

READERS GUIDE

Michael Scott

# THE NECROMANCER

*The Secrets of*  
THE IMMORTAL  
NICHOLAS FLATTEL



## ABOUT THE BOOK



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In the previous three volumes in this series, Sophie and Josh Newman, fifteen-year-old twins, were drawn into battles raging across the globe and throughout the Shadowrealms, epic conflicts involving mythical beings and immortal humans. Having been Awakened to remarkable powers through their association with Nicholas Flamel, the fourteenth century alchemist and his sorceress wife, Perenelle, they are now key players in a fight for control of the planet.

The Flamels' powers are fading because they no longer have the codex, a magical book containing the secrets of immortality. Nicholas is reunited with Perenelle, who has escaped her imprisonment on Alcatraz. Though they both are aging, Nicholas seems to be weakening more rapidly than his wife.

Back in San Francisco, the twins make a brief trip to visit their aunt, but soon encounter new and sinister characters—Aoife of the Shadows and Niten, a Japanese warrior—who later prove to be friends. Their European allies are scattered—Scathach and Joan of Arc are lost in a Shadowrealm, apparently transported back in time, while Saint-Germain, desperate to find his wife, Joan, enlists the aid of Palamedes and Shakespeare to meet an Elder in Sherwood Forest.

The Dark Elders have declared Flamel's archenemy, John Dee, an outlaw, but Dee escapes their trap and, with the aid of the immortal Virginia Dare, begins to set his own plans in motion. Meanwhile, Billy the Kid and Machiavelli, spared by the Elders from punishment for letting Perenelle escape, are returning to Alcatraz to unleash nightmarish monsters on the world.

The only hope for the Flamels is to use Sophie and Josh's newly awakened powers, and they enlist the aid of Prometheus to teach Josh Fire Magic. But Dee has other plans for Josh. . . .

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## PRE-READING ACTIVITIES

- ♀ The author introduces many characters in this series that are actual historical figures. Have students research these names and share information they learn about these people and the times they lived in: Nicholas Flamel, Perenelle Flamel, Dr. John Dee, Virginia Dare, Comte de Saint-Germain, Joan of Arc, William Shakespeare, Niccolo Machiavelli, Billy the Kid, Black Hawk, and Miyamoto Musashi. Make a chart of facts that can be proven about these people and the legends that have been attached to them.
- ✂ Many other characters are names from myth and folklore. Research the stories about these characters and the cultural background of each: Scathach, Aoife of the Shadows, Palamedes the Saracen Knight, Cuchulain, Aten, Quetzalcoatl/Kukulkan, Tammuz, Zephaniah (the Witch of Endor), Prometheus, Mars Ultor, and Coatlicue.
- ♀ Places—both real and mythical—play an important role in these books. Look up information about each of these sites and discuss what special characteristics of these places might make them “magical”: Alcatraz Island, Mount Tam, Tower of London, Sherwood Forest, Krakatoa, Coit Tower, Point Reyes, and Danu Talis (Atlantis).

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- ♀ Review events from the earlier books. What does Flamel mean when he says, “I am not proud of some of the things I have done, but I regret nothing”?
- ♂ Why are twins Sophie and Josh unsure of their relationship to the woman they call Aunt Agnes? Why does Niten hand her a photograph from 1914 showing Scathach at Ypres—or is it Aoife? Why is Aoife feared by so many, even the Flamels?
- ⊗ Perenelle remembers the day when Nicholas brought home the Codex, and they “entered the world of the extraordinary, where nothing was as it seemed and no one could be trusted.” Why do Sophie and Josh have difficulty trusting the Flamels? What does Nicholas mean when he says, “But the truth is a double-edged sword; it is a dangerous thing”? (p. 16)
- ♀ Why does John Dee say curiosity is his “greatest strength and his worst failing”? What does it mean when he is declared *utlaga*? What makes him think he can evade the Elders who are hunting him?

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS (CONT.)

- ⌘ What does Dee mean when he calls music the “oldest of all magical sounds”? Discuss the importance of music and its effect on various characters. Who is the mysterious German that Virginia Dare says taught her to play the flute?
- ⌘ Referring to the Elders, Aoife says the terms “good” and “bad” are meaningless and quotes Shakespeare, who wrote: “There is nothing either good or bad, but thinking makes it so.” (p. 97) Discuss this quote in relation to the characters and events in this story.
- ⌘ Virginia Dare says: “Revenge drives us all.” How does this statement describe her character and her partnership with Dee? Discuss this statement with respect to other characters, both human and legendary.
- 8 Compare the personalities of Machiavelli and Billy the Kid. Machiavelli says he thinks about dying with remarkable regularity and Billy says that dying is not something he ever thinks about. What does this tell you about each of them? How do their personas in the story mesh with the historical facts about these two?
- ⌘ Why do Josh and Sophie stay with the Flamels even though they do not trust them? Discuss Niten’s admonishment to them: “Protect one another, trust one another, because, at the end of the day, all of these people want something from you. . . . Your only responsibility is to one another.” (p. 128) Who else told them the same thing?
- ⌘ Machiavelli says to KuKulKan, “Fools lie, clever men stick to the truth.” (p. 160) Compare this statement to Aoife’s comment about her twin: “Scathach lies. . . . You wouldn’t want to believe a single word she tells you.” (p. 157) What is the importance of truth in light of what you know about these two characters? How do lies—or simply not telling the whole truth—affect others in the story?
- ⌘ What is the connection between Perenelle and the Witch of Endor? What does Perry mean when she tells Sophie, “The Witch’s memories are knowledge and knowledge is power”? (p. 144) Why does Sophie worry about the Witch’s memories consuming her? Why can’t she retrieve the Witch’s memory of the years she spent with Perenelle or what she knows of Gilgamesh?
- ⌘ Discuss the memory Sophie has of Zephaniah and Prometheus in the Nameless City. Why is this important to the plot? What is the connection of the Elders to the Archons? What effect does memory have on other characters in the story?

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS (CONT.)

- ✂ Who is the Elder Tammuz? Why does Shakespeare say he hates Sherwood Forest; and why does Tammuz say of Will, “I really do not like him”? Shakespeare’s comment is: “We hate what we fear.” Discuss this quote in relation to the plot of *The Necromancer* and in relation to the news of the day in our own world.
- ⚔ What is the importance of the four swords—Excalibur, Clarent, Joyeuse, and Durendal? What can you learn of their history that explains the mysterious power of these weapons?
- ♀ Discuss the issue of trust. Sophie says, “If we’re going to survive, we have to learn to trust people.” But Josh has reasons for distrusting everyone they have met. How can they know who are the right people to trust?
- ♂ Kukulkan tells Machiavelli, “Your master and I are related, not by blood or family, but by bonds forged in struggle and adversity.” (p. 161) Discuss other characters in this story that are connected by experiences they have shared rather than by family ties—those who become, as Scathach says of the Flamels, an “accidental family.” Have you experienced this in your own life? How do these alliances affect various characters in the story?
- ⊗ Discuss the theme of siblings in this volume: Sophie and Josh, Aoife and Scathach, Prometheus and Zephaniah (the Witch of Endor). How are their sibling relationships similar and how are they different? Why does Prometheus tell Josh, “Whatever happens between you and your sister, make sure you talk to her before making any decisions. Don’t allow anyone to tell you what she said, or what she did—make sure she tells you herself.” (p. 279)
- ⚔ How is Dee able to get Josh away from the Flamels? Is his power stronger than theirs? Why did Nicholas refuse to learn the skill of necromancy? Why is Josh enticed by Dee’s promise to teach him that skill? What is Dee’s power over Josh?
- ⚔ Who is Coatlicue? What does Dee expect to gain from calling her from her prison? Why does he need Josh to do that? Why does Aoife sacrifice herself by fighting Coatlicue?
- ⚔ Who is Marethyu? Why did he lure Scathach and Joan to the Shadowrealm he created? Once reunited with Saint-Germain, Shakespeare, and Palamedes, why does he insist they all go with him to Danu Talis? What does he hope to do with them?

# POST-READING ACTIVITIES

- ⚡ Discuss the characters of Sophie and Josh. Michael Scott has said that the ultimate heroes in this series had to be twins, female and male, because nearly every mythology around the world considers twins to be special. How do Sophie and Josh, as present-day teens, fit the mythological idea of “twins of legend.” How do they each react to the new powers that are Awakened in them?
- ☞ Two more volumes are planned in this series. What are your predictions for the characters and the plot as the story continues? From what you know of world mythology, can you predict new characters that might be introduced in the next two volumes? What historical figures do you think might play a part in the rest of the story?

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



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**MICHAEL SCOTT** is one of Ireland's most successful authors. He writes for both adults and young adults. A master of fantasy, science fiction, horror, mythology, and folklore, he was hailed by the *Irish Times* as “the King of Fantasy in these isles.” He lives and writes in Dublin, Ireland. Learn more about Michael Scott at [DillonScott.com](http://DillonScott.com)

## INTERNET RESOURCES

**Alcatraz**  
[nps.gov/alcatraz](http://nps.gov/alcatraz)

**Tower of London**  
[hrp.org.uk/TowerOfLondon/stories.aspx](http://hrp.org.uk/TowerOfLondon/stories.aspx)

**Nicholas Flamel**  
[alchemylab.com/flamel.htm](http://alchemylab.com/flamel.htm)

**John Dee**  
[johndee.org](http://johndee.org)

**Machiavelli**  
[philosophypages.com/ph/macv.htm](http://philosophypages.com/ph/macv.htm)

**Billy the Kid**  
[aboutbillythekid.com](http://aboutbillythekid.com)

**Virginia Dare**  
[learnnc.org/lp/pages/1647](http://learnnc.org/lp/pages/1647)



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Prepared by Connie Rockman, Youth Literature Consultant, adjunct professor of children's and young adult literature, and editor of the H. W. Wilson Junior Book of Authors and Illustrators series.

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