

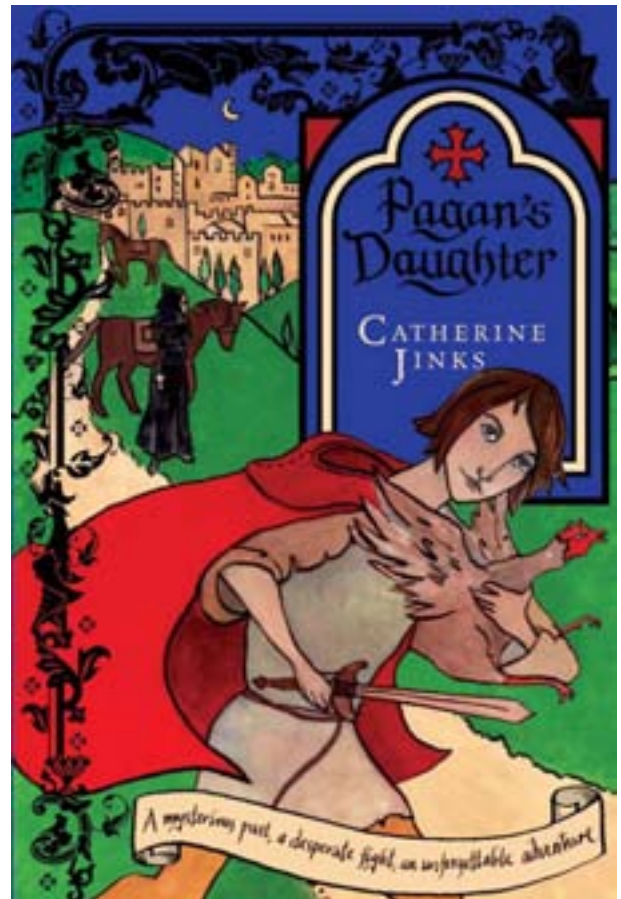
**Teachers Notes (Secondary)**  
**by Dr Robyn Sheahan-Bright**  
**Pagan's Daughter**  
**Catherine Jinks**

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Recommended for ages 12-14

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## INTRODUCTION

*We are all on our own quests, Babylonne. And we all have our own relics.* (p 134)

Set in 1227, this is the story of sixteen year old Babylonne Kidrouk, the illegitimate daughter of Pagan and a Cathar Perfect named Mabelia. A sequel to the four novels about her father, this novel takes up the story twenty years later.

In the previous series, Pagan was an orphaned Christian Arab boy who had become squire to Lord Roland, a Templar Knight, and had journeyed with him. He'd learned to love him as a mentor while they fought off antagonists, and then had 'renounced the sword' when they both became novices at the abbey of Saint Martin. Amidst the violence of the Crusades they escaped to France and eventually Pagan became a Roman priest and later Archdeacon of Carcassonne. Meanwhile he had also mentored Isidore, a young monk who had been his devoted scribe, and who continued to serve him after Roland died. The series finished with an epilogue which offered only a brief outline of Pagan's later life.

This new series fills in the gaps in his last years by imagining a romance and a child for him. In this novel Isidore discovers Babylonne, the daughter Pagan had never met. Although Isidore had been aware of Pagan's love for Mabelia, he'd not known that Mabelia had borne a child until he accidentally met her daughter and recognised the resemblance. By falling in love, Pagan and Mabelia had both broken the tenets of their faiths and were doomed to live apart. Since Mabelia's death in the siege of Lavaur soon after Babylonne was born, Pagan had grieved for her until his own death, which occurred only weeks before *Pagan's Daughter* begins.

Meanwhile Babylonne has been raised under the strict arm of her Aunt Navarre in a Cathar convent of Perfects run by her grandmother, Lady Blanche of Laurac. Navarre treats Babylonne like a slave, punishing her constantly for being the child of a priest. Against her will, Babylonne is being "trained" to become a Cathar Perfect—a branch of Christianity which became widely popular in France in the 12th century, and was seen by the Roman Catholic Church as heretical, so that several crusades and inquisitions effectively wiped out the religion by the end of the 13th century. Cathars called themselves 'Good Christians', arguing that they were the only true practitioners of the faith. By the time in which this novel is set, the 'Good Christians' had suffered years of persecution, but still retained a lot of support in the Languedoc area. Many ordinary people were sick of the corruption and power of Roman Catholic priests, and were drawn to the religion because of its emphasis on apostolic poverty and lay spiritual authority.

But Babylonne is a tempestuous girl and although she has played the role of Cinderella in the house of the ugly stepmother and endured verbal and physical abuse every day of her life, she rails against her

mistreatment and the restrictions of a Perfect life. Her anger is fuelled by the story she's been told of her birth which includes her mother's rape by her father, of whom she has an understandably poor opinion. She has also grown up during the Albigensian Crusade, one of the bloodiest times in history. She has already witnessed six sieges in her young life, and countless acts of violence, so that all her childhood memories and stories are of massacres, torture and cruelty. As a result she's not a fan of her fellow man or woman. She believes that life is a matter of survival, pure and simple. So she's not surprised when she's told by a priest that her name refers to the Biblical words of King David: ' O daughter of Babylon, who art to be destroyed' (p 71). 'Babylonne believes that the world is hell...the Devil's realm' (p 113).

But then, when she meets a monk named Isidore, all this certainty begins to unravel...

## **PLOT SUMMARY**

When Navarre threatens to marry Babylonne off to 'an ancient old man who sees giant olives in his bed', Babylonne plans to run away and join the *faidits*, the exiled knights who are fighting to reclaim Languedoc (now southern France) from the French. But Isidore gets wind of her plan and helps her escape from her dreadful home, since, as her father's friend, he feels the need to protect her. So they embark on a journey which is a quest for a safe haven, and consists of a series of meetings with various characters, most of whom threaten their purpose. These encounters are set against a background of real historical events which are therefore explained by the characters who interrupt their journey. They include a group of mad Pilgrims and a number of knights some of whom are based on real historical people [see **Characters** below]. Apart from the physical journey, this novel also traces a spiritual and emotional quest for the secrets of Babylonne's past and is therefore a rite of passage story, too. She learns that her notions about her parents are wrong; that her stereotypical view of religion is far too narrow; and that monks like Isidore can be kind, and honest, and caring too.

Babylonne learns to love someone for the first time in her life.

## **THEMES & CURRICULUM TOPICS**

Themes suggested by the novel which might be explored with class groups include:

- Identity
- Female strength
- History and historical truth or authenticity with a focus on the Middle Ages, and the causes of war such as religion, economics and politics

These themes are pertinent to such curriculum topics as:

Curriculum topic	Theme
Literacy and Language	Creative Writing
SOSE/HSIE	Studying History
Science and Technology	War and Weaponry
Creative Arts	Drama
Health and Personal Development	Food and Public Health

## CREATIVE WRITING

This novel offers a model for the exploration of a variety of techniques relative to creative writing studies. These include: writing genres; characterisation; style; structure; and writing books in series.

### Writing Genres

The novel falls not only into the genre of **historical fiction** but also into the genre of **adventure novel** and into that of **folklore or fairy tale** as well. Each convention has its own demands and constraints. Teachers might like to select passages from the novel which illustrate these three genres. For example:

- Historical fiction : passage beginning 'It was a great battle, you know. The Siege at Lavour lasted a month...' (p 87)
- Adventure novel: passage beginning 'Isidore lunges. He grabs at the horse underneath me; ...' (p 216)
- Fairy tale: passage beginning 'When the beautiful princess ran away...' (p 136)

Then set the class the task of constructing a passage written in one of these genres.

**Investigate three of the strategies** Jinks uses to write in the historical fiction genre to make history 'come alive' by making it as authentic as possible for the reader:

**a) Humour** - Babylonne (like Pagan in the previous series) has a way of looking at the world and seeing the funny side of even the most dire of circumstances.

- One of the housemates has the ugly habit of punishing herself physically, in order to pay penance to her God : 'Dulcie's idea of cooking is to assault the nearest turnip with a big stick

and a jug of boiling water. I suppose, since she spends so much time mortifying her own flesh, she believes that we should all be mortifying ours as well.' (p 12)

**b) Colloquial language** and idiosyncratic phrases in which similes are often made with things from the natural world (such as produce)

- '...or she'll fall—corns over crown—and end up with her nose spread across her face like a rotten pear.' (p 15)
- 'that man in the green cloak, who looks like an interesting collection of unwashed root vegetables' (p 97)
- ' "This is such a one-Church town." Look at them all. No one in Toulouse stares at strangers like that; we might as well be in Laurac. "You'd think we had udders growing out of our ears." '(p 98)
- 'A short, solid, balding man in a handsome green tunic has popped out of the undergrowth like a fast-growing leek.'(p 124)
- 'You twisted scrap of boiled ox-tripe, how *dare* you?'(p 233)

**c) Visceral, extremely immediate descriptions** of the violence of conflict litter the text.

- 'They chopped up the French like cabbage, and skewered them like pigs.' (p 88)
- During the battle at La Becede the descriptions of the injured are terrible (pp 264- 267).
- And the revenge Pons takes for Loup's death is horrible too (Ch 24).

Question:

Consider Jinks's use of such immediate description and personal engagement with the reader. What impression were you left with after reading such passages?

### **Characterisation**

**Creating characters** entails writing physical and emotional descriptions of them and then tracing their relationships with others via dialogue and action. It also raises questions to be answered. And the fact that they are medieval characters presents challenges too. Read Jinks' article (1996, pp 147-155) which explains how she created her characters' voices.

This novel has two main characters, Babylonne and Isidore.

Sixteen-year-old Babylonne is the illegitimate daughter of a Roman priest (Pagan) and a Cathar Perfect (Mabelia). She is her father's daughter: small (even for medieval times!) and olive-skinned like him, she has also inherited his fiery nature and refusal to bow to the dictates of others. She rebels against her Perfect upbringing, hates her father's memory, and is determined to join the *faidit* knights. She's feisty, funny and very street-wise, though she has never been taught to read.

Exercise:

Write a description of Babylonne in your own words. Does she change as the novel progresses?

Father Isidore Orbus, tall, pale and red-headed, is a professor of canon law at the University of Bologna. Formerly Pagan's scribe, he regards him as a father figure, and takes up the challenge of guiding and protecting the daughter who looks so like him. He is an educated and gentle man: 'Sometimes, when Isidore speaks, it's as if the angels themselves are singing.' (pp 198-9) When Babylonne hurtles into Isidore's life, he is struck by her strong resemblance to Pagan. For Pagan's sake, Isidore persuades Babylonne to let him travel with her, and tries to dissuade her from her "fool's errand" of joining the *faidit* knights.

Question:

Is Isidore a saintly character? How different is he to Pagan? Read Jinks's article (1996, pp 152-154) where she explains the way she created their two characters.

The growth of the love between Babylonne and Isidore is traced, just as Pagan's love for his Knight Templar was traced in earlier books. A series of incidents gradually break through the wall Babylonne has around her. First, Isidore rescues her from the monks; then he helps her escape from the Cathars; on their journey, her cynicism is met by acts of kindness which are unfamiliar to her; and then he gives her the hair which Pagan had carried until his death—'It sits in my palm like a feather.' (p 118) And for the first time she cries. But the real test comes when they are separated and she realises how much she's come to need him. 'I only knew him for three days: why do I miss him so much?' (p 267)

Question:

Compare the love of Pagan and Roland to the love of Babylonne and Isidore. What are the similarities? What are the differences? How would the gift of something so personal as a piece of hair make you feel?

**a) Using dialogue to create characters:**

Relationships between these two characters are also drawn here via dialogue. Babylonne's gradual softening towards Isidore occurs after a series of conversations during their various encounters:

- Their first meeting (pp 4-8).
- Her escape and his rescue of her (pp 54-67).
- Staying at the convent (pp 68-80).
- Their journey and his reflections on her father (pp 82-93).
- They stay at a priory and Isidore gives her a lock of Mabelia's hair (pp 107-119).
- She learns of Pagan's recent death and of how much Isidore loved him (pp 122-3).
- She learns that Isidore is capable of trickery if circumstances demand: 'I'll have to watch this one.' (pp 132-4)
- She hears of Roland's death and Isidore's sense of guilt over it (pp 138-9).

- Escaping from the monastery, they argue over religion and she continues to doubt his intentions despite his concern for her (pp 160-170).
- He worries about her and then remarks on her resemblance to Pagan (pp 202-6).
- Babylonne is taken from Isidore and realises how she's going to miss him:
  - 'Oh God. God help me, what shall I do? They cast him down in the dust. He's hurt and abandoned. I've lost him. He's disappeared from sight.' (p 221)
  - 'Isidore, help me. Where are you? I can't stand it anymore.' (p 288)
  - 'I never said goodbye. I never even said thank you. He was my good angel, and I served him with scorn. I wish that I could tell him how sorry I am. I wish he was here.' (p 312)
- Finally, Isidore comes for her and the tone of their conversation is warm and loving, as they leave together (pp 313-320).

In each of these conversations, Babylonne gradually discovers that Isidore does not fit her stereotype of a monk at all, and that her impressions of her father and his relationship with her mother have been wrong.

Exercise:

Write a piece of dialogue which is similar to these examples. Have a character speaking antagonistically towards another person and then demonstrate a change of heart as the conversation progresses.

**b) Developing themes/topics through characters**

**Female power** is a topic suggested by the character of Babylonne who is a woman of her times. She's destined to be married off, made to live in a virtual nunnery or used as a whore or a slave. She has no education, cannot read and has no prospects for gainful employment except to serve the will of men and to try and stay alive. But her weakness may be her strength. Her feminine side may save her. As Maura the servant in the citadel at La Becede explains, in a battle women are sometimes ignored, and often indispensable. 'Besides, no matter what a man's fighting for, he always needs his washerwomen ... So don't worry—we're safe ... Don't worry—there'll always be some unpleasant job that no one else wants to get stuck with. You watch.' (p 258-9)

Questions:

What do you predict of Babylonne's future? How does Isidore treat her/think of her? Even though he rescues her, she is still at the mercy of a man's decision for her welfare. Discuss.

Women in this novel have a tough time—there's always the danger of being raped or forced to succumb to the men's desires—but they are also outspoken and very tough characters, too! The cook, Maura, who slaves in the kitchen and her helper, the sexually 'popular' Grazide, are both typical of serving women of the

time (pp 239-242) in their humorous and often ribald zest for life. And, like the Cathar women, they are completely in charge of their own domain.

Question:

How would you have enjoyed such a life? What attracts you about life for women in medieval times?

**Identity** is a strong theme in this novel. Topics relevant to Babylonne's childhood and to the characters of Isidore and Pagan include: orphans, bastards, poverty, domestic cruelty, nature (environment) vs nurture (genetics), and making one's own way in life.

Questions:

Pagan, Babylonne and Isidore are each orphans. They are each in their mid-teens when their stories are told. How does this aloneness affect their lives and their characters? How does an environment influence an identity? How does genetic make-up influence identity? What passages reflect these two views of Babylonne's identity?

- Environment: Isidore implies early in the novel that being an orphan has influenced their lives:

'I too was orphaned at an early age. As was your father. We were both alone in the world.'(p 70)

Babylonne is rebellious because of the way her relatives have treated her: 'If she does, I'll be blamed for it. No matter what I say. Because I'm always blamed for everything.' (p 35)

'A room of my own. I've never had one before.'(p 107)

Babylonne believes that people are basically cruel and is suspicious of everyone: 'He's staring at my bare legs. "What happened to you?" What? Oh that.

"That was my aunt. She threw scalding water over me."(p 120)

- Genetics: But despite the influence of their upbringing, the novel also suggests that genetics have played a part in their development as well:

'It's the first time I've seen you smile,' Isidore suddenly explains, in a tight voice..."You have Pagan's smile." (p 205)

**c) Minor characters** might be of interest for discussion too. For example, **Bishop Fulk of Toulouse** was a real historical figure. In Babylonne's eyes he is very much a "baddie", for standing by at the siege of Lavour while her mother died. But in reality he was a fascinating, complex character—a bishop who had once been a travelling troubadour, highly intelligent and a reasonable man, yet convinced of the righteousness of the crusade against the Cathar "heretics".

**The pilgrims:** On their journey, Babylonne and Isidore travel briefly with a group of pilgrims travelling to St James of Compostela, a famous medieval pilgrimage site in Spain, and still one today. The pilgrims are "all mad" (according to Babylonne), with their strange wooden clogs and finger-bone relics:



- Bremond d’Agen and his wife Galerna - wine merchants from Bordeaux
- Petronilla - an elderly woman with an obsession for saints
- Boniface Batejet - an arrogant priest with aspirations to fame, writing an account of his journey
- Drogo - his servant, a seedy, suspicious character with a yellow face
- Agnes and Constance - two young widows from England, and their servant, Gilbert, who snores
- Gervaise - a young English rake who has been expelled from university.

They also meet several **Knights** [See **Studying History** below].

Question:

Choose any of these minor characters and discuss. What made this character interesting to you?

**Style**

**a) First person present tense narrative** is used in a very immediate way, suggesting a conversation with the reader. For example, read the first paragraph in the book which begins:

‘Oh no.  
I’ve killed the chicken.  
How could I have killed it? How could this have happened? I wasn’t trying to kill it—I was trying to shut it up, the stupid thing. What was I supposed to do? Let it squawk away until they found me?’ (p 1)

Question:

How does this style of writing work to engage a reader? Try to write your own passage in a similar style.

**b) Pace** is hectic, with cliff-hanger endings to chapters and strong openings.

Exercise:

Read any chapter opening or closing and discuss the ways in which Jinks keeps the reader engaged in the text.

**Structure**

The novel is told in the present tense but includes frequent flashbacks, and most of the 25 chapters are introduced by a text which is relevant to the story, providing a structure for the novel and foregrounding action in the chapter. For example, Ch 1 is preceded by Maps of Toulouse and Languedoc; Ch 2 by Medieval Hours; Ch 4 by Babylonne’s Family Tree; Ch 5 by definitions of endura, consolamentum and melioramentum; Ch 6 by Historical Tenets of the Cathars, calling Themselves Good Christians; Ch 8 by a quote about the Death of Guiraud; Ch 9 by a Monk Spotting Guide; Ch 10 by a definition of Langue d’oc; Ch 11 by Fulk’s Song; Ch 12 by information about St James of Compostela; Ch 17 by an explanation of the Albigensian Crusades; Ch 21 by definitions of items of clothing; Ch 22 by Siege Fighting; Ch 24 by ‘Sieges I have seen’.

### Questions:

Read any one of these texts and discuss how it relates to the chapter which follows. How does this structure influence the reading of this work?

### **Books in Series**

Writing a book in a series has certain constraints. The writer must decide how to recap on the previous books without leaving too little space to develop the current one. For example, one of the most important 'back stories' in this novel is that of Pagan's relationship with Lord Roland which was the emotional 'heart' of the entire Pagan series. Pagan Kidrouk, Archdeacon of Carcassonne, was Babylonne's father, and is the hero of Catherine Jinks's earlier series set at the time of the medieval crusades. Pagan was a Christian Arab, born in Bethlehem, who also never knew his parents. After growing up in Jerusalem, he became a squire to the Templar knight Lord Roland Roucy de Bram, a "golden-haired knight with a noble soul". After Jerusalem fell to Saladin, Roland and Pagan travelled back to France where Roland became a monk and Pagan eventually became a canon of law and the Archdeacon of Carcassonne.

Instead of telling every detail of that earlier plot, though, Jinks instead 'suggests' it in two ways. First, the gradual growth of love between Babylonne and Isidore mimicks the gradual growth of love between Pagan and his mentor [see **Characters** above]. Secondly Jinks has Isidore describe the guilt he feels for Roland's death—'If he hadn't taken me up there, he wouldn't have died.' (p 142) —and thus encourages the reader to return to that scene, even if they haven't already read it.

### Questions:

How much of the previous novel or series of novels must the writer repeat for the reader? How does the novel stand on its own? Does it warrant a sequel? What clues or questions has the writer left at the end which might suggest another novel? Do you want to read more about Babylonne, Isidore or Pagan?

## **STUDYING HISTORY**

### **Historical truth, authenticity or accuracy**

Historical truth, authenticity or accuracy is a tricky subject since it's difficult to argue. Babylonne's views of events are different to Isidore's and they live in the same time! Historians since then have viewed the Crusades from many angles. There are many theories about every historical incident. For example, Babylonne hates Fulk but others would disagree. This work could encourage students to explore the fact that the views of leaders of particular groups or nations are often different and that history is often in the hands of the people who write it. For example, war in a history book seems a thing which can be explained by causes and consequences and to be dated precisely, but Babylonne's experience of it is not so neat:

'Ah God. The French.

They always come back. We beat them off and we beat them off and they never go. All my life, they've kept returning with their war machines and their bloodthirsty bishops and their endless troops—wave after wave of them—like a recurring nightmare. Why can't they leave us alone?

(p 246-7)

Activity:

Choose a 'fact' about the Albigensian Crusade and then conduct a debate about it after researching the topic carefully. For example, 'The War of Bouvines' has been used as a title to describe a series of armed conflicts between the English king John Lackland and the French king, Philippe II from 1202 until 1214 which culminated in the Battle of Bouvines. Can you define as a single war such a number of different events occurring over a period of time? Research by visiting:

- War of Bouvines

<http://www.xenophongroup.com/montjoie/bouvines.htm>.

Then discuss.

Research:

Several fortress sites from the Crusades still exist; find out about them by doing a web search. Eg:

- Some Fortresses of the Albigensian Crusades

<http://www.xenophongroup.com/montjoie/albigen2.htm>

**Many of the knights Babylonne meets in Pagan's Daughter are real historical figures**, including Lord Pagan de La Becede (a tall man with gold hair and a huge beaked nose), Lord Pons de Villeneuve (who became the first post-war Seneschal of Toulouse), and Lord Bernard Oth de Montreal (Babylonne's cousin in the book, but in reality a nasty piece of work who changed sides several times and tried to have his wife disposed of). One of the more glamorous knights of the times was **Olivier de Termes**, the son of Lord Raymond de Termes. Young and gallant, Olivier fought with his father Raymond to defend Termes against Simon de Montfort, who led the first crusade against the Cathars. There are many stories about the two: they raided Simon's camp at night and captured his flags, hanging them from the castle ramparts in a gesture of defiance; they killed a man standing beside Simon with a deadly accurate crossbow bolt; one night when they had run out of water and were just about to open the gates of Termes to the enemy, a miraculous shower of rain filled their cisterns. Simon de Montfort captured Termes eventually, and after Raymond's death, Olivier became one of the leading *faidit* knights in the fight for Languedoc.

Research:

Investigate the lives of any one of these knights and find out as much as you can about them.

### The influence of religion, economics and political power

a) The influence of religion, economics and political power are topics to be discussed in relation to this novel too, and which you might wish to further research. For example, you could read more about the Cathar faith, a religion which was 'dualist', in that they saw the temporal world of earth and the flesh to be ruled by Satan, while the spiritual realm of heaven was ruled by God. Anti-clerical, believing in poverty and abstinence in all things, 'Good Christians' were divided into credentes, those who believed in the tenets of the religion but were still in the world of the flesh, and *perfecti* or Perfects, those who lived a spiritually pure life and were on their way to heaven. Perfects believed that one of the worst sins a person could commit was to perpetuate the world of the flesh, hence they abstained from sex and would not eat food that was the 'product of fornication'—meat, cheese and eggs—and lived simply, wearing sandals and navy blue robes and rejecting all ornamentation.

#### Research Project:

Discuss the Cathar diet and lifestyle. How difficult would it be to live as a Perfect?

OR

Research other religions, their diets and lifestyle prescriptions.

b) The economic situation of individuals and communities determines how our lives are led. Babylonne is poor; her life has been lived on the knife-edge of deprivation. So she has very low expectations of what might be her rights in life.

c) Or you might discuss the aspect of power in this and other novels by Jinks. She has written that:

'There were a lot of marginal people in medieval Europe, and they were the source of many heretical movements, many satirical songs, many assaults and murders. And when it comes to powerlessness, you can't beat a child.'

(Jinks, 1996, p 151)

#### Question:

Is the fact that Pagan, Isidore and Babylonne lack power a significant aspect of their appeal to you? What did you learn about the power of social class in these novels?

History is more than a series of dates and events but it is helpful to understand that key events impact on people's lives too. This is the **Timeline** during which the five novels take place:

Title	Historical period	Protagonist
Pagan's Crusade	1187	Pagan

Pagan in Exile	1188	Pagan
Pagan's Vows	1188	Pagan
Pagan's Scribe	1209	Isidore
Pagan's Daughter	1227	Babylonne

Questions:

What are the key historical events which occurred in France or in Europe between 1187 and 1227?

**WAR AND WEAPONRY**

The novel offers a number of scenes which depict the manner in which wars and battles were fought in these times. It is full of violent descriptions which offer the reader an insight into the sort of technology then commonly employed in battle.

Exercise:

Research the use of weapons and the manner in which fortresses were used as strongholds from which to fight such conflicts during the Crusades. Read about medieval mechanical artillery, by going to sites such as:

- Albigensian Crusades (1209-1255)

<http://www.xenophongroup.com/montjoie/albigens.htm>

This site suggests that 'Considerable misunderstanding of medieval mechanical artillery is reflected in many publications. This has led to confusion over the rotating-beam machines (such as *trébuchet* and *mongonel* [*mangonneau*]) that were extensively employed during the many sieges of the Albigensian Crusades.'

Research and write about some of the machines such as a bricole whose smaller size 'permitted smaller crews and a more rapid rate-of-fire. They were particularly effective against crews of larger siege artillery and attacking troops.' Discuss your findings.

School visit:

There are a number of medieval battle re-enactment societies that will visit schools to display armour and fighting techniques and dress students in the costumes of the times. Your school might invite one in, to supplement the class's reading of this text.

**DRAMA**

Activities:

1. Choose a scene in this novel which involves a number of people and write a script for it. Act it out using five members of your class.

2. If you were a casting agent which movie stars would you cast in the roles here? eg Babylonne: Claire Danes? Isidore: Ralph Fiennes (if he were younger!) Fulk: Joaquin Phoenix? Write a profile of the part and then describe your reasons for choosing that actor.
3. Choose an emotional scene in the novel. Act it out in a mime showing how the character is feeling in this scene.
4. How would you dress the stage for the scene in which Babylonne first meets Isidore. What sort of lighting/ set/ backdrop/ music would you choose?

### **FOOD AND PUBLIC HEALTH**

The novel gives the reader an idea of the domestic privations of life at the time. This is one aspect of the writing that makes this story so 'real' for the reader. There are many descriptions of smelly corridors and near misses as people relieve themselves in the streets. General health was poor when so many were impoverished; when there was little sanitation, disease was prevalent; and violent injuries were a fact of everyday life.

#### Exercise:

Read about conditions during these times. What sort of medical facilities were available? What diseases and illnesses were common?

### **QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING AND DISCUSSION**

1. Conduct a class study of Catherine Jinks' work. Display her books and make a series of posters about each title in her body of work. Read aloud some of the most exciting segments from this and other works. Compare her novels.
2. Examine websites about the Crusades.
3. Compare this series of books to another about the Crusades. Were they different in focus? Opinion? Atmosphere? Read for example the tongue in cheek Horrible Histories: Dark Nights and Dingy Castles one of a series by Terry Deary and Martin Brown (Scholastic) or read Karleen Bradford's Crusades series (HarperCollins). See <http://www.karleenbradford.com/scarletcross.html> .
4. Discuss this novel as an example of the genre of quest or journey novel. Compare to other works which are based on such a motif.

## CONCLUSION

Babylonne and Isidore are just as fascinating and subversive as heroes, as Pagan and Roland were. They will appeal to young readers with a healthy sense of humour and scepticism and will encourage them to question historical interpretation and to enjoy researching and finding out for themselves what really happened during the time of the Crusades. This novel is a vibrant affirmation of what it means to embrace life even when surrounded by death and destruction.

'I don't want death any more. I want life. I want to live.  
'Come,' says Isidore. And he leads me gently away from the bloody  
ruins, towards the open gate.  
Out into the rolling green countryside beyond.'

(p 324)

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## ABOUT THE WRITERS

### CATHERINE JINKS

**Catherine Jinks** is a medieval scholar and prolific author for teenagers, children and adults. Her books have garnered numerous awards in Australia and overseas. The original Pagan books grew out of a university course Catherine Jinks took about the Crusades and were also heavily influenced by comedies such as Monty Python and the Holy Grail.

#### Books by Catherine Jinks

##### For Children & Teenagers

*Evil Genius*, Allen & Unwin, 2005

*Eloise: A Ghost Story*, Allen & Unwin, 2003

*Eustace: A Ghost Story*, Allen & Unwin, 2003

*Eglantine: A Ghost Story*, Allen & Unwin, 2002

*Darryl's Dinner*, Penguin, 2002

*The Rapture*, Pan Macmillan, 2001

*You'll Wake the Baby*, Penguin, 2000 - Winner CBC Award

*What's Hector McKerrow Doing These Days?*, Pan Macmillan, 2000

*The Stinking Great Lie*, Penguin, 1999

*Piggy in the Middle*, Penguin, 1998 - Winner Australian IBBY Award

*The Horrible Holiday*, Penguin, 1998

*Eye to Eye*, Penguin, 1997 - Winner CBC Award, Aurealis Award

*The Secret of Hermitage Isle*, ABC Books, 1997

*Pagan's Scribe*, Hodder Headline, 1996 - Winner Victorian Premier's Award

*Pagan's Vows*, Hodder Headline, 1995 - Winner CBC Award

*Witch Bank*, Penguin, 1995

*Pagan in Exile*, Hodder Headline, 1994

*Future Trap*, Penguin, 1993

*Pagan's Crusade*, Hodder Headline, 1992

*This Way Out*, Omnibus, 1991



### For Adults

*The Road*, Allen & Unwin, 2004

*Spinning Around*, Allen & Unwin, 2004

*The Gentleman's Garden*, Allen & Unwin, 2002

*Bella Vista*, Penguin, 2001

*The Notary*, PanMacmillan, 2000

*The Inquisitor*, PanMacmillan, 1999

*Little White Secrets*, Penguin, 1997

*An Evening with the Messiah*, Penguin, 1996

### **DR ROBYN SHEAHAN-BRIGHT**

Dr Robyn Sheahan-Bright operates justified text writing and publishing consultancy services, and publishes regularly on children's literature, Australian fiction, and publishing history. She was inaugural director of and is a Life Member of the Queensland Writers Centre, and was co-founder of Jam Roll Press. Her latest publications include *Paper Empires: A History of the Book in Australia (1946-2005)* (2006) co-edited with Craig Munro, and *Hot Iron Corrugated Sky: A Century of Queensland Writing* (2002) co-edited with Stuart Glover. She has chapters in several textbooks including *Crossing the Boundaries* edited by Michelle Anstey and Geoff Bull (Pearson Education, 2002). Her PhD thesis traced the development of the Australian children's publishing industry, and she teaches for Griffith University (Gold Coast) and USQ.