army? Which scene is your favorite? Why? In the end, how do some things remain the same there?
12. The novel is peppered with a wide cast of mythological beasts. Which one is your favorite? Why? Does this novel inspire you to read the original myths as well?

Activities:

Create a map of the Underworld. Use as many details from the book as you can and don't forget to add in the beasts.

Fill out the following character charts as you read.

THE MORTALS	Description	Conflict	In the end
Charlotte			
Zee			
Grandmother Winter			
Mr. Metos			

IMMORTALS	Description/Powers	Important because	In the end
Philonecron			
Hades			
Persephone			
Charon			

Music:

The Harpies like to rewrite nursery rhymes to reflect their more modern tastes. Rewrite another nursery rhyme or tune for another one of the Underworld's beasts. Common tunes might include Mary Had a Little Lamb, Frère Jacques, or London Bridges.

Art:

Design the costumes for the movie adaptation of the novel. Sketch garments and choose colors and even fabrics. Or, choose a scene to design instead. You can sketch, paint, or use the computer to create your setting.

Language:

Rewrite one of the ancient Greek myths into a modern story.

This guide was created by Tracie Vaughn Zimmer, a reading specialist and author of Reaching for Sun. Visit her website to find hundreds of guides to children's literature. www.tracievaughnzimmer.com