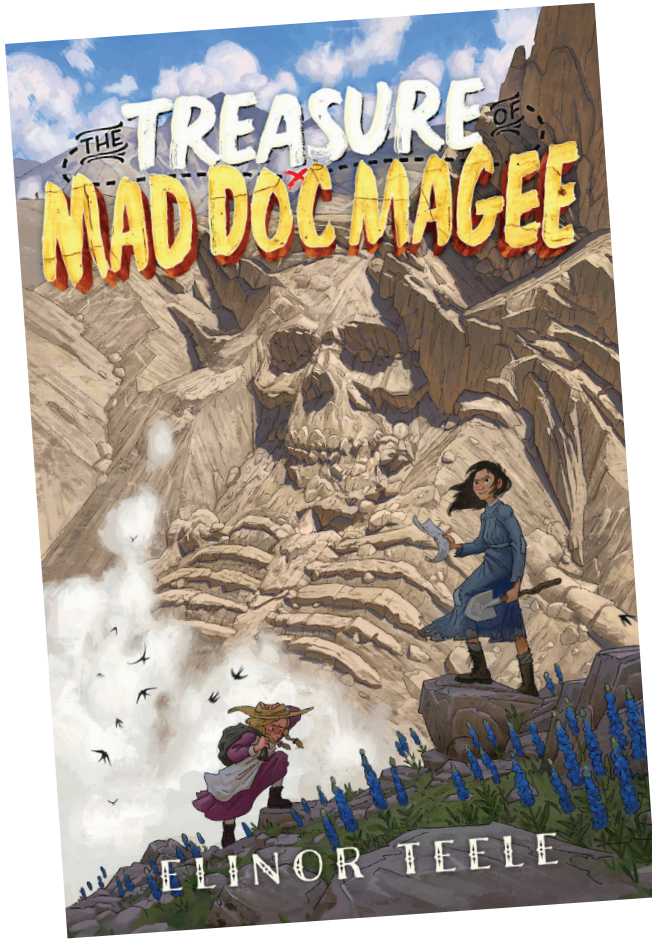


THE TREASURE OF MAD DOC MAGEE



AN EDUCATOR'S GUIDE
FOR CLASSROOM USE



The small, run-down town of Eden is the only place Jenny Burns has ever called home. The roots of the trees are in her bones, the air of the mountains is in her breath, the lakes and rivers are in her blood. And that's why, when her father loses his job and tells Jenny that they may have to move on from Eden, she knows she can't let that happen.

The fever of New Zealand's gold rush still runs in the veins of Eden, and everyone knows the legend of Doc Magee: how he found the largest gold nugget anyone had ever seen and hid it somewhere in the hills before he disappeared.

Jenny and her best friend, Pandora, know that if they can find the gold, it'll solve all their problems. But the way is fraught with mysteries, riddles, and danger — and those are just the threats they know about. Before her quest is over, Jenny will have to face challenges from within as well as from without.

Elinor Teele is the author of *The Mechanical Mind of John Coggin* as well as a playwright who graduated with a PhD from the University of Cambridge in 2005. She lives with her family in New England. You can visit her online at www.elinorteele.com



Prepared by
Melissa Guerrette,
M.Ed., NBCT
Oxford Elementary School,
MSAD 17, Maine



BEFORE READING

THE GOLD RUSH

The Treasure of Mad Doc Magee is rooted in New Zealand history. Providing context for readers before they begin reading or in the early chapters as the setting is established may support their comprehension of the characters and their internal and external conflicts, as well as the setting.



Learn more about the historical context of *The Treasure of Mad Doc Magee* in these two blog posts published on Elinor Teele's website:

The Otago Gold Rush

<http://elinorteele.com/the-otago-gold-rush-treasure-of-mad-doc-magee/>

Arrowtown as Eden

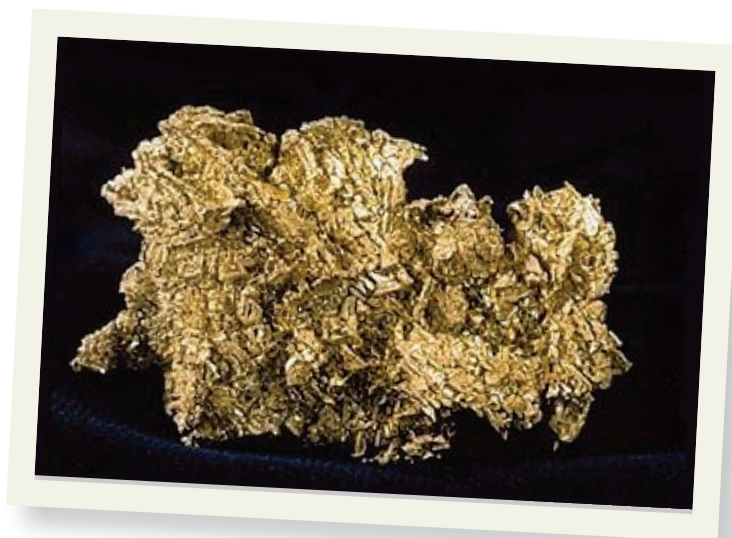
<http://elinorteele.com/arrowtown-as-eden-treasure-of-mad-doc-magee/>

TREASURE HUNT

The Treasure of Mad Doc Magee is a real treasure hunt of its own for readers! Between the language and history folded into the story, there are hidden gold nuggets throughout the book to stretch and build readers' thinking. Encourage students to read and reread for a keen eye to crafty language choices that parallel the chapter headings. Discover more of Elinor Teele's thoughtful and deliberate choices in this blog post that shares hints about some of those precious nuggets:



<http://elinorteele.com/chapter-headings-treasure-of-mad-doc-magee/>





CHAPTER-BY-CHAPTER QUESTIONS

CHAPTERS 1-2

Compare and contrast the personalities of the two main characters, Jenny and Pandora.

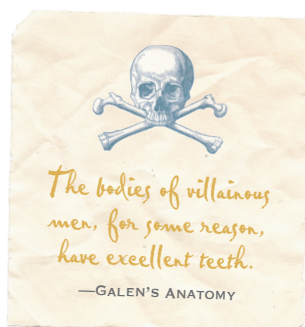
Describe the relationship between Jenny and her father, Hapless Burns.

What makes Jenny uncomfortable about talking to Pandora's mother, Mrs. Quinn?

CHAPTERS 3-4

What is Jenny's attitude towards school? Why?

What is the meaning of the word "degenerate"? Why does Mr. Grimsby use this word to describe Pandora?

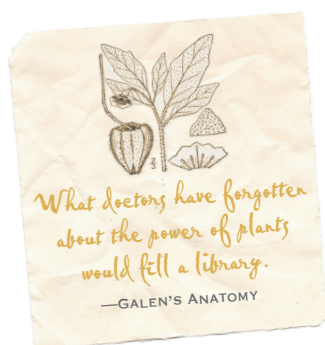


CHAPTERS 5-6

Why is Jenny suspicious of King Louis?

Jenny describes King Louis as an opportunist. What is an opportunist, and is King Louis deserving of this description? Why or why not?

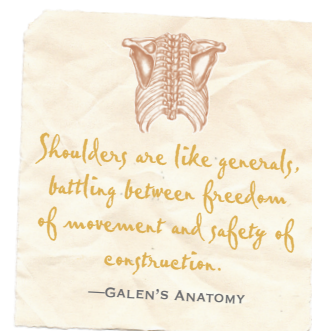
What evidence is there that King Louis is intolerant of other cultures or religions?



CHAPTER 7

Why might it be a disaster if Mr. Grimsby has Dr. Galen's letter?

Do you agree or disagree with Jenny's decision to keep the tintypes a secret from Pandora?



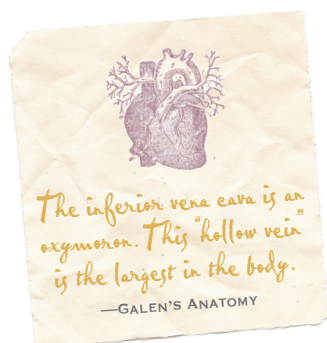
CHAPTERS 8-9

What was gold rush fever? How does Jenny's daydreaming about the future parallel the gold fever of the miners?

Reflect on Hapless's recollections of the Gold Rush. What were some of the characteristics of the miners who searched for gold during the Gold Rush? If you had lived in the days of the Gold Rush, would you have gone seeking fortune?



CHAPTER-BY-CHAPTER QUESTIONS CONTINUED



CHAPTERS 10-11

Who is referred to as the “filth of the rush,” and why?

How do King Louis's prejudices reveal his own fears or insecurities?

Why does Jenny choose to remain silent rather than defend the Lum brothers?

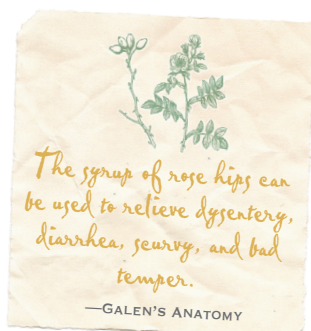
CHAPTERS 12-13

What is Jenny's hope when she asks Hapless to tell stories about her mother?

What is bothering Jenny?

Why is Jenny worried about Kam's plan to go in search of gold?

What causes the change in Jenny and Kam's relationship?



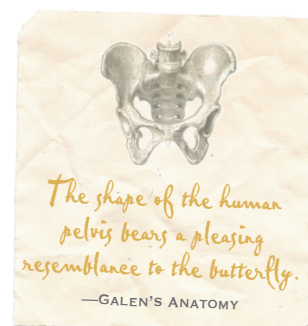
CHAPTERS 14-16

Why does the narrator say “a fight with a best friend is the most dangerous in the world”?

Why are Jenny and Pandora fighting?

Pandora accuses Jenny of being scared. Is she right? What might Jenny be fearful about?

What seems to be the source of Silent Jack's anger?



CHAPTERS 17-19

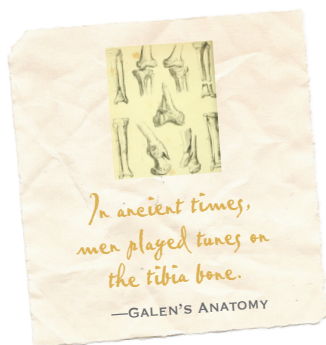
Why does Mr. Grimsby want to assist Jenny and Pandora in their search for treasure? Do they make the right choice by allowing him to stay?

How does the girls' perspective about Mr. Grimsby change along their course of travels? Why does it change?



CHAPTER-BY-CHAPTER QUESTIONS CONTINUED

CHAPTERS 20-21



Why was it mortifying for Jenny to reconnect with Kam at Gam Saan?

What insights do we gain about Kam and the way he honors his father? In what ways are Kam's feelings about his father the same as and/or different from

Jenny's feelings for her mother?

What do we learn is the weight Kam carries?

CHAPTERS 22-23

Why is King Louis insistent that Jenny earn the privilege to see his safe by playing a hand of poker?

Why do you think Hapless told Jenny a different story about her mother than the one Gentle Annie tells?

How has Jenny's motivation for finding the gold nugget changed?



CHAPTER 24

What is Mr. Grimsby's motivation for wanting the gold?

What does it mean that "he'd practiced so much for his role as a villain that he'd forgotten himself in the process"?

How does Jenny "understand" Mr. Grimsby?

If you were left to decide who should have the gold, who would you give it to, and why?

CHAPTER 25

How did the treasure of Mad Doc Magee change Jenny?



FOR MORE DISCUSSION

HOME AND IDENTITY

Both early and later in the book, Jenny wrestles with her identity, especially as it relates to the concept of “home.” How does where a person lives and where they are from connect to their sense of identity?

Jenny wonders if all she is where she’s from. What else might you say contributes to who Jenny is? What contributes to the sense of who *you* are?

In the first chapter, readers learn about Still Hope, one of the legends of the Gold Rush whom Jenny admires. Still Hope’s name is also mentioned at other character-defining moments in Jenny and Pandora’s journey. In what ways does Jenny exhibit similar character traits to Still Hope? Why is it significant that Jenny hears another slant about Still Hope and his story in the final chapters of the book (p. 285)? How does this change or influence her perspective about her hero?

Jenny, Pandora, Lok, and Kam are all descendants of individuals who lived during the Gold Rush. In what ways did their parents’ Gold Rush experiences shape who they are? In what ways do these children continue to live in the same spirit? In what ways do you think they might live differently because of their parents’ experiences?



A house in a Chinese settlement in the vicinity of the Otago Gold Rush. Photograph by Elinor Teele.

STRUCTURE AND CRAFT

Sometimes tall tales are completely invented, and other times they are told as real stories with exaggerated events. Tall tales are usually funny because of the language and exaggerations used in storytelling. Should *The Treasure of Mad Doc Magee* be classified as a tall tale? Discuss the details and evidence that help support your opinion.



A cottage in the vicinity of the Otago Gold Rush. Photograph by Elinor Teele.



FOR MORE DISCUSSION CONTINUED

THE COURAGE TO ACT

After Mr. Grimsby belittles Pandora during Mr. Polk's visit to the schoolhouse, Jenny is left remorseful for not supporting her friend. Later, Pandora and Jenny are privy to slurs and uncomfortable stereotypes during King Louis's rant about the Lum brothers, and Jenny still remains quiet instead of standing up for her friends.

Why was it so difficult for Jenny to act with courage when she witnessed unfairness?

How could she have supported Pandora or the Lum brothers?

What might she have said if she were to confront Mr. Grimsby or King Louis?

THE INFLUENCE OF FEAR

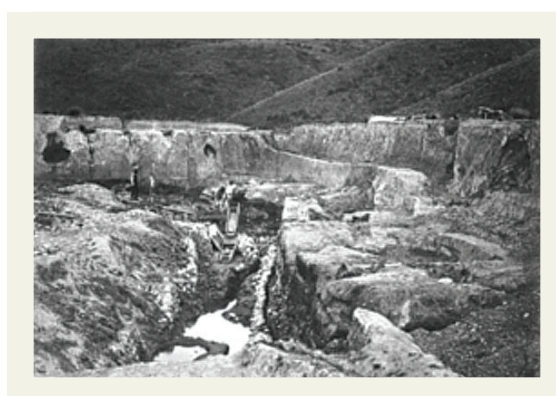
Both Pandora and Kam accuse Jenny of acting out of fear in the story. Fear plays an important part in the choices and motivations of the characters in *The Treasure of Mad Doc Magee*. Which characters are influenced by fear? How, and in what instances? (Consider: fear of change, fear of the truth, fear as a motivation, fear as a reason for action or inaction, etc.)

HOPE

As Jenny and company near the end of the treasure hunt and believe their search was for naught, the narrator says, "When you have lost the hope of your life, the future is seldom a prospect worth contemplating."

In what ways did the search for Mad Doc Magee's treasure provide lively hope for each of the characters?

In what ways did the search for gold in the Gold Rush provide hope for the seekers?



Gabriel's Gully after the Otago Gold Rush.
Photograph by Herbert Deveril (1840-1911).

THE AFTERMATH

As the characters search for Doc Magee's hidden treasure all across the landscape of Eden, there are multiple references to the wear of the Gold Rush on the land. For example, on p. 83, the narrator's description mentions mining artifacts left behind and the number of trees that had been cut to make a clearing. What other examples or evidence can you draw from the story of what was left behind in the wake of the Gold Rush? What was the environmental toll, and who did it impact?



OTHER EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

GEOGRAPHY

Map out the geography of Eden according to the narrator's description in Chapter 1.

The skeleton map Jenny and Pandora use in the treasure hunt connects parts of the body with natural features — like mountains and streams — from the setting of the book. Recreate the treasure map to illustrate the connections between the bones and the geographic features. Use the clues and also Jenny and Pandora's treasure hunt to help.

In Chapter 5, Jenny and Pandora realize the garden of Little Eden is a map that Kam has planted as a tribute to his home and his father. If you were going to make a garden as a tribute to your favorite person or place, what would it look like? What would you plant? Why?

ANATOMY & BIOLOGY

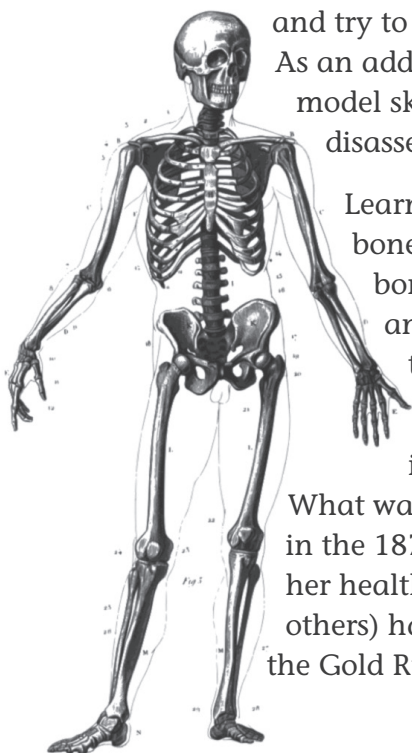
Using a diagram of a skeleton like the one on p. 54, shuffle the names of the bones and try to match them correctly.

As an added challenge, find a model skeleton that can be disassembled and reassembled.

Learn the meanings of the bones' names. Research the bones and their functions, and compare your findings to the diagram on p. 77.

Why was Mrs. Quinn in such a fragile state?

What was the state of medicine in the 1870s? In what ways might her health (and the health of others) have been impacted by the Gold Rush?



CRYPTOGRAPHY

The clues in Mad Doc Magee's treasure hunt were seated in puzzles and codes. Try making some of your own puzzles and clues using some of these:

Anagrams: Scramble the letters of your message so they form other words to conceal your real message. (pp. 224, 230-231)

Null Cipher: When decoding a Null Cipher, there are many more extraneous letters than the ones important to the message. Sometimes solving a Null Cipher means using the first letter of each word; other times there is more of a pattern to which letters hold the message. In the case of the cipher hidden at God's Army, every tenth letter was part of the code. (pp. 123-125)

Four Triangles Cipher: In the tailrace at the stamp mill, the triangles had a blank or a space in their sides rather than a dot to indicate the letter represented. (pp. 232-236, 244-246)

Polybius Square Cipher: The letters of the alphabet are arranged in a 5 x 5 grid and encoded with a pair of numbers, the coordinates on the grid. Typically, i/j share a spot; however, in *The Treasure of Mad Doc Magee*, y/z share. The other variation in the cipher at Gam Saan is that the coordinates were to be read right to left, top to bottom (in keeping with Chinese language) rather than left to right, top to bottom. (pp. 276-279)



OTHER EXTENSION ACTIVITIES CONTINUED

DRAMA

Mr. Grimsby traveled to the region with his dramatic troupe during the Gold Rush. On pages 3-4, several characters of the Gold Rush are described. Assume the personality of one of these characters and write and perform your Gold Rush story similarly to the way Mr. Grimsby performs on pages 258-260.



Remnants of the Athenaeum Hall in Cromwell.
Photograph by Elinor Teele.

Imagine the story of Kam and Lok's father in the pursuit of his dreams (pp. 169-171). In the spirit of Chinese theater, perform his story with **shadow puppetry**. Write a script, make puppets, and gather an audience to hear retold tales of the Gold Rush.

LANGUAGE & WORD PLAY

Pandora tells Jenny she wants to be funny because funny people have friends. Jenny tries to explain how jokes are often funny because of puns, words with multiple meanings.

What examples of puns can you find throughout *The Treasure of Mad Doc Magee*?

What jokes do you know that fit this description? Can you make an original joke using a pun?

PERSUASIVE WRITING

Imagine you lived in the time of the Gold Rush. Write a letter to your family convincing them that you need to go in search of gold. Or, write a letter to a family member who plans to go in search of gold to persuade them not to go. Use evidence and reasons from your knowledge of the Gold Rush and the experiences of the characters in *The Treasure of Mad Doc Magee*.

ADDITIONAL READING

Access an extensive list of Gold Rush-themed texts (from New Zealand, Australia, and the United States) compiled by the author on her website: <http://elinorteele.com/gold-rush-childrens-books/>