

KATHERINE MARSH



JEPP, WHO DEFIED THE STARS

HE SEEKS HIS PAST TO DISCOVER HIS FUTURE.

DISCUSSION GUIDE

Disney • HYPERION BOOKS

About the Book

Fate:

Is it written in the stars from
the moment we are born?
Or is it a bendable thing that
we can shape with our own hands?

Jepp of Astraveld needs to know.

He left his countryside home on the empty promise of a stranger, only to become a captive in a strange and luxurious prison: Coudenberg Palace, the royal court of the Spanish Infanta. Nobody warned Jepp that as a court dwarf, daily injustices would become his seemingly unshakeable fate. If the humiliations were his alone, perhaps he could endure them, but it breaks Jepp's heart to see his friend Lia suffer.

After Jepp and Lia perform a daring escape from the palace, Jepp is imprisoned again, alone in a cage. Now, spirited across Europe by a kidnapper in a horse-drawn carriage, Jepp is unsure where his unfortunate stars may lead him.

Before Jepp can become the master of his own destiny, he will need to prove himself to a brilliant and eccentric new master—a man devoted to uncovering the secrets of the stars—earn the love of a girl brave and true, and unearth the long-buried secrets of his parentage. And he will find that beneath the breathtaking cruelty of the world is something else: the persistence of human kindness.

Masterfully written, grippingly paced, and inspired by real historical characters, *Jepp, Who Defied the Stars* is an awe-inspiring story of triumph in the face of unimaginable odds.



Curriculum Connections

READING, WRITING, AND RESEARCHING

Pre-reading Activity

As a pre-reading activity, have students complete an anticipation guide structured in the following manner:

Before Reading	After Reading	STATEMENTS
		Relationships between parents and their children are always complicated.
		It is impossible to change your destiny.
		Love can overcome all obstacles.
		People are always a product of their environment.

Instruct students to complete the guide by placing a “+” sign in the box next to the statements with which they agree and a “0” next to those with which they disagree. They must commit to agreement or disagreement—there are no conditional responses. Students should be assured that there are no correct or incorrect positions.

Correlates to Common Core Standard Reading Literature: Key Ideas and Details R.L. 7.2.; Speaking and Listening: Comprehension and Collaboration S.L. 7.1., S.L. 8.1., S.L. 9-10.1., S.L. 7.2., S.L. 8.2., S.L.9-10.2., S.L. 7.3., S.L. 8.3., S.L. 9-10.3.

Writing and Research

The following questions may be posed throughout the novel study as reflective writing prompts, or alternatively, they can be used as targeted questions for class discussion and reflection.

- 1 At the opening of *Jepp, Who Defied the Stars*, Jepp states, “Being a court dwarf is no easy task. I know because I failed at it.” How do these introductory lines set the stage for the events to come?
- 2 After being accosted by travelers visiting his mother’s inn, Jepp states, “And so I learned the word that would come to supplant my name. But I thought not of myself as a dwarf.” What’s the significance of this incident? In what ways is Jepp changed by this experience? In your opinion, why is labeling him so cruel? Have you ever had a similar situation happen to you? How did you choose to deal with it?
- 3 Why do Jepp and Robert feel so drawn to Lia? What is it about her circumstances that help them move beyond their own issues to want to help her? In what ways does her presence help them in return?



- 4 Describe Magdalene. What makes her a dynamic character? Is she the type of person you would want to befriend? Why or why not?
- 5 *Jepp, Who Defied the Stars* contains a number of characters who exhibit a variety of strengths. Which character impresses you most (or least) with their strength? Explain your choice.
- 6 Explain the significance of the title, *Jepp, Who Defied the Stars*. In your opinion, does it accurately describe the events and relationships portrayed in the novel? Do you believe it's possible to control your destiny? Why or why not?
- 7 Jepp offers, "To be loved is the birthright of every mewling babe but, once grown, a man is not assured of such affection." In what ways does Jepp's relationship with Magdalene change him? And though he states, "I feel as if I have recovered the happiness of childhood," Jepp still feels compelled to undercover the mystery of his birth and his parentage. Do you believe he makes the right decision to leave Magdalene in search of answers? Why or why not? Do you think it's necessary for people to understand their history to be at peace and happy? Why or why not?
- 8 In *Jepp, Who Defied the Stars*, at times, fear both motivates and incapacitates Jepp. Consider how he deals with his fears. Does he acknowledge them? In what ways do we witness him turning to others for assistance? Who are the people you seek out to assist you when you are afraid?
- 9 *Jepp, Who Defied the Stars* is told in first person; how would the story be different if another character (besides Jepp) were telling it? Do you think changing the point of view would make the story better or worse? Why?

Correlates to Common Core Standard Reading Literature: Speaking and Listening: Comprehension and Collaboration S.L. 7.1., S.L. 8.1., S.L. 9-10.1., S.L. 7.2., S.L. 8.2., S.L. 9-10.2., S.L. 7.3., S.L. 8.3., S.L.9-10.3. Writing: Text Types and Purposes W. 7.1., W. 8.1., W. 9-10.1., W. 7.2. W. 8.2., W. 9-10.2., W. 7.3, W. 8.3, W. 9-10.3.

Extended Writing Prompts

After Jepp identifies Severinus as a spy for Ursus, Lord Tycho states, “Jepp, you are hereby freed from this contract for your service as a dwarf. We hope you shall choose to remain with us as an apprentice scholar. You have shown yourself more than worthy of such a position in my house.” Consider the following questions: Why is Tycho’s statement so important to Jepp? In what ways is Jepp’s advancement in Tycho’s house an opportunity for Jepp to move beyond the traditional expectations of him by others? In your opinion, why is this so critical to the development of Jepp’s sense of self? Compose a short persuasive essay offering your position on this issue. While considering Jepp’s experiences, use textual evidence to provide specific examples to support your case.

Correlates to Common Core Standard Reading Literature: Key Ideas and Details R.L. 7.1., R.L. 8.1, R.L. 9-10.1 and Writing: Text Types and Purposes W. 7.1., W. 8.1., W. 9-10.1., W. 7.2. W. 8.2., W. 9-10.2., W. 7.3, W. 8.3, W. 9-10.3.

In *Jepp, Who Defied the Stars*, part of Jepp’s story focuses on his connection and relationship with his family and the people that matter the most to him. Consider your most special relationships. What makes these individuals so important? Compose a personal journal entry where you share their thoughts, and be sure to answer the following questions:

- 1 Who are the individuals who mean the most to you?
- 2 Why is that particular relationship so special?
- 3 What’s the greatest sacrifice you’ve made for the people you love?
- 4 In what ways have the changes you’ve experienced in your life affected those to whom you are closest?

To culminate, ask for volunteers to share their writing with the class.

Correlates to Common Core Standard Reading Literature: Key Ideas and Details R.L. 7.1., R.L. 8.1, R.L. 9-10.1 and Writing: Text Types and Purposes W. 7.1., W. 8.1., W. 9-10.1., W. 7.2., W. 8.2., W. 9-10.2., W. 7.3., W. 8.3., W. 9-10.3. Writing: Production and Distribution W. 7.4., W. 8.4., W. 9-10.4.

Making Thematic Connections

Consider the following themes of *Jepp, Who Defied the Stars*: Sacrifice, loyalty, courage, and perseverance. Select one of the themes and find examples from the book that helps support this theme.

Create a sample Life Lesson Chart using the model at:

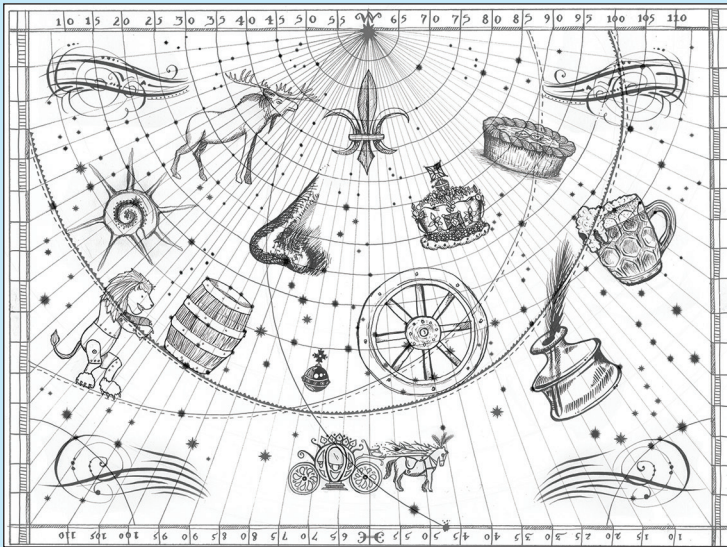
http://www.readwritethink.org/lesson_images/lesson826/chart.pdf

Correlates to Common Core Standard Reading Literature: Key Ideas and Details R.L. 7.2., R.L. 8.2, R.L. 9-10.2

Making Meaning by Exploring Setting

Consider the variety of settings for *Jepp, Who Defied the Stars*; why is each of these places important to the development of Jepp? Using the descriptions provided in the novel, illustrate the three places you believe to be most important to his story. In addition to the illustrations, include a short explanation of the significance of each, and why you believe it is important.

Correlates to Common Core Standard Reading Literature: Key Ideas and Details R.L. 7.1, R.L. 8.1, R.L. 9-10.1.



Considering Character

Create an “I AM” Poem or a Biopoem

The purpose of this strategy is to help students demonstrate knowledge of a character in *Jepp, Who Defied the Stars* by following written prompts to complete a poem about the individual. Students can be given the prompts to follow on a worksheet or alternatively, students may create an original slideshow using PowerPoint, Prezi, or Movie Maker.

“I AM” POEM

FIRST STANZA:

I am (name the character)

I wonder (something the character is actually curious about)

I hear (an imaginary sound the character might hear)

I see (an imaginary sight the character might see)

I want (something the character truly desires)

SECOND STANZA:

I pretend (something the character actually pretends to do)

I feel (a feeling about something imaginary)

I touch (an imaginary touch)

I worry (something that really bothers the character)

I cry (something that makes the character very sad)

I am (the first line of the poem repeated)

THIRD STANZA:

I understand (something the character knows is true)

I say (something that the character believes in)

I dream (something the character might actually dream about)

I try (something the character really makes an effort to do)

I hope (something the character actually hopes for)

I am (the first line of the poem repeated)

BIOPOEM

Line 1: First name _____

Line 2: Three traits that describe the character _____

Line 3: Relative of _____

Line 4: Lover of _____ (three things)

Line 5: Who feels _____ (three things)

Line 6: Who needs _____ (three things)

Line 7: Who fears _____ (three things)

Line 8: Who gives _____ (three things)

Line 9: Who would like to see _____ (three things)

Line 10: Resident of _____

Line 11: Last name _____

Correlates to Common Core Standard Reading Literature: Key Ideas and Details R.L. 7.1, R.L.8,1., R.L. 9-10.1 and Craft and Structure R. L. 7.5., R.L. 8.5, R.L. 9-10.5, R.L.7.6., R.L. 8.6, R.L. 9-10.6

Essential Quotes Analysis

The language that an author uses in his work is essential to getting across the intended meaning. Select four quotes from *Jepp, Who Defied the Stars* that seem to signify key ideas that the author hopes that readers take from the text. These might be quotes spoken by characters or might be from the narration, and page numbers should be included with the quotes. Have students develop a chart with the following four columns: Quote, Page Number, Relevance to the Novel, Intended Meaning for Readers

The intended meaning should have relevance not only to the characters in the text, but to the lives of anyone who reads the book.

Correlates to Common Core Standard Reading Literature: Key Ideas and Details R.L. 7.1., R.L. 8.1., R.L. 9-10.1.

Create Original *Jepp, Who Defied the Stars* Inspired Art

For added novel connections, allow students to create one of the following as an additional means of exploring the novel.

- Music is often used to connect people to one another and the world at large. Select a favorite character from *Jepp, Who Defied the Stars* and create a CD with an original playlist that is representative of the experiences that character undergoes throughout the novel. Create original art for the jewel case and on the interior, and after including appropriate artist information, offer an explanation for the selection of each song.
- One of Marsh's greatest strengths as a writer is her ability to offer richly descriptive scenes. In small groups, have students select a favorite scene from *Jepp, Who Defied the Stars* and create either a digitally or manually illustrated graphic novel for that scene. Using a digital comic strip creator (<http://www.makebeliefscomix.com/Comix> or <http://infinitecomic.com> for example), have students begin by using the strips to create storyboards for their scene. Have students select original art, images, and graphics. Alternatively, students could assume the roles of two of the characters with each one's personality and voice and have them interact with each other by creating an extension of a scene from one of the novels. As part of the evaluation component, consider panel size and number of panels, transitions and layouts, artwork, writing, and lettering.
- Using a variety of media, create an original piece of art that is symbolic of one of the major themes of *Jepp, Who Defied the Stars* (these may include but are not limited to the following: love, family, friendship, loyalty, or sacrifice).
- Previews of coming attractions in the movie industry are known as trailers. Design an original book trailer for *Jepp, Who Defied the Stars*. Begin by creating a storyboard, detailing which scenes you intend to incorporate in your trailer. Use a moviemaker program of choice such as www.animoto.com. Post your finished trailers to www.youtube.com.

One more step—talking about bullying, and being different

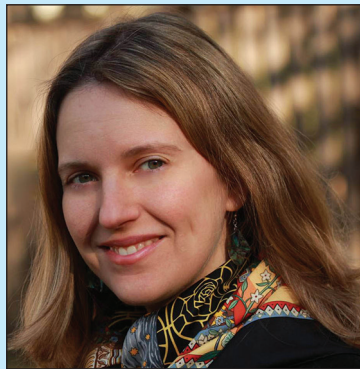
- A child is bullied every seven minutes on playgrounds. Adults intervene only four percent of the time. Peers intervene eleven percent of the time, and eighty-five percent of the time there is NO intervention at all.
- In one study of junior high and senior high students, over eighty-eight percent said they had witnessed bullying in their schools.

Motivational speaker Mark Trombino, who is three feet three inches tall, has spoken at hundreds of schools throughout the country to help break down the barriers associated with differences, the negative effects of bullying—no matter how small they seem, and the pivotal role of the bystander. For more information, visit his Web site at www.motivationalsmalltalk.org.



About the Author

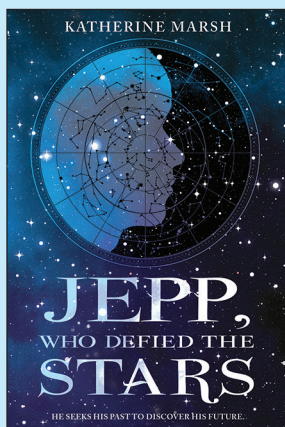
Katherine Marsh was a high school teacher before moving to New York City, where she began writing for magazines such as *Rolling Stone* and *Good Housekeeping*. Some of her nonfiction stories about her home state of New York have appeared in the *New York Times*. She is now the managing editor of *The New Republic* magazine, where she specializes in politics and culture. She now lives in Washington, D.C. She is the author of *The Night Tourist*, winner of the 2008 Edgar Award for Best Juvenile Mystery, and its sequel, *The Twilight Prisoner*, which are both set in New York City. Visit her at www.katherinemarsh.com.



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This guide was created by Rose Brock, a teacher, school librarian, and doctoral candidate at Texas Woman's University, specializing in children's and young adult literature.

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