READER'S GUIDE



CHARLOTTE SYCAMORE by Kate Maddison

THE INCREDIBLE

Full of high-stakes action, fantastic inventions, luxe royal court, engineered beasts, and a good dose of humor, this steampunk novel is a masterful blend of science fiction, fantasy, and alternative history.

HC: 978-0-8234-2737-6 / Grades 5 up E-book available

"High action, tangled romance, and a spirited heroine.

My perfect recipe for a great read."

-Kelley Armstrong, #1 New York Times Best-selling Author

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- ❖ One of the major themes of the story is the idea of Charlotte "being true to herself." In order to accomplish this she lied, stole, disobeyed her father, and did unladylike things. Do you think she was justified in all of these negative behaviors? Why or why not? Describe a time when you have had to stand up for something in which you believed, even though your behavior might be considered wrong by some people. How did you handle it?
- ❖ Sixteen-year-old Charlotte had an interest in two boys: Peter and Benjamin. The author describes her feelings toward each of them during various scenes in the story. Do you think the story would have been as good without the romantic situations? Why or why not? What did the idea of romance add to the story?
- ❖ Charlotte's father had taught her to fence and had encouraged her interest in science and math when she was younger but later insisted that she learn wifely skills such as embroidery, etiquette, and being a perfect hostess. How were both sets of skills of value to her as the story progressed? What are your feelings about boys and girls learning different sets of skills that will supposedly positively affect their adult lives? How has this issue has changed (or not) in today's world? Compare how this issue is dealt with in the United States vs. in other countries.
- ❖ There are many political issues in the story: the lack of adequate health care for the poor, young children working in factories, the idea of being addicted to lemons once they made Charlotte feel better, and the use of technology for good or evil. Describe which of these issues are still present in today's society, and present your ideas of what might be done to solve them.

INTO THE CLASSROOM

Interdisciplinary Connections



Literature/Language Arts

Students may discuss the questions on the previous page as a whole group or in small groups, or choose one or more about which to write. These satisfy the Common Core State Standards: CCSS 6.W.3, 7.W.3, 8.W.3; 6.SL.1, 7.SL.1, 8.SL.1

Literary Genres—The story combines several literary genres: steampunk, historical fiction, science fiction, fantasy, romance, and mystery. Students should be aware of the characteristics of these genres. Have students select passages in the book that fit into each specific genre. (Example: The Royal Gadget Engineering Hall with all of its exhibits fits into the steampunk genre.) CCSS 6.RL.5

Art

The author used great detail in describing settings, characters, and clothing in the book. Artistically inclined students may wish to create visual representations of any of these using various artistic media.

Research

There are many settings and topics mentioned in the story that might spark interest on the part of students for additional research. They may wish to consult Google Images to see pictures of 1876 London, Queen Victoria, Hyde Park, Scotland Yard, Windsor Castle, Westminster, Buckingham Palace, London Bridge, the River Thames, the Tower of London, the Prince Albert Memorial, Trafalgar Square, and Balmoral Castle—all of which are still in existence today. They can also search for pictures of the various breeds of horses mentioned if they are interested, CCSS 6.SL.2, 7.SL.2, 8.SL.2

Students can use print or electronic resources to find more information on rabies—its symptoms and possible cures—the invention of Vaseline, the healing properties of lemons (vitamin C) or other citrus fruits, the development of forensic medicine (à la CSI), the lives of Thomas Edison and Charles Darwin, and the advent of the current system of health care in Britain. CCSS 6.W.8, 7.W.8, 8.W.8

Questions for Discussion CCSS 6.W.3, 7.W.3, 8.W.3; 6.SL.1, 7.SL.1, 8.SL.1

Classroom activities prepared by Sandy Schuckett, school library consultant.

About the Book

Sixteen-year-old Charlotte and two friends are mauled by what appear to be rabid dogs, and soon people across London are being attacked. When she and her friends fall ill, Charlotte embarks on a race for the antidote. Set in Victorian London and full of action and fantastic adventures, this novel blends science fiction, fantasy, and alternative history.



About the Author

Kate Maddison is a pen name for Kate Bridges, the best-selling, award-winning author of nineteen historical romance novels. The *Incredible Charlotte Sycamore* is her first book for young readers. Kate lives with her family in Toronto, Canada. Visit her website at www.katemaddison.com/.

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