



Story Summary

Angry over his family's recent move and current enforced holiday in Halifax, twelve-year old Laz Berenger rebels against a guided tour of the Citadel and sets out to explore on his own. In one dark tunnel, his St. Christopher medal burns suddenly hot. There's a strange smell, and Laz blacks out. When he wakes up, everything happens at once. A sword is put to his throat. Men who look like extras from *Pirates of the Caribbean* hand him over to a ship's captain who strips him and takes his medal. He is declared a French spy. Laz realizes, to his horror, that it is 1745 and he is trapped in time. These English colonists, still loyal to King George, are at war with the French. To earn his freedom, Laz must promise to spy on the French at the fortification of Louisbourg. But once in Louisbourg, Laz earns a job as a runner to the kind Commander Morpain and learns to love both the man and the town. How will Laz find a way to betray the inhabitants of Louisbourg? How else can he hope to earn back his St. Christopher medal, which is surely his key to returning to his own time?

Karen Bass is a multi-award-winning author of a number of novels for young adult readers. *Graffiti Knight* won the CLA Young Adult Book Award, the Geoffrey Bilson Award for Historical Fiction for Young People, the R. Ross Annett Award, and the CAA Exporting Alberta Award, among other honors. *Uncertain Soldier* won the Geoffrey Bilson Award for Historical Fiction for Young People and was a finalist for the OLA Forest of Reading Red Maple Award. *The Hill* is a White Ravens Selection and a Junior Library Guild Selection, and is nominated for the Forest of Reading Red Maple Award. Karen lives in Hythe, Alberta where she was the public library manager for sixteen years before turning to full-time writing.

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Keywords:

Historical Fiction, King George's War, Louisbourg, Acadia, Halifax, Espionage

BISAC Codes

JUV001000 JUVENILE FICTION / Action & Adventure / General

JUV016080 JUVENILE FICTION / Historical / Military & Wars

JUV064000 JUVENILE FICTION / Time Travel

Reading Level

Fountas & Pinnell :Y | Lexile measure : 720L

BOOK CLUBS

This guide has been developed for use in classroom book clubs/literature circles. Book clubs support and develop the love of reading as well as help students build comprehension and support the development of collaborative learning and critical thinking.

In book clubs students:

- meet in small groups (4–8) to discuss a book they are reading
- take turns assuming a leadership role within the group
- meet regularly and set the pace for their reading
- take ownership for their learning by:
 - selecting the book they will read (usually from a predetermined list provided by the teacher)
 - determine the pace of the reading
 - prepare for and run their discussions.

Prior to beginning with book clubs, teachers:

- take time to develop and nurture whole class discussions about books while modeling the skills and behaviors needed to collaborate and work together as a book club
- provide guidance, modeling, and support
- become familiar with all texts prior to making them available to students

During book club discussions, teachers:

- develop a schedule for book clubs ensuring they provide time for reading and discussion
- provide mini-lessons for any needs that may arise
- monitor through observation and conferring as well as supporting student self-assessment

Key elements:

- Groups meet on a regular basis, with time provided in class to read and discuss their book
- Students use a “reader’s notebook” to write notes, comments, insights, and questions while they read
- Students bring their reader’s notebook to each meeting to support their discussion
- Discussion topics may emerge from the students as they read; however, the teacher provides discussion topics and provocations to help students engage in rich discussions (suggestions are provided in this guide)
- Group meetings are collaborative, with each group developing a set of norms for their group
- The teacher serves as facilitator
- Assessment is grounded in teacher observation, student conversations, and student self-assessment
- Book clubs promote a love of reading

Thinking about Assessment...

This Discussion Guide offers a range of prompts, tasks, and provocations to support Book Club discussions. While using this guide in the classroom, teachers have a number of opportunities to use observation, conversation, and product to assess student thinking and learning. The tasks and prompts offered in this guide are designed to support discussion, sharing, and student thinking while providing an opportunity for students to demonstrate comprehension, extension of thinking, and critical literacy. Assessment can include: self-assessment and peer assessment, conversations with students through teacher/student conferences; group discussions; and products created by the students.

For the teacher and student to have a clear, common understanding of the expectations and criteria to achieve success while reading the novels, educators develop learning goals based on curriculum expectations and share them with the students in language they can understand. Then together, the educator and students co-create criteria to make the path to success visible and clear.

These success criteria are posted in the classroom, are visible to all students, and may be revised and edited based on the learning and understanding of the students.

As the Book Club meetings are collaborative and begin with the groups developing a set of norms for their group, it is suggested that all groups open each meeting with a reflection of the previous discussion. These reflections can highlight what went well during the discussions; what needs to improve in these discussions; and considerations for the current discussion.

Discussion Guide:

This discussion guide will offer a variety of tasks, discussion prompts, and questions to provoke thinking and deepen comprehension before, during, and after reading of the novel. These are suggestions only and it is certainly not necessary to complete the entire list of suggested activities/questions. Educators are encouraged to make choices based on the strengths, needs, and interests of the students.

Highlighted Curriculum Expectations

Ontario Ministry of Education Language Arts Curriculum K–8

Oral Communication

- I.2 Active listening strategies
- I.3 Comprehension strategies
- I.4 Demonstrating Understanding
- I.5 Making Inferences/Interpreting Texts
- I.6 Extending Understanding

Reading for Meaning

- I.4 Demonstrating Understanding
- I.5 Making Inferences/Interpreting Texts
- I.6 Extending Understanding
- I.7 Analyzing Texts
- I.8 Responding and Evaluating Texts

Reading: Understanding Form and Style

- 2.1 Text Forms
- 2.3 Text Features
- 2.4 Elements of Style

Reading: Reflecting on Reading Skills and Strategies

- 4.2 Interconnected Skills

Reading with Fluency

- 3.1 Reading Familiar Words
- 3.2 Reading Unfamiliar Words

Media Literacy

- 3.1 Creating Media Texts

Before Reading

1. Explore both online and text resources to help you develop background knowledge prior to reading this book. Research the history and culture of the Acadians in Canada, particularly in the time this book takes place: 1745. Consider religion, language, living conditions, government, and culture. Make a “top ten” list of “things to know” about the Acadians to share with your group.
2. Explore the online resources dedicated to two prominent historic locations in this book:

The Citadel in Halifax:

<https://www.pc.gc.ca/en/lhn-nhs/ns/halifax>

and the Fortress of Louisbourg:

<https://www.pc.gc.ca/en/lhn-nhs/ns/louisbourg>

Because both locations have played a key role in Canadian history there is much to learn on these two official sites. Share what you have learned about both locations in a creative manner with your group. Consider a brief oral/visual presentation, a comic, a poster, a digital story, an infographic, etc.

3. Learn about the practice of parkour mentioned in this book. Discuss what you have learned with your group. How do you think it may come up in the context of this historical novel based on a time travel adventure?
4. The Mi’Kmaq are an Indigenous people who are among the original inhabitants in Atlantic Canada. They play an important role in this story and during this time in Canada’s history. Explore the history and society of the Mi’Kmaq. Share your learning with your group. Use the I-C-Q protocol to organize your thinking: **I**—what did you find interesting; **C**—what connections can you make to what you learned; **Q**—what questions do you have?
5. Throughout the book various types of ships are mentioned, as they were an important form of transportation in 1745 and an integral part of Laz’s journey. Learn about the differences between these ships: schooner, slope, brigantine, frigate, shallop. Make brief notes in your Reader’s Notebook and refer to them while you read.

6. As you begin reading the book, sketch or download a map of New Brunswick and Nova Scotia, including Cape Breton Island. You will use this sketch to create a map detailing and labeling Laz’s journey. As you read, note all of the places he mentions/travels to. Include their current names as well as the name of the location in 1745 when possible.
7. After reading the introduction to the book and scanning the front and back cover, record predictions and questions that you have about the text in your Reader’s Notebook. Share with your group.

During Reading

**Please check in with your book club at the suggested points in the novel.

Chapters 1–5

1. Identify the words and phrases that are used by the author to set the mood in chapter one. In your Reader’s Notebook, create a word cloud that captures the mood depicted by the author. Share with your group. After everyone has shared, go back to your word cloud and make additions and revisions to help you fully capture the mood in chapter one.
2. Locate Halifax on your map. Conduct some research to learn about this city, both in the past and in the present. Discuss what you have learned with your group.
3. What can you infer about this family’s relationships? Consider the relationship between Laz and his father, his sister, and his mother. Share your ideas with your group.
4. Do you agree with Emeline that Laz is rebelling and that he has no filter? Explain your thinking using evidence from the text, as well as your own ideas.
5. Briefly research the St. Christopher medal and its significance. Use this research as well as evidence from the text to discuss the importance of this medal to Laz. Why do you think Nan gave Laz the St. Christopher medal? Why did she “swear him to secrecy”? Discuss with your group.
6. We are introduced to both the Citadel and the Fortress of Louisbourg on page 32. The Acadians are also

mentioned on page 28. How does what is stated in the text connect with your research prior to reading? Share with your group.

Chapters 6–8

1. Reference is made to “King George’s war” in this section of the text. Learn more about this war and summarize your learning in point form using the: “who, what, when, why, and how” format in your Reader’s Notebook. Share with your group.
2. Some Christian religious references are made on page 45. They include the phrase “papist” and the name Lazarus. Learn more about both. Why do you think it is important to understand the phrase “papist” and the story of Lazarus in the context of this story?
3. What have you learned so far about life in 1745? What stands out for you in terms of social differences, as well as conditions related to daily life, gender roles, etc.? Discuss in your group, referring back to the text to support your thinking.
4. What have you learned so far about Laz’s character? What personality traits does he display up to this point in the text? Record your thinking in your Reader’s Notebook. You will return to this list in the next section of this guide.
5. What advice might you give Laz to help him survive in his new life? Discuss with your group.
6. Why do you think Laz continues to pretend he is texting his friend Ryder? Discuss with your group.
7. Laz often thinks about and mentions his grandmother. Why do you think he thinks about her often? What kind of relationship do you think they had? Discuss in your group.
8. At the end of Chapter 9, Laz is given the task of “sewing”. He makes a comment about having to “live this down”. What do you think about his comment? What does this reveal about Laz?

Chapter 9–18

1. We are learning more and more about the characters Laz encounters in his time travels to 1745. What do

you think about Ben, Cooper, Hawkins and Pepperell? What characteristics do they display? What do you notice about their thinking and their relationship with Laz?

2. Laz is experiencing many challenges and hardships in these chapters. To what extent do you think Laz brings these difficulties on himself? Discuss with your group.
3. What would you find most difficult if you found yourself in Laz’s situation? Record your thoughts in your Reader’s Notebook.
4. Return to the character list you created for Laz. What might you now add to the list given Laz’s recent behavior and his thinking? Do you think he is reckless, or a risk taker? Explain your thinking to your group.
5. What are the survival skills Laz has had to learn to adapt to life in 1745? Do you feel he is adapting well? What do you think Laz could do to better adapt to life in 1745?

Chapter 19–23

1. What are you learning about class differences as well as religious differences in 1745?
2. In chapter 19, Laz faces a dilemma: should he stay and try to sabotage the French as he had promised, or escape and try to find his way back to the present and to his home and family? How does Laz confront this dilemma? Do you think he made the right choice? Why/why not?
3. Some important issues are touched on in these chapters, including slavery. What do you think about the relationship between Morpain and his slave George? How does Laz face the issue of slavery? How do you feel about the way in which slavery is portrayed by the author in this text? Many students are surprised to learn that slavery existed in Canada. Explore this issue with your group to learn about Canada’s history with slavery.
4. In this section of the text, Laz travels to many locations within Louisbourg. Return to the research you

conducted about Louisbourg before reading and to your map of the region. Map out Laz's travels and discuss his movement during the battle and siege with your group.

5. What skills and character traits helped Laz survive this perilous time? Courage has been mentioned several times in this novel. Who do you believe has displayed courage up to this point in the novel? What connection can you make to the demonstration of courage in your own life? Record in your Reader's Notebook and then share with your group.

Chapter 24–28

1. At which point in this section of the text do you feel Laz was in the greatest danger? Explain your thinking.
2. Laz feels that Louisbourg has become home. He seems drawn to this community. Why do you think he feels this way?
3. At the end of chapter 28, Laz faces another dilemma. He is drawn to Louisbourg and to Morpain, considering him to be a father-like figure. He is also anxious to return home to his family. How does Laz face this dilemma?
4. What does this reveal about his relationship with his father, with Morpain, and with his sister Emeline? How do you feel about Laz as he faces this dilemma?
5. Do you agree that Morpain is like a father to Laz? Explain your thinking using evidence from the text.

Chapter 29–39

1. Isabelle is one of the few female characters in this novel. What do we learn about the role of women and girls in 1745 from her and the characters who interact with her? How do you feel Laz treated her? Discuss with your group.
2. Do you think Laz made the right decision when he sabotaged the French? Why/why not? Discuss both points of view with your group.
3. In Chapter 30, Laz is chased around Louisbourg. The author uses a variety of powerful words to describe

Laz's movements during the chase. As a group, create a chart of all the word choices made by the author that help us visualize this chase scene and Laz's movement during this chapter.

4. Return to your regional map created before reading the book. Work together with a partner to ensure you are continuing to map out Laz's journey.
5. You will find a map of the Fortress of Louisbourg on the website you explored prior to reading the text. With a partner, review the map and locate the places within the fortress that the author mentions in the text.
6. In Chapter 32, Laz is captured and must face Morpain, Isabelle, and the people of Louisbourg. Select one word that you believe describes how each of the following felt when they reconnected with Laz: Morpain, Isabelle, George, the soldiers, the townspeople. Share with your group.
7. At the end of Chapter 32 Laz realizes he is a traitor. Do you agree? Debate this within your group. (More information about a debate format can be found in *Guides to Effective Instruction: Oral Communication Volume 4*)
8. While Laz is in prison, Morpain visits him and the bond between them is strengthened. What makes Morpain such an admirable character?
9. How does Laz redeem himself in Chapter 33? What connections can you make to the interaction between Morpain and Laz? What book, movie, or T.V. show does this remind you of? Why? Discuss with a partner in your group.

Chapter 40–43

1. Is this how you expected Laz to be received/treated when he returned to the British side?
2. How did you feel when Laz gave Ben his St. Christopher medal? What were you thinking about Ben and about Laz? Turn and talk with a partner.

3. In these final chapters Laz stops pretending to text Ryder. Why this change in behavior? Discuss with your group.
4. In Chapter 43, Laz finally returns home. Do you think he is right when he says things will be different? How do you think things will be different?
5. Don't forget to read the historical notes provided by the author at the end of this text. What surprised you? Share with your group.

After Reading

1. Review your journey map and share your map with one of your group members. Have you captured Laz's entire journey?
2. This text focuses on several "big ideas." These include: courage, family, loyalty. What would you identify as the "big idea" in this text? Record your thinking in your Reader's Notebook and then share with your group.
3. This book is sometimes described as a "fantasy/time travel adventure" or as "historical fiction" or as a "coming of age" story. Learn about all three text forms/genres. What form/genre stands out for you as you consider how you read this text? Discuss with your group.
4. We learn a great deal about history in this text. What was some new learning for you? What would you like to learn more about? Create a visual note to capture your thinking.
5. We never see Laz reunite with his family but we do learn that he is making some important decisions now that he is home. What do you think of Laz's decisions at the end of the novel? Did you like the ending? Discuss with your group.
6. Read about the battle of Louisbourg. Does the author depict the battle/siege effectively?
7. As a group, create a T-chart to compare life in the present with life in 1745. Consider elements such as: food, clothing, transportation, role of men/women, social structures, religion, health, and other topics explored in the text. After creating the chart, consider whether or not you feel the author depicted life in 1745 effectively. Why/why not?
8. What surprised you most about this book? Respond in your Reader's Notebook and then share with your group.
9. Laz experiences a great deal of growth in this novel. How does he grow emotionally?
10. What do you think might happen next in Laz's life? Share with your group.
11. What enduring lessons did Laz learn about home, family, and community as a result of his journey?
12. The author allows us to see two sides of the British/French conflict. Does she present one side more favorably? Whose voice is missing?
13. There are two sides to Laz's story as well. Is he a traitor as Cooper claims, or a hero as Ben hopes? Debate with your group.
14. Create a book trailer to encourage others to read this text. Select appropriate images, text, and music to create an effective trailer to promote the book.



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