



TEACHERS' NOTES

RECOMMENDED FOR

Ages 11+; years 6 to 9

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KEY CURRICULUM AREAS

- **Learning areas:** English
- **General capabilities:** Literacy; Critical and Creative Thinking; Personal and Social Capability; Ethical Understanding

REASONS FOR STUDYING THIS BOOK

- Fantastically fun sequel to *Prometheus High: How to Make a Monster* by Australian author Stuart Wilson.
- Combines Ancient Egyptian themes with action, adventure and raising mummies!
- Good example of a novel with multiple points of view.

THEMES

- Responsibility
- Science and magic
- Friendship and found families
- Horror genre
- Ancient Egypt
- Ethical dilemmas

PREPARED BY

Penguin Random House Australia

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Prometheus High 2: The Books of the Dead Stuart Wilson

PLOT SUMMARY

A frantic rooftop race.
Alchemy lessons on a zeppelin.
A booby-trapped pyramid . . .
Just the start of semester two at Prometheus High.

Athena and Marceline are going to extreme lengths to unearth Marceline's past – if their foolhardy plans don't get them expelled.

Godfrey's lonely without his friends, so when Emily asks him for a favour he's eager to help. But is her request all that it seems?

Meanwhile, no one has noticed the threat growing on the airship *Atet*, as an ancient monster of unsurpassed power and fury is about to awaken . . .

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Stuart Wilson lives in Melbourne, Australia, with his wife and son. An omnivore when it comes to consuming stories, he reads too many books, watches too many films and plays too many videogames. Like Athena, he also chews on his lip when he's nervous. He is now the co-owner of a top-floor apartment. And lots of his neighbours own cats.



And there's a storm brewing. So he's just waiting for the right moment ...

AUTHOR'S INSPIRATION

Stuart says:

For *The Books of the Dead*, I wanted the setting to be as different to *How to Make a Monster* as possible. So rather than a rainswept voyage at sea, we are in Egypt, with classes aboard an airship!

When it comes to dealing with mummies, there are a string of obvious references. The idea of exploring the pyramid inevitably riffed on similar scenes in *Indiana Jones* and the Brendan Fraser *Mummy* movies, but I wanted to ensure that tomb robbing would not be displayed in a positive light. Considering the history of colonial nations taking things from historical sites and displaying them in foreign museums, it was important to me that our heroes are specifically *not* doing that. Thus, when Marceline and Athena go exploring the pyramid, they are actually looking for something left there by a previous tomb robber.

Some of my influences were a bit more obscure. When it comes to Athena's scene of claustrophobic horror, I was actually thinking of the first time I read Thor Heyerdahl's 1957 book, *Aku Aku*. That non-fiction work chronicled the explorer's investigation of the Easter Island statues, and featured a chapter where he almost got stuck whilst crawling through caves, and it truly made my skin crawl. I wanted to craft something similar in *The Books of the Dead*.

I did a lot of research into airships. I'm fascinated by the fact that they were once considered the future of travel before falling out of favour (mostly due to one very publicised disaster). I absolutely devoured a book by Rick Archbold and Ken Marschall called *Hindenburg: An Illustrated History*, which details the entire era of airship travel, not just that one famous example. It was the description of the last flight of the *Shenandoah*, a US Navy zeppelin that was caught in a storm and thrown upside down and torn apart, that informed a lot

of what happens on the *Atet* during the climax. I was also inspired by the famous 1927 image of the *Los Angeles* zeppelin poised vertically above the Lakehurst high mast.

Finally, when it comes to Marceline's story, I wanted to keep interrogating the idea that the monsters in *Prometheus High* were never asked if they wanted to be resurrected. While Marceline's friendship with Athena is strong, there will always be a divide between them, and it's the relationship between Creators and Creations that really drives the central conflict of the series.

PRE-READING QUESTIONS

1. Before reading the book, look closely at the front cover. What do you think the plot will be about based on the image you see there?
2. What genre do you think the book is? What elements on the cover give you that impression? Can you think of other books that might be in the same genre?
3. Compare the cover to the first book in the series – *Prometheus High: How to Make a Monster*. How has the designer made the series follow a similar look? What elements are similar?

KEY STUDY TOPICS

Point of view (POV)

Point of view narration is when a story is written through the perspective of a character; we are ultimately viewing the world through their eyes. In the story, we get multiple points of view: Athena's, Marceline's and Godfrey's.

Questions and activities

1. Why do you think the author opted for this mode of storytelling? How do you think it enriches our understanding of the characters? For instance, having the perspectives of both Athena and Marceline helps us better understand the tensions within their friendship, and the reasons for Marceline wanting to hide her secret from Godfrey. It also gives us insight into both a Creator and a Creation's way of thinking.
2. Think about how the story would have been if it was written *all* through Athena's POV, or *all* through Marceline's POV. How do you think this might affect how we, as readers, engage with the story and understand the motivations of all the characters? Have a go at rewriting a small excerpt of a chapter that *isn't* from Athena's or Marceline's POV and compare the differences. Which is better?





History – Ancient Egypt, airships and more

The Books of the Dead – and the second semester at Prometheus High – takes as its main subject some of the rituals and practices of ancient Egypt, such as mummification and the building of pyramids.

Questions

1. Animals were very important in Egyptian life and religion. How many animals with significance can you name?
2. Why do you think animals held such importance to the Ancient Egyptians?
3. Egypt has been plundered over the years for its treasure and historical artefacts. Can you name other countries where this has happened?

Activities

- Look up Giza and the great pyramids on a map. Draw your own map of the area, featuring all the important locations in the story – including the fictional ones! Don't forget to include the mooring tower the *Atet* is tied to and the locations that are only mentioned briefly, like the graveyards, solar barge museum and roads to Cairo.
- Draw a floor plan of the Great Pyramid as it really is, then adding the fictional parts too, like the Khonsu door, secret paths, traps, tomb guardians and chambers.
- Pick one of the pharaohs or queens mentioned in the story, research them and write a short biography of them and their reign. (For example: Tutankhamen, Amenhotep III, or Queen Tiye.)
- Design a sarcophagus for the pharaoh or queen you researched above. Try to include symbols that are meaningful to that person's life and achievements.
- *[E]very time you take a mummy out of its tomb, you risk awakening them. It can happen by accident, like that time in the British Museum, or it can happen on purpose, as we saw with the sinking of the Titanic.*

(p. 26) Through the character of the Professor, the author is suggesting that a Creation could have sunk the *Titanic*. Research the *Titanic* and find out what happened to this ship on its maiden voyage. Then write a scene imagining how this could have happened if a Creation was responsible.

- Research airships online. Then draw a cross-section of the *Atet*. Make sure you label the different areas of the ship and try to follow the descriptions of the vessel that are included in the story.



What's in a name?

There are many ways an author can help to build a well-rounded character: background, description, voice, dialogue style. But are there others that the author can employ?

Questions

1. Do you think a character's name can affect what the reader thinks of them? For example, what impression do you get when you find out the main character's name is Athena Strange? Do you think the author has chosen that name deliberately? What do you think it symbolises?
2. Can you think of other books you have read where the name of a character reflected their personality? Some examples you might explore include Roald Dahl's books, or the Harry Potter series.



3. Can you find examples of a character suiting their name in *The Books of the Dead*? (They don't have to be main characters either!)

Activities

- Find two examples of names reflecting the character's personality and draw a mind map showing why you think this might be so. For example, why do you think Stuart named one of the new teachers Theo Pagonis? What does his name mean? How does his name reflect his personality and his status within the story?
- Can you find examples of characters being given names to provide extra layers to the story or to create humour?

Diaries and journals

Stuart uses the device of a journal or diary in both *How to Make a Monster* and *The Books of the Dead*.

Questions

1. Why do you think diaries or journal entries are something he includes in the story?
2. Look at the styles of writing used in *The Book of Creators*. What makes the diary entries different from the writing used for the main part of the story? (Take note of things such as vocabulary, tone, sentence structure and format.)

Activities

- Imagine you are a Creator and write your own entry in *The Book of Creators*. Don't forget to include information about your Creation and concerns and worries you might have about the whole process.
- Research Þrídrangar lighthouse. Why do you think the author has used this location as a setting?
- Keep a diary for two weeks. After that time, look back at the entries in a critical way and work out which entries were the most interesting and why. What makes them stand out from other days in the diary?

Friendship

Questions

1. Do you think that Marceline and Athena could have handled the situation with Godfrey differently? How do you think the story would have changed if they had told him about their plans to break into the Bibliotheca Alexandrina from the start?
2. Have you ever kept a secret from a friend? Do you think there is ever a time when keeping a secret would be okay? Why or why not?

3. Athena puts her life in danger several times to help her friend. Do you think Marceline understands the sacrifice Athena has made? How does Marceline show her thanks?

4. *From an early age, Godfrey had been repeatedly told that he was too much. Talking too much, too quickly, too loudly. 'Not everyone needs to know every single thought that goes through your mind,' his mum had said in between dozens of requests for him to use his 'inside voice'. So, over the years, he'd learned to temper his excitement, always taking a breath before speaking, modulating his tone and otherwise keeping a lid on things.* (p. 28)
Do you think it is fair that Godfrey has to keep himself and his actions in check like this? Are there times when you have felt that you couldn't be yourself? How did this make you feel? Why do you think Professor Selinofoto makes Godfrey feel better about himself?

Ethical dilemmas

Throughout the story, there are various moments where we are presented with the reality of what is happening at Prometheus High through the point of view of Marceline, who is a Creation herself.

[Athena] was, after all, a Creator. That was always at the back of Marceline's mind. And a Creator wouldn't truly understand how much this meant for a Creation. That couldn't be helped. (p. 185)

For a moment, Marceline recognised the expression in its honey-coloured eyes: it was panic. The Mummy was scared. Marceline tried to imagine how it would feel, to be ripped from the afterlife without warning by a Creator who didn't spare a moment to think if it was what the Mummy wanted. (p. 91)

Questions

1. Brainstorm the ethical considerations of resurrecting the dead. How would you feel if you were brought back by a Creator without consent?
2. In pairs, or as a class, discuss the pros and cons of this practice. For example, a pro could be better improving health outcomes and learning about history.
3. Once you have done this, place yourself in the shoes of a Creator. How would you go about making sure what you were doing was ethical? Prepare a checklist.



FURTHER READING FROM PENGUIN RANDOM HOUSE AUSTRALIA



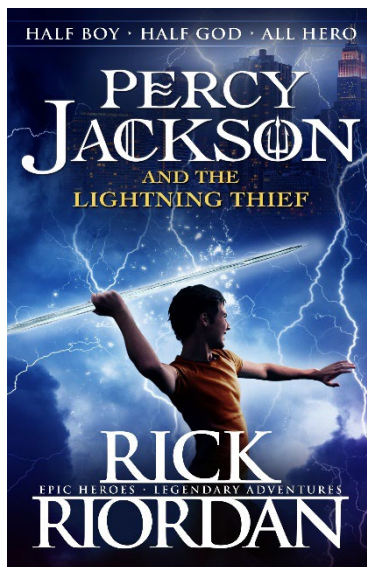
Prometheus High 1: How to Make a Monster
by Stuart Wilson

A rusting ocean liner. Thirty students learning to resurrect the dead. A murderous monster on the loose ... Just a typical day at PROMETHEUS HIGH.

Athena Strange's first semester at Prometheus High starts with a bang. But when her lessons in reanimation, robotics and skulkers move too slowly and she has trouble making friends, Athena decides to take matters into her own hands.

On a ship where science and magic collide, and the monster under your bed is probably very real . . . will Athena be able to hold her head above water?

Teachers' notes available.



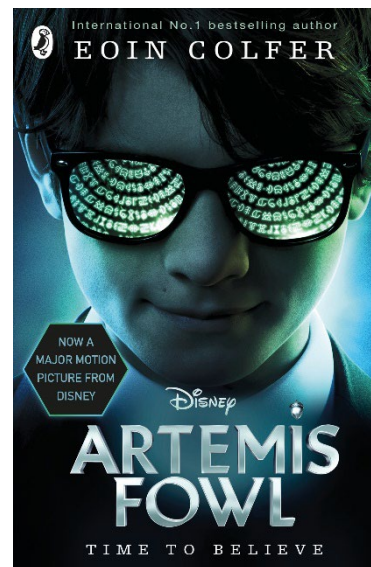
Percy Jackson and the Lightning Thief (Book 1)
by Rick Riordan

Half boy. Half God. All Hero.

Look, I didn't want to be a half-blood. I never asked to be the son of a Greek God.

I was just a normal kid, going to school, playing basketball, skateboarding. The usual. Until I accidentally vaporized my maths teacher. Now I spend my time battling monsters and generally trying to stay alive.

This is the one where Zeus, God of the Sky, thinks I've stolen his lightning bolt – and making Zeus angry is *a very bad idea*.



Artemis Fowl
by Eoin Colfer

Rumour has it Artemis Fowl is responsible for every major crime of the new century.

Just twelve years old and already he's a criminal genius, plotting to restore his family's fortune with a spot of corruption and kidnapping.

Kidnapping a fairy for ransom, to be precise.

Artemis Fowl has discovered a world below ground of armed and dangerous – and extremely high-tech – fairies. But he may have underestimated their powers. They *will* fight back. Is the boy about to trigger a cross-species war?

Let the misadventure begin.



ORDER FORM

TITLE	AUTHOR	ISBN	SCHOOL YEAR	RRP	QTY	TOTAL
Prometheus High 2: The Books of the Dead	Stuart Wilson	9781761042263	6+	\$16.99		
Prometheus High 1: How to Make a Monster	Stuart Wilson	9781761042256	6+	\$16.99		
Percy Jackson and the Lightning Thief (Book 1)	Rick Riordan	9780141346809	5+	\$17.99		
Artemis Fowl	Eoin Colfer	9780241387177	5+	\$16.99		
TOTAL						

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