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Recommended for 10-14 year olds

THE STOLEN PRINCE OF CLOUDBURST

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ILLUSTRATIONS BY
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Summary

Long ago, the little Prince of Cloudburst was stolen from the seashore by a Water Sprite. Now, ten years later, the prince has found his way home. The King and Queen are planning the biggest party in their Kingdom's history to welcome him.

Meanwhile, on the other side of the Kingdoms and Empires, Esther Mettlestone-Staranise is looking forward to another year at Katherine Valley Boarding School. But she arrives to find a number of strange and unsettling changes. For one, her new teacher is rumoured to be an Ogre. Two mysterious students have joined the school, and one of Esther's classmates is an undercover Spellbinder. Most disturbingly, the mountains surrounding the school – usually a delight of glaciers, teashops, lakes and Faeries – are now crowded with wicked Shadow Mages.

As secrets and dangers escalate, Esther must find the answers to several puzzles. Why is her teacher behaving so oddly? Which of Esther's classmates is the Spellbinder, and can they really protect the school from gathering hordes of Shadow Mages? Could the Stolen Prince of Cloudburst be connected?

How can Esther – who is not talented like her sisters, nor an adventurer like her cousin, but just Esther – save her family, her school and possibly her entire world?

Themes

Magic • fantasy • myths • quests • spells • courage • resourcefulness • family • prejudice • scapegoating • climate change



Author style

Short chapters, a deceptively simple first person narrative and gorgeous illustrations by Kelly Canby make this perfect reading for Year 4 students; while the combination of rollicking adventure, classic episodic tale, quest story and a modern take on the fantasy novel will keep older readers equally enthralled.

The third book in Jaclyn Moriarty's Kindoms and Empires series, *The Stolen Prince of Cloudburst* is a standalone novel that will capture the imaginations of newcomers to the series, as well as satisfy the many fans of *The Extremely Inconvenient Adventures of Bronte Mettlestone* and *The Slightly Alarming Tale of the Whispering Wars*.

The story's narrator, Esther Mettlestone-Staranise, is completely charming and will win readers over instantly with her funny, smart, loving and just a little bit rebellious take on life. But it is the entire cast of characters at Esther's school, Katherine Valley Boarding School, that make this story so engaging. There's Esther's poker-playing sisters Imogen and Astrid, hilariously vague Principal Hortense and Esther's new teacher, the weirdly popular Mrs Pollock, to name a few.

Suggestions for Classroom Discussion and Application:

Cover

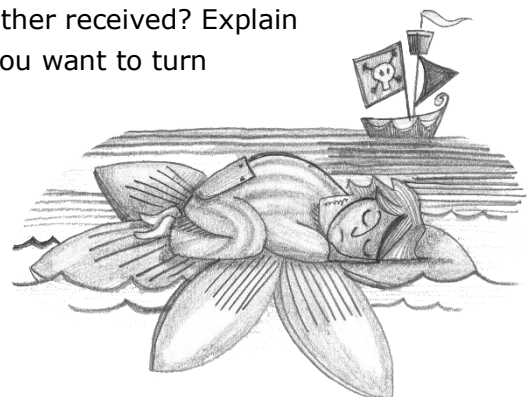
Before reading the story, examine the image on the front cover of the novel and write a short paragraph to describe what you think the story will be like and whether it makes you want to read it. Consider how the cover makes you feel? Look closely at elements such as colour, font, perspective, illustrative style and subject matter. Do you expect the story to be a fun and cheerful read or something far more dark and serious? What might the sign on the arched pillar, 'Caution: Water is Wet', suggest about the story? Who might the story be about? Will it be set in the real world or some other fantasy world?

After finishing the novel, go back to this paragraph to see whether your predictions of genre and events were correct.

Part 1

Did you like the novel opening with Esther's narrative account? Which particular elements did you like: the plot, Esther's connection to the story, her authorly interruptions such as, '(That was a helpful aside.)', or her use of language to describe things and people, such as a day being 'sniffly' and an ocean lily being 'like a floating picnic blanket'?

What did you make of the teacher feedback and mark Esther received? Explain whether you think it was fair or surprising. Did it make you want to turn the page straightaway to get to Part 2?



Show Not Tell

Chapters 1 and 2 are packed full of information about Esther and her family. Some information is told directly; for instance, we know Esther's father teaches history at Clybourne University because she tells us that on page 13. However, some information is inferred, meaning Esther doesn't tell us but we form our own opinion of someone based on what they say or do. An example of this might be when Esther's mother is saying goodbye to the girls on their return to school (pages 17–19). We understand she is competitive because she insists on her daughters winning any competition they enter, and that she is quite distracted to them because she is keen for them to leave as quickly as possible.

Draw a line down the middle of a page in your workbook and title one side 'Direct Information' and the other 'Inferred Information'. Read both Chapters 1 and 2 closely and list as many examples of information about Esther, her mother and father as you can in the correct column.

Language

Esther is a natural writer and loves to use language to make her stories as entertaining as possible. In Chapter 5 she describes the rumour that her new teacher might be an Ogre as being like 'a ghostly cat ... wandering the garden, brushing its fur against bare legs and then moving on' (page 23). And when she finds out where her teacher comes from in Chapter 6 she feels like the ghost cat, 'leapt into the air and sunk its claws into my throat' (page 28). What is the literary term for this kind of description? Can you find five other examples of this literary device in the novel, list each and explain what each is describing?

Breaking the Fourth Wall

Esther is also a master of unusual techniques to get readers' attention and emphasise a particular scene or conversation. One example she uses is called Breaking the Fourth Wall and refers to when she realises that there are Shadow Mages and pirates at the party. She says, 'I will begin a new chapter in case you need a moment for the shock.' (page 317). Research the term Breaking the Fourth Wall and describe how Esther's words here are an example of the technique.

Flash Forward

I was so happy I slid down the banister. Mr Dar-Healey, who was passing by, said, "Esther!" But then he winked at me.

Sixteen days later I was lying in the mud in the gardens behind the school, rain hammering my face, sobbing. (page 371)

Why do you think the author chose to flash forward in time at this point in the story? How did this flash forward affect the way you read the story?

Extension question: How has the author presented Esther's narrative account, 'The Stolen Prince of Cloudburst', in a similar way? [Answer: Esther's story and Mrs Pollock's remarks open the novel but the next chapter goes back in time to before Esther had written the story and met Mrs Pollock.]

Characterisation

'My sister Imogen can also swim. Astrid can read people. Whereas I'm just Esther.' (page 431)

Do you agree that Esther is just Esther? Does she have any special talents? Give examples of things she says or does that show her talents in the story. For instance, if you say she is brave you could say she showed that by saving the school from the Radish Gnomes (pages 240–241), Fire Sirens (page 246) and Witches' attacks (pages 248–252).

Empathy

- What sort of a mother is Nancy Mettlestone to Esther for most of the novel? Did you feel sympathy for Nancy after she told the story of leaving Esther on the picnic rug in the Wicked and Nefarious Kingdoms? Why or why not?
- Does Nancy seem like a nicer mother by the end of the story? What was the most important thing she did to show she is becoming nicer? How does the last page of the novel illustrate the deep and loving bond between Esther and her mother?
- Bronte and Alejandro are characters from which other books by Jaclyn Moriarty? Why do you think the author decided to include them in this story?

Hero's Journey

Write a short essay explaining what the term 'Hero's Journey' refers to and whether you think Esther's story is a good example of it.

Discussion Topic: Good versus Evil

Is the difference between good and evil always straightforward? If you do an evil thing, are you an evil person? Is Pelagia an evil person because she agreed to help her 'father'? Is Esther's mother evil because she left Esther alone in the Wicked and Nefarious Kingdoms? Are Witches evil if they care for their children (page 353)?

Discussion Topic: Sibling Rivalry

Is it possible to love your brother or sister (or friends) and still feel a bit jealous of them? How does this question relate to Esther and her sisters?



In the author's own words:

'When Bronte Mettlestone took her journey to visit her ten aunts in various parts of the Kingdoms and Empires, one of my favourite visits was with her cousins at the boarding school in the mountains. I wished she could stay longer and get to know the three girls. I liked how close the sisters were, and how they teased each other, but were fiercely loyal to each other.

'Their mother, Aunt Nancy, was the meanest of the aunts visited by Bronte, and I thought a lot about how difficult it would be to have Nancy as your mother.

'I have four sisters myself, so I like to think about sisters, and the bond between them, but also to look more closely at one particular sister. I chose Esther – partly because I love the name Esther and partly because I like middle children. I'm one of the middle children in my family, and it's possible to get a little lost, and to wonder whether you have any special role, or if your job is just to be one of the middle kids.'

Jaclyn Moriarty



Photo courtesy of Wendy McDougall

Author Background:

Jaclyn Moriarty is the author of novels for children, young adults and adults, including the internationally bestselling *Feeling Sorry for Celia* and *Finding Cassie Crazy*, and the Colours of Madeleine trilogy. The first book in that trilogy, *A Corner of White*, won the NSW Premier's Literary Award for Young Adult Fiction, the Queensland Literary Award for Young Adult Fiction, and was short-listed for the Western Australian Premier's Awards. In the US, it was a Boston Globe-Horn Book Honor book, was short-listed for the Nebula (Andre Norton prize), and was a Kirkus Best Book of the Year. The second in the trilogy, *The Cracks in the Kingdom*, also won both the NSW and Queensland Literary Awards, was short-listed for the Victorian Premier's Awards, and won the Aurealis Award for Best Young Adult Fantasy. The Kingdoms and Empires books, a series of standalone books for 10 to 14-year-olds, include *The Extremely Inconvenient Adventures of Bronte Mettlestone*, *The Slightly Alarming Tale of the Whispering Wars* and *The Stolen Prince of Cloudburst*. The first two books in the series have won and been short-listed for a number of prizes. A former media and entertainment lawyer, Jaclyn grew up in Sydney, lived in the US, the UK and Canada, and now lives in Sydney again.