

Teachers Notes by Lindsay Williams

Liberator

by
Richard Harland

ISBN 978-1-74237-342-3

Recommended for ages 12-16+ yrs

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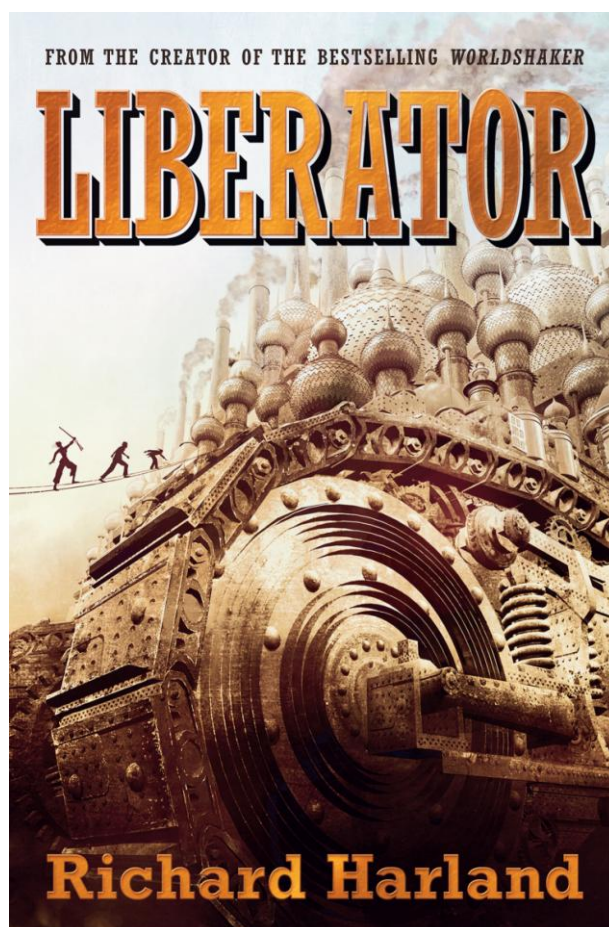
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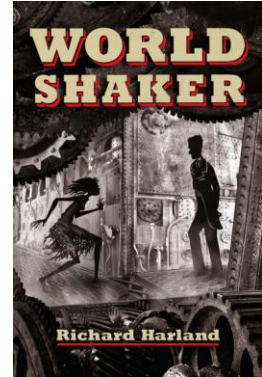
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INTRODUCTION

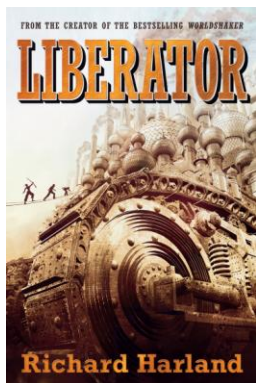
PLOT SUMMARY

The story so far: In *Worldshaker*, readers are introduced to an alternative history of the world in which the British at Waterloo do not defeat Napoleon. This results in a massive industrialization project to fuel on-going warfare and endless battles that turn Europe into a wasteland. Technical ingenuity leads to the building of 'juggernauts', massive mobile cities that roll across the world and can even cross oceans.



Sixteen year old Colbert (Col) Porpentine and his family live a cloistered, privileged life aboard the British juggernaut, the *Worldshaker*, at 'two and a half miles long, three quarters of a mile wide...the largest construction on the face of the Earth' (*Worldshaker* p.20). Colbert is a part of the Upper Decks people, the elite of the population who live in luxury aboard the juggernaut. They are ruled over by Queen Victoria the Second and Prince Albert, and the day to day running of the juggernaut is the responsibility of the Supreme Commander, currently Col's grandfather Sir Mormus. In the very lower decks of *Worldshaker*, down amongst the dirt and noise and danger of the engines, live the Filthies, the lowest caste in this society, regarded as sub-human by the Upper Decks people. But they are quietly plotting revolution against their oppressors.

This revolution is eventually made possible with the aid of Col who has been spurred to action after becoming involved with one of the Filthies, a girl called Riff. After the defeat of the Upper Decks and the death of Sir Mormus, the Filthies take control of *Worldshaker*. As a result, many of the Upper Decks people choose to leave – although most of the Porpentines choose to take their chances and stay on.



Now: It is three months after the Filthies' victory and the juggernaut has been renamed *Liberator*. A revolutionary council is in control and the Swanks (the new name for the former Upper Decks) are finding life tough – they are under constant scrutiny and suspicion. This is exacerbated by the work of a mysterious saboteur whom the council is convinced comes from within the ranks of the Swanks.

Besides the search for the saboteur, the novel has a number of intertwining threads to its plot: politics onboard the *Liberator*; the pressing need for more coal to fuel the juggernaut; the rise of the red armbands (radicals/extremists amongst the Filthies); the problem of internal refugees amongst the Swanks and the sinister disappearance of many of their number; and finally, the attack on the *Liberator* by the Russian and Austrian juggernauts. Amongst all of this is the struggle of Riff and Colbert to maintain their relationship.

LIBERATOR IN THE CLASSROOM

Like its predecessor, *Liberator* is very suitable for teenagers and an accessible example of the increasingly popular Steampunk genre. As such, it would have a welcome place in an English class as part of a genre study. The novel also resonates strongly with events in the contemporary world, dealing as it does with the aftermath of revolution and the dangers of political extremists. It can also be read as a story about personal responsibility, courage and the need for tough decisions. Ultimately, it is also a story of hope and the possibility of a better society. Although the novel certainly benefits from having read the first book, *Liberator* also stands alone.

History and Study of Society teachers would also find a place for *Liberator* (and *Worldshaker*) in their curriculum as a way into studying Victorian society and European history. It could be used as an interesting, concrete way into exploring the difficulties that face societies in the wake of revolution, and the domino effect of mass civil uprisings. Like its predecessor, there is a sub-text about the impact of human technology on the environment – a hot topic in a world pondering its response to global warming.

INTRODUCTION: LINKS TO THE AUSTRALIAN CURRICULUM

These notes are aimed at middle to upper secondary classrooms. The activities are designed to be used mainly as part of an English program (although some links to History are also provided).

The English activities have been designed to take account of the three strands of the Australian English curriculum:

- **Literature** – the activities focus on developing appreciation of the novel form which has the potential for enriching students' lives and expanding the scope of their experience. In addition, students will appreciate the works of an Australian writer who is involved in the Steampunk literary movement.
- **Language** – many of the activities are designed to develop students' knowledge about Richard Harland's use of language to create fictional worlds, encourage readers to align themselves with particular characters and values, and to keep the narrative flowing.
- **Literacy** – see the vocabulary wheel strategy included as Blackline Master 4. There are also specific activities that assist students to think more like a writer (especially of novels and narratives generally).

While some activities clearly belong mainly to one strand or another, many of the activities also draw upon these strands in an integrated manner.

ABOUT THE TEACHERS NOTES

These notes provide 21 class and student activities, accompanied by four blackline masters.

Teachers notes are also available for the first novel in the series, *Worldshaker*. Many of the activities and related resources could be adapted for use with *Liberator*. In addition, if students have read and/or studied the first novel, the activities could be extended to see how the narrative and character develop across the two books. Consequently, it is assumed that these notes will be read in conjunction with those for *Worldshaker*:

<http://www.allenandunwin.com/uploads/BookPdf/TeachersNotes/9781741757095.pdf>

ENGLISH ACTIVITIES

BEFORE READING

Activity 1:

In addition to researching the Victorian era and the background to juggernauts suggested in the notes for *Worldshaker*, students should research the literary genre of Steampunk. Here are some useful starting points:

- <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Steampunk>
- <http://www.richardharland.net/worldshaker/WS.steampunk/WS.steampunk.index.htm>

Finally, students might find Richard Harland's background notes on where the ideas for *Worldshaker* came from quite useful:

- <http://www.richardharland.net/worldshaker/WS.writing/WS.writingIdeas.htm>

Extension: With the assistance of the teacher-librarian, set up a Steampunk display in the school library.

Activity 2:

It is three months since the Filthies revolted against their servitude onboard the *Worldshaker* and they are now in control. Before reading the novel, have students write a diary entry by Colbert Porpentine (Col) in which he discusses the revolution and its aftermath. Where is he living? How is the rest of his family? What are relationships with the Filthies like? If students have not read *Worldshaker*, the teacher may need to provide some background (see *Worldshaker* notes as a starting point).

As they begin reading, students can discuss how accurate (or inaccurate) they were and why.

DURING READING

Activity 3:

While you are reading, create an annotated bookmark - on one side, gradually create a timeline showing the major events of the novel. On the reverse side, list the main characters under the following headings:

- Filthies
- Swanks
- Residents of Botany Bay
- Svolchi (Russian Filthies)

You may wish to use the template provided (Blackline Master 1).

Activity 4:

The Hero's Journey is a well-known, archetypal structure for narratives, especially adventure stories. Read more about it on

http://www.thewritersjourney.com/hero's_journey.htm

Then, using the simplified version in Blackline Master 2, match events in *Liberator* to the Hero's Journey. In groups, discuss how closely the story follows the archetypal

structure, noting points of similarity and difference. After finishing, evaluate whether or not the story is formulaic and, if not, how Harland manages to avoid this.

Extension: Use Blackline Master 2 to also trace the development of Col's relationships and note how these progress in relation to the main storyline.

Activity 5:

Visit Richard Harland's website and study the information about the *Worldshaker*: <http://www.richardharland.net/worldshaker/WS.exploringjugg/WS.exploringjugg.index.htm>
As you read, compile an annotated map of the *Worldshaker* showing where important events occur.

For a bit of fun, you could imagine that Septimus and Professor Twillip have invented a Steampunk version of the GPS satellite navigator. (Of course, without Einstein's Theory of Relativity, they would have to operate on different principles.) Record directions in the style of these popular devices – the objective being to become familiar with the layout of the *Liberator*.

Extension: Obtain a blank world map and plot modern day locations which correspond to places visited by *Liberator*, or mentioned in the novel. This map can be annotated. Such a map that is included on Richard Harland's website: <http://www.richardharland.net/worldshaker/WS.exploringjugg/WSexploringRoute.htm>

Activity 6:

As you read, collect samples of favourite lines, quotations, scenes etc. Write these out in a reading journal and ensure you include page references. Also collect words that you haven't come across before and write those in your journal along with the meaning of the word and an example from the text. Blackline Masters 3 and 4 can be used for this purpose.

Extension: You might also wish to continue the journal begun for *Worldshaker*. Like that novel, *Liberator* has strong cinematic qualities and great potential to be made into a movie. Therefore, as students read, they could imagine they are directors planning a film and keeping a director's notebook. This would include:

- Character notes: Which characters are the most vital and would need to be retained? Which could be cut or merged (for budgetary reasons)? Who (i.e. which actors) could be cast in particular roles?
- Costuming: Sketch ideas for costumes (or find suitable pictures)
- Plot: What events will be emphasized and are essential to the story? What might be omitted or modified?
- Setting: Sketch or find pictures of suitable locations for films. Sketch designs for interior shots.
- Music: Choose music that could be used to capture the mood of particular scenes.

Additionally, the main characters in movies such as *Lord of the Rings* and *Star Wars* have their own musical motif, a piece of music that plays when they enter a scene. What musical motif could you apply to particular characters?

Unlike more straightforward chapter questions, this activity encourages students to use higher order thinking (e.g. inferring, translating and designing) while reading the book.

AFTER READING

Activity 7:

In groups, share some of your journal entries and compare and contrast what people have written, how they have responded. Discuss why students may have reacted in various ways to the book – is it to do with the novel itself? Is it to do with attitudes, values and experiences of the reader? Is it a combination of these?

Activity 8:

Plotting of a novel also involves planting narrative 'time bombs' - that is, details which are revealed early on, but may not appear particularly important at the time. However, later the reader discovers that these details have been crucial points that allow later events to work or make sense. Like a time bomb, they are just sitting in the book waiting to be activated by the author. For example, Sephaltina admits to acts of sabotage - which appears to resolve one of the story threads in the novel. The true importance of this revelation does not become clear until much later during Victoria and Albert's trial - during one of Sephaltina's attempts at sabotage, she has seen Lye leaving the *Liberator* at Botany Bay. Col is able to use this fact to discredit Lye by revealing her as the traitor who has made the soldiers at Botany Bay aware that an attack would take place the following morning. What other facts are revealed (perhaps in passing) that later turn out to be crucial to the plot?

Activity 9:

This is the story of the aftermath of revolution and it explores some big, complex ideas. In order to deal with these complexities and make it more accessible, the novel focuses on particular characters who also represent different aspects of how a society might reinvent itself. For example, Col represents members of the old regime - but one who becomes aware of the injustices occurring. Riff represents the moderate faction of the new regime. What aspect of society do each of the following characters represent? What is the possible significance of their fate in the story?

- Lye
- Mr Gibber
- Guy at Botany Bay
- Sephaltina

Extension: The relationship between Mr Gibber and Murgatrude - light relief but also becomes an important mechanism for Gibber's eventual redemption. Discuss. Why is it important to redeem Gibber?

Activity 10:

Sometimes events that happen would be time consuming to describe in detail or detailed descriptions would slow the pace of the book. Re-read pp.277-280 and pp.422-4. Discuss and evaluate Harland's solution to this problem: providing a limited point of view (Col's); having Col fall unconscious. Are there further examples of this (or similar) techniques in the novel?

Activity 11:

According to Aristotle there are three main persuasive techniques:

- Ethos: establishing the trustworthiness of the speaker;

- Logos: making a logical argument using good evidence;
- Pathos: the use of emotional appeals.

The strongest rhetoric makes use of all three techniques, weaving them together. Read some of the speeches made by characters in the book, e.g.

- pp.243-4 - Lye's appeal to purity
- pp.286-297 - speeches at the trial of Victoria and Albert

Identify and evaluate the rhetorical devices used by the speakers.

Activity 12:

Contrast is a very common and useful technique in narrative - it can build tension to keep readers interested. It can also be a useful way to encourage or help readers to make evaluations about characters/events. So, for example, Harland constructs Riff and Col as very different characters; on pp.355-6, readers discover that Col believes in abstract principles and morality, whereas Riff has a belief in 'real' things. Of course, by joining together, they become even stronger - we could take this to mean that belief in both the abstract and the real are necessary. [And their eventual partnering is also symbolic of the Filthies and Swanks finally uniting.] In what other ways do Col and Riff differ? What else does this difference contribute to the novel? What other examples of contrast can you find? How are they being used?

Activity 13:

In the first novel, *Worldshaker*, the apparently sophisticated and refined Upper Decks people (who become the Swanks in *Liberator*) are revealed to be living a lie - their privileged lifestyle depends on their cruel oppression of the Filthies and a belief in Filthy inferiority. Consequently, the revolution, which brings their reign to an end, seems legitimate and necessary. However, in this novel, our appraisals of the Filthies and Swanks are called into question: it is hard not to feel some sympathy for the Swanks and suspicion, even abhorrence, of the Filthies (or at least some of them). What techniques does Harland use to manipulate reader's reaction in this way? Consider the language used (in description and dialogue), actions of characters and plot developments.

TRANSFORMING, DESIGNING AND CRITIQUING ACTIVITIES

Activity 14:

Re-read Chapter 41 starting on p.216. As the *Liberator* flees from the other juggernauts, it 'approached the chain of the hills at the back of Botany Bay. They rose like a green sloping wave, as high as the Bridge of the juggernaut itself. No gaps, no breaks, no valleys. The juggernaut couldn't bulldoze through so much solid rock; it would have to go up and over' (p.219). Later, as it climbs the range, Col realizes that there is a 'low, grating vibration - surely the rollers on the downhill side skidding deeper and deeper into the ground' (p.220). Although only barely referred to in the book (as in this brief quotation), the juggernauts clearly must cause a great deal of environmental damage - and remember, if Botany Bay is where modern day Sydney stands, then these hills are the Blue Mountains, a World Heritage area. Even at the end, the inhabitants of the *Liberator* remain oblivious to this aspect of their lives as they join the *Romanov*. Re-tell parts of the story revealing the environmental damage caused by the juggernauts.

Imagine you are Septimus and - with Professor Twillip - have been researching the history of the juggernauts. In addition, you have been on the observation decks taking detailed notes of the effects of the juggernaut as it rolls over the landscape. Write the paper revealing the findings of your investigations.

Activity 15:

Recent catastrophic and tragic natural events have revealed the limitations of human technology. Of course, in part, Steampunk novels such as *Liberator* and *Worldshaker*, celebrate human technology. Compare attitudes towards technology suggested in Harland's novels to alternative views of technology that are expressed in a range of other books, e.g.

- *War of the Worlds* by H. G. Wells
- *Brave New World* by Aldous Huxley
- *1984* by George Orwell
- *Cosmos* by Carl Sagan
- *Into the Wild* by John Krakauer

...and films such as:

- *Avatar*, *Aliens 2*, *Terminator 2* and *Titanic* made by James Cameron.

Write an analytical essay exploring the various representations of technology in literature and film. Consider the complex relationship between humans, technology and nature.

Activity 16:

Film trailers are an established and well-known technique for the marketing of movies. Of late, book trailers have become increasingly popular. Using Google, find examples of these on the Internet, for example, go to

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PYiw5vkQFPw>

for a trailer of Scott Westerfield's novel, *Leviathan*. Create your own book trailer for *Liberator*.

Activity 17:

The ABC's 'First Tuesday Bookclub' involves a panel of book lovers discussing their reactions to specific novels. The host introduces each book and a short film provides a summary of the plot - this is done through the use of voice-over and live action re-enactment. After viewing segments from the program, create your own panel discussions of *Liberator*.

Activity 18:

Write the outline for a sequel to *Liberator*. What happens now that the Russian juggernaut (with the inhabitants of *Worldshaker* aboard) is headed for North America? Will the other juggernauts leave them alone? Will the Russians and British live in harmony? Will they really be able to live in peace? And, of course, don't forget that Col and Riff are now partnered, so they might start a family.

Activity 19:

Read Richard Harland's advice on writing:

- <http://www.richardharland.net/WRITING%20TIPS/indextop.htm>
- <http://www.richardharland.net/worldshaker/WS.steampunk/steampunkwritingtips.htm>

Create your own Steampunk story - this could be in the form of a short story, short film or graphic novel.

LINKS TO HISTORY

Activity 20:

Find specific examples of techniques used by Lye to gain power, e.g. Rhetoric (persuasion through language), force (including elimination of potential opposition), fear, manipulation of government and legal processes. Compare and contrast what happens in *Liberator* with real life revolutions and other regime changes, e.g. China, Russia, Iraq, South Africa, Egypt.

Activity 21:

In *Liberator*, Harland suggests that sometimes there is no alternative but to take up arms and fight for a cause (for example, re-read pp.361-3 where Col hesitates to shoot soldiers moving about in the travel tubes on board the Russian juggernaut). Research whether history is on his side. What examples are there of non-violent revolutions? How successful have they been?

OTHER RESOURCES

One of the best resources for studying this novel or Steampunk more generally is Richard Harland's official website:

<http://www.richardharland.net/index.htm>

Read an interview with Richard Harland from January 2011:

<http://ripping-ozzie-reads.com/2011/01/18/meet-richard-harland/>

It includes references to *Liberator*, and features a stunning image of the Russian and British juggernauts clashing.

For an older interview with Harland, see:

<http://www.tabula-rasa.info/AusHorror/RichardHarland.html>

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER READING

Read some more Steampunk. These websites provide annotated lists to start students on their reading. It is highly recommended that teachers preview the books listed.

- <http://www.richardharland.net/worldshaker/WS.steampunk/SteampunkInBooks.htm>
[This is a list provided by Richard Harland. A link on the left hand side menu bar will take students to Steampunk on film.]
- http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_steampunk_works
[This list contains references to graphic novels and films as well.]
- <http://www.fantasy-magazine.com/2008/10/top-10-literary-steampunk-works/>

For more Australian science fiction/fantasy (but not Steampunk), read the short story collection *Yellowcake* by Margo Lanagan (published by Allen and Unwin).

INFORMATION ABOUT RICHARD HARLAND

<http://www.richardharland.net/>

[This is Richard Harland's official website and includes extensive advice on writing stories.]

<http://www.tabula-rasa.info/AusHorror/RichardHarland.html>

[Read an extensive interview in which Harland chats about his life as a writer, the process of writing and some of his other books.]

<http://www.laterallearning.com/authors/harland.html>

[Discover more about Richard, including how to book him for a visit to your school.]

OTHER BOOKS BY RICHARD HARLAND

For older readers

The 'Eddon and Vail' science fiction series from Pan Macmillan:

The Dark Edge, 1997

Taken By Force, 1998

Hidden From View, 1999

The 'Heaven and Earth' fantasy trilogy from Penguin:

Ferren and the Angel, 2000

Ferren and the White Doctor, 2002

Ferren and the Invasion of Heaven, 2003

The 'Vile Files' cult gothic novels published by small press:

The Vicar of Morbing Vyle, 1993

The Black Crusade, Chimaera Publications, 2004

Worldshaker, 2009

For younger readers

Walter Wants to be a Werewolf! 2004 (Penguin, in the Aussie Chomps series)

Sassycat: The Night of the Dead, 2005 (Omnibus/Scholastic)

The 'Wolf Kingdom' series, published by Omnibus/Scholastic in 2008

Wolf Kingdom: Escape!

Wolf Kingdom: Under Siege

Wolf Kingdom: Race to the Ruins

Wolf Kingdom: The Heavy Crown

Awards

The Black Crusade won the Aurealis Award for Best Horror Novel of 2004 and the Golden Aurealis Award for Best Novel in any category of Speculative Fiction.

Ferren and the Angel and *Sassycat* have been CBC Notable Books; *Sassycat* is on the NSW Premiers Reading Challenge list.

Worldshaker was shortlisted for the 2010 NSW Premier's Literary Awards - Ethel Turner Prize for young people's literature, and for the Golden Inky, 2009.

ABOUT THE WRITERS

RICHARD HARLAND

Richard Harland was born in Huddersfield, England, and migrated to Australia in 1970. After several years as a singer, songwriter and poet, he became a lecturer in English at the University of Wollongong. He resigned to become a full-time writer in 1997. He now lives in Figtree, eighty kilometres south of Sydney.

His first book was the comic horror novel *The Vicar of Morbing Vyle*, which has since become a cult classic. In 1997 he began the Eddon and Vail series, which combines a science fiction world with detective thriller stories: *The Dark Edge*, *Taken By Force* and *Hidden From View*. Since then he has published a number of fantasy novels for younger readers, horror fiction and SF short stories, two of which won Aurealis awards.

Author website: <http://www.richardharland.net>

LINDSAY WILLIAMS

Lindsay Williams taught in state and private schools for 25 years, teaches pre-service English teachers at the University of Queensland, has an educational consultancy business and is in the early stages of a Ph.D. through the University of New England. He has written the two volume English Teaching Survival Manual, on-line resources for Screen Australia's digital learning site, the curriculum package for the ACTF's Lockie Leonard series, and teacher notes for other Allen and Unwin publications, Odo Hirsch's *Darius Bell and the Glitter Pool*, *Worldshaker* by Richard Harland, *Jameela* by Rukhsana Khan and *Yellowcake* by Margo Lanagan. Lindsay has been a member of a number of committees advising on state and national curriculum and is the past-Vice President of the English Teachers Association of Queensland (ETAQ) which presented him with The Peter Botsman Memorial Award for contributions to quality English education in Queensland. His website is www.englishteacherguru.com.

Liberator
by Richard Harland

The Story

The Characters

Filthies

Swanks

Residents of Botany Bay

The Svolchi

Others

TRACING THE HERO'S JOURNEY

In the retrieval chart below is a simplified version of the archetypal Hero's Journey that lies at the heart of most extended narratives (see http://www.thewritersjourney.com/hero's_journey.htm for much greater detail).

As you read the book, in the left hand column, explore how closely Col's journey as hero matches the archetypal journey. In the right hand column, trace the development of Col's relationships compared with the trajectory of the plot.

Hero's Journey - plot	Progression of Col's relationships (especially with Riff)
Col in the Ordinary World – living as a Swank in the Norfolk Library <i>Events in story:</i>	
Call to adventure and Refusal of the Call <i>Events in story:</i>	
Meeting with the Mentor <i>Events in story:</i>	
The Extraordinary World – meeting with trials, allies and enemies (the Shadow) <i>Events in story:</i>	
The Inmost Cave – a great ordeal <i>Events in story:</i>	
Escape <i>Events in story:</i>	
Return to the Ordinary World with the Prize <i>Events in story:</i>	



Vocabulary Wheel

For significant or particularly unfamiliar items of vocabulary, print off and complete the Vocabulary Wheel.

