

BOOKNOTES

EDUCATORS GUIDE

Enter the imaginative worlds
of Paul Stewart & Chris Riddell



Grades 5–7



Grades 3–7

about the edge chronicles

The Edge Chronicles tell the story of three generations of heroes—Quint, Twig, and Rook—whose courage and strength of character take them on remarkable quests and journeys throughout the Edge: a land of great beauty and terrifying dangers. From the Deepwoods to the Mire; from the Edgelands to the Twilight Woods; from Undertown to Sanctaphrax, the story's heroes overcome great odds, experience thrilling adventures, form lifelong friendships, and endure profound loss in this world that, at many times, resembles life on earth. The series touches on many important themes to readers, such as friendship, loyalty, the environment, technology, and war to make the Edge Chronicles not only a fascinating reading experience, but a relevant one as well.

★ **“The narrative will cast a spell on readers from the beginning.”**

—Publishers Weekly, Starred, on *Beyond the Deepwoods*



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looking at the series as a whole

questions for group discussion

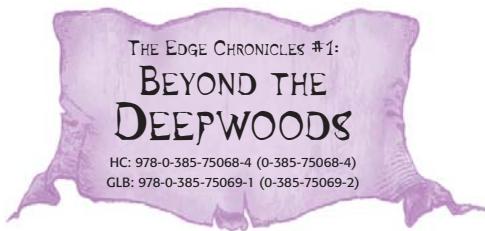
- Although the series is set in a world of bizarre environments inhabited by a myriad of fantasy creatures, each book in the Edge Chronicles contains themes that readers can connect to their own lives. Discuss some of the dominant themes that appear in the series, such as self-identity, abandonment, acceptance by family and friends, forgiveness, caring for the environment, slavery, war, social injustice, etc.
- After reading *Freeglader*, Book #7, readers learn that Quint, Twig, and Rook are blood relatives. Discuss similarities in character and personality between the three heroes. In what ways, if any, are they different? Of the three, which one is your favorite? Why did you relate to this character more than the others? Which one is your least favorite, and why?
- Quint, Twig, and Rook all had to confront profound loss early on in the lives: Quint's loss of his mother and brothers in a fire, Twig's abandonment, and Rook's violent loss of his parents in a slave attack. How has each character's personality been shaped by his loss? How can surviving a painful loss make a person stronger?
- The battle of good vs. evil is a constant found in each volume of the Edge Chronicles. Discuss the various villains that appear in the series, and why, in the end, they are always defeated. What character flaws do the villains possess that, eventually, do them in?



curriculum connections

- Banderbears. Prowlgrins. Fighting Fromps. Spindlebugs. Ratbirds. These names don't belong to the latest pop bands, but to just some of the wondrous creatures that inhabit the Edge. Many of the creatures have multiple physical and behavioral characteristics of real animals. Discuss some of the creatures of the Edge and how Stewart and Riddell created them based on actual animals. Challenge students to create fantasy animals inspired by the ones featured in the Edge Chronicles.
- Stewart and Riddell create their remarkable stories in unconventional ways. Sometimes Stewart's text will inspire Riddell's illustrations. Sometimes it's the opposite, with Riddell presenting an image to Stewart that, in turn, inspires his writing. To experience this process, bring in a passage from a classic fantasy, such as *The War of the Worlds* or the *Chronicles of Narnia*. Read the passage aloud once and have students listen without taking notes. Read the passage again, but this time students should take notes as they listen, jotting down any phrases or ideas that appeal to them. Next, challenge students to create an illustration to accompany the passage. To turn the process inside-out, select an illustration from a chosen fantasy book and make photocopies of the image for each student. Tell students that the image is from a classic fantasy story, but do not share the title. Challenge students to write a short story (at least two pages) inspired by the image.

Send your students to www.edgechronicles.com for interactive games, a creature guide, and more!



Young Twig is different. Raised by a woodtroll family since infancy, he's never fit in at home, in his village, or at school. As he approaches his 14th birthday, he learns the circumstances of his beginnings: how he was abandoned by his natural parents and taken in and raised as a woodtroll. His loving mother, Spelda, sends Twig out into the Deepwoods to begin his adult life. Against Spelda's instructions, Twig strays from the path and becomes lost in the Deepwoods, utterly alone and vulnerable. Despite the odds, Twig

not only learns to survive on his own, but begins to understand where his true destiny lies.

questions for group discussion

- After Twig leaves the woodtroll village and sets out into the Deepwoods, he strays from the path, an action that his mother, Spelda explicitly forbade him to do. Lured by the beauty of the woods, Twig suddenly realizes he is lost and in danger. Do you think Twig should have stayed on the path? If he had, do you think he still might have been able to fulfill his destiny? Why is it important in life to sometimes “stray from the path”?
- Twig survives one close call after another as he journeys through the Deepwoods: the halitoad, the rotsucker, the swamp, the wig-wigs, the bloodoak, etc. Discuss some of these encounters and why Twig was able to survive.

What character traits does he possess that allow him to elude death time after time?

- Why, in Twig's darkest moment, falling into the void of the Edge, does he finally realize his own self-worth?

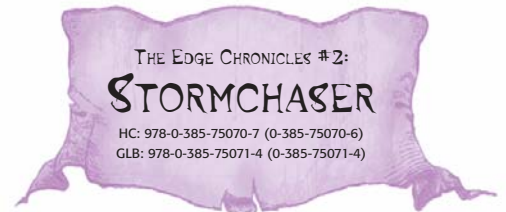
curriculum connection

- Work with the school art teacher to make a mural of the Deepwoods, including environments, trees, plants, creatures, and landmarks described in *Beyond the Deepwoods*.

themes

**Alienation • Abandonment
Self-Identity • Courage
Perseverance • Self-Acceptance**

Twig lives as a sky pirate alongside his famous father, Cloud Wolf, until the *Stormchaser* is damaged due to Twig's inexperience. A furious Cloud Wolf leaves Twig behind on their next quest for the sacred material stormphrax. Not knowing that individuals are plotting to profit from the booty, Cloud Wolf sets out on his quest, unaware that Twig has stowed away. A terrible mutiny and raging storm forces the crew to abandon ship with Cloud Wolf still aboard, and Twig becomes captain. Without a ship and stranded in the Deepwoods, it's up to Captain Twig and the crew to return, not only with stormphrax, but with the knowledge of how to harness its power for the common good.



questions for group discussion

- A friendly slaughterer pedaling lucky charms tells Twig, “Fear of the unknown is for the foolish and weak . . . for my money, what is known is generally far more frightening.” (p. 10) Do you agree with this statement? Why or why not? What that is “known” is frightening to you?
- After Twig sees Screed Toetaker's supply of stormphrax, he becomes enraged that he was unable to find the substance. Professor of Light says, “Ah, Twig . . . ends and means.” (p. 284) Discuss the phrase *the end justify the means*. In this situation, do the ends (restoring the Sanctaphrax treasury with stormphrax, and from it, producing water-cleansing phraxdust) justify the means (the murder of hundreds of people)?

curriculum connection

- It is impossible for a book that is so packed with vivid detail to have an illustration for each bit of action. Discuss the events in the story that have accompanying illustrations, and why these events were chosen. Have students illustrate, in a line drawing, one scene that does not have an illustration.

themes

**Family • Corruption
Destiny • Loyalty
Leadership • Friendship**

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Captain Twig learns that the Mother Storm is headed toward the Edge to reseed the sacred waters of Riverrise, and thus rejuvenate all life forms throughout the land. This rare and natural occurrence would come as great news but for one dire problem: the floating city of Sanctaphrax stands in the path of the Mother Storm. Twig and his crew must return to the Edge and sever the anchor chain that ties Sanctaphrax to Undertown so that the buoyant rock on which the city is built can be released into Open Sky. It's up to Twig to accomplish this daunting task before the clock strikes midnight . . . over Sanctaphrax.

questions for group discussion

- Although Cowlquape is small for his age, browbeaten from years of abuse by his father, and treated as “Undertown scum” by Vox Verlix, he dreams of a better life. What strengths does Cowlquape possess that ultimately transport him from his life as a sub-acolyte to the Most High Academe?
- On pages 149 and 150, Cowlquape reads to Twig from an ancient barkscroll about the mythical Riverrise. The text reads, “*It is now the commonly held belief that the Mother Storm has struck the Edge not once, but many times, destroying and recreating with each return.*” Discuss how natural occurrences, such as fire, create life through destruction.

curriculum connection

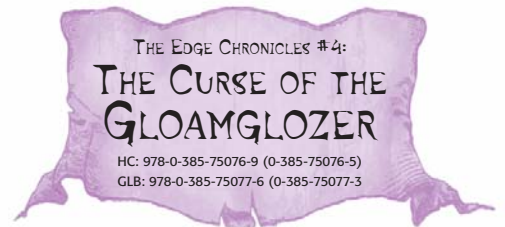
- Weather is a consistent subject in the Edge Chronicles. Have students research examples of extreme weather and report on its causes, common places on the earth where the weather occurs, and recent examples of its effects on the population and the environment.



themes

Friendship • Loyalty
Hope • Slavery • Greed
Environment • Freedom

In this prequel to the first three volumes, readers meet young Quint long before his sky pirating days, as he becomes the apprentice to Linius Pallitax, the Most High Academe of Sanctaphrax. Shortly after his arrival, Quint is enlisted to assist with an assignment that lies deep at the center of Sanctaphrax. Quint, along with Linius’s daughter Maris, discovers a secret laboratory that conceals an experiment that threatens to destroy the Most High Academe and the stability of Sanctaphrax. It’s up to Quint to face the evil force that seeks to kill Linius and anyone that stands in its way.



questions for group discussion

- Do you think that Wind Jackal was convinced to let Quint stay on as the Most High Academe under false pretenses? What didn’t Linius tell Wind Jackal more about the “simple duties” Quint would be performing as his apprentice? Do you think Linius thinks he is being honest with Wind Jackal? Why or why not?
- Linius Pallitax attempts to create life within the Ancient Laboratory at the heart of the Sanctaphrax rock. Bungus describes the ancient scholars, who also attempted to create life by saying, “They were arrogant . . . they were vain. Understanding the world that already existed was not enough for them.” (p. 232) Do you think Linius’s experiments were right

or wrong? Why is it so important for scientists to be ethical and consider the consequences, both positive and negative, of their experimentations?

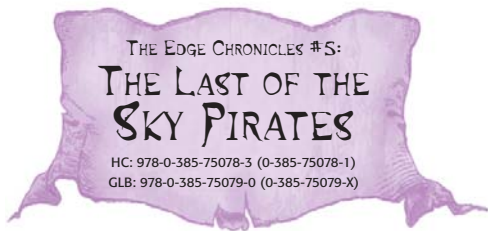
curriculum connection

- Conduct a classroom debate about the ethics of genetic engineering. Before the debate begins, give students time to research issues such as cloning, stem cell harvesting, and other topics relevant to this subject.

themes

Genetic Engineering
Friendship
Growing Up • Fear

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Fifty years after Captain Twig severed the anchor chain securing the floating rock of Sanctaphrax to Undertown, all is not well in the great floating city or the urban sprawl of Undertown. Rook Barkwater is selected as a Librarian Knight elect, and seeks to train in the Freeglades. Along the way, Rook encounters personal failure, betrayal, and near death. Rook ventures out into the Deepwoods to continue his studies, and he meets the famous sky pirate, Captain Twig. Together, they journey back to Undertown in the *Skyraider* to stage a dramatic rescue mission atop the horrible Tower of Night.

questions for group discussion

- Rook is transported beyond the squalor of the sewers through reading and his quest for knowledge. How can being educated elevate a person beyond the circumstances of their life, such as being born poor or not being from a “connected” family?
- On page 45, during the announcement ceremony Rook swears to “serve Edge scholarship, both Earth and Sky, for the good of all” with his heart and his head. Discuss the meaning of this pledge. How does Rook fulfill his sworn vow as the story unfolds?



curriculum connection

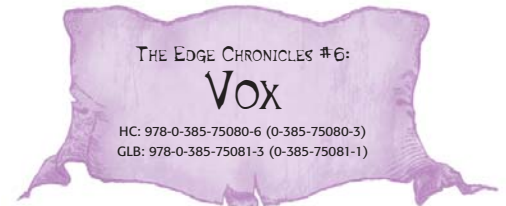
- At the end of the book, Rook, Cowlquape and Wumeru the Banderbear witness Captain Twig being carried away by the caterbird. (p. 364) Have students work in teams to create an additional chapter to this volume that will be the start of a new volume that picks up on Twig’s arrival at Riverrise. (Riverrise is described in Chapter Eighteen of *Midnight over Sanctaphrax*).

themes

Dreams • Perseverance
Courage • Friendship
Loyalty • Freedom • Trust

Illustrations © 2000 by Chris Riddell.

Rook Barkwater’s skycraft crashes in the deadly area of the Edge known as Sreetown. Rook is rescued, only to be captured on the way back to the sewers that house the Great Library. Mindwashed and forced to work for a sinister goblin whose life work is to concoct potions that cause instead of cure sickness, Rook must survive only on his wits. With determination and luck, Rook manages to come face-to-face with Vox, the usurper and false Most High Academe, and discovers this brilliant but vengeful former apprentice of Sanctaphrax has a plan to destroy all of Undertown and his enemies. Can Rook foil Vox’s plan?



questions for group discussion

- Many of the characters in *Vox* display an easy ability to commit cruelty: the Guardians of Night, the slavers, Amberface, General Tytugg, the Shrykes, and Vox. Although these characters are not human, their actions are sadly very human. Why do you think some people are capable of abject cruelty? Do you think some people are born cruel, or does cruelty occur as a result of certain conditions or experience?
- Amberface attempts to erase Rook’s memories. Rook resists by holding onto one memory of warmth and security, and realizes that there was one thing that remained the most important and most precious thing of all. The seed of his existence, the essence

of himself—in short, the knowledge of who he was. (pp. 135–136) Why is self-knowledge a necessary part of maturity? How would you describe the essence of yourself?

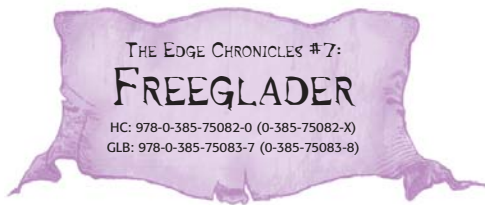
curriculum connection

- Form book clubs of four to six students. Assign each group a theme from the book, and have them identify and discuss examples that support the theme.

themes

Revenge • Power • War
Dangers of Technology
Friendship • Slavery
Self-Identity

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After the great battle and destruction of Undertown, its surviving inhabitants must seek out a new life in the Free Glades, but to do so will require a mass exodus across the treacherous Mire and the seductive Twilight Woods. Led by a band of surviving sky pirates, the Library Knights, and a band of protectors known as the Ghosts of Sreetown, thousands of homeless seek a better life. What they don't

know is that the Shryke bird creatures, the Goblins, and the evil foundry master plan to enslave them. It's up to Rook, Felix, Xanth, and the others to fight for their very survival . . . as Freegladers.

questions for group discussion

- Chapter Two is called “Exodus.” Discuss the meaning of this word and identify times in history where exoduses have occurred. Challenge students to come up with reasons why people are forced or compelled to leave their homeland. Discuss examples of mass exoduses around the globe that have happened in the last five years, and the reasons for these flights.
- Xanth is despised by the Librarians for his betrayal in *The Last of the Sky Pirates*, and for his work as assistant to the brutal Orbix Xaxis. In the Edgelands, Xanth saves Rook's life. How is his selflessness a necessary step to his ultimate redemption? Before Xanth can be truly redeemed, why must he first forgive himself?

curriculum connection

- Rook learns that he is the grandson of Twig and the great-grandson of Cloud Wolf. He is given a miniature oil painting of Cloud Wolf, the single artifact that connects Rook to his heritage. Have students, with parents' permission, look through family keepsakes to identify an artifact. Have them write an essay describing its significance and how it represents their family history.

themes

Freedom • Teamwork
Oppression • Slavery
Revolution • Hope • Devotion

As the floating city of Sanctaphrax becomes gripped by a harsh and relentless winter, Quint begins his training in the Knights Academy, the venerable school charged with training the elite band of Knights Academic. As the buoyant rock cools and expands to the point of ripping free of its anchor chain, the city's hierarchy and power structure is threatened by internal forces and bitter rivalries. It's up to Quint, and his band of Winter Knights, to save Sanctaphrax from a coup that will surely end life in Sanctaphrax as he knows it, before time runs out for good.



questions for group discussion

- How is Vilnix's neglect of his prowlgryn pup, and his refusal to take responsibility for the animal's condition, a reflection of his character? Why is it important to take responsibility for your actions, even if doing so may have negative repercussions? Why did Quint feel guilt when he let Fenviel Vendix know that Vilnix was responsible for the pup's near starvation?
- Philius Embertine gives Phin a prophetic message to send to a knight long lost on a stormchasing voyage: “Tell him the time has come, ‘not to take from the sky but to give back.’” (p. 246) How can this message be applied to the real world? Why is it important to give back more than we take?

curriculum connection

- Challenge students to come up with a story that focuses on Wind Jackal, the son or daughter of Rook Barkwater, or Twig's daughter, Keris.



Illustration © 2005 by Chris Riddell.

themes

Ambition • Responsibility
Growing Up • Friendship
Loyalty • Perseverance

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FAR-FLUNG ADVENTURES



looking at the series as a whole

about the far-flung adventures

In the Far-Flung Adventures come three very young and unlikely heroes to take readers on journeys to new lands in a world of fantastic inventions, daring voyages, pirates posing as teachers, flying carpets, three-toed snowmen, and walking mermaids—to name just a few of the utterly original elements of these hilarious and endearing tales. In three volumes, readers will meet Fergus Crane, Corby Flood, and Hugo Pepper: three children who prove that courage, compassion, and love sometimes come in small packages. Readers will love how the author intertwines elements from each individual, connecting the stories in place and time, and how the wonderfully detailed illustrations combine with the text to transport readers to places of wonder, danger, beauty, and above all, adventure.



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GLB: 978-0-385-75093-6
(0-385-75093-5)

questions for group discussion

- What character traits do the series' heroes, Fergus, Corby, and Hugo, have in common? Which character was your favorite and which was your least favorite? Why? Did you relate to any one character in particular? Explain.
- What does the phrase "far-flung" mean? Do you think this phrase is appropriate for the series? Why? In what ways are the adventures "far-flung"?
- Discuss the main problem that each character faces. How are these problems similar? In what common ways do the characters solve the problem?
- How does the author weave details, information, and characters throughout the three volumes?

curriculum connection

- After students have read all three Far-Flung Adventures, challenge them to write a short story in which the three main characters—Fergus, Corby, and Hugo—meet and work together to solve a problem.



Illustration © 2006 by Chris Riddell.



about fergus crane

Fergus Crane discovers that his teachers from the school ship *Betty Jeanne* are not quite what they seem—they're actually pirates! Can Fergus and his winged horse save his schoolmates on the far-off Fire Island? And who else will he find there?

questions for group discussion

- Lucia Crane does piecework for the Fateful Voyage Trading Company. What does the word *fateful* mean? What is *fate*? What is meant by a fateful voyage, and why was Marcus Crane's journey to the Emerald Sea a fateful one? Would you describe Fergus's adventure as fateful? Why or why not?
- What clues do the author and illustrator provide that all is not as it should be aboard the school ship *Betty-Jeanne*? What qualities does Fergus possess that allow him to be successful on his adventure?

curriculum connection

- Fergus has the opportunity to use many of his Uncle Theo's brilliant devices, such as the Lunchomatic, the mechanical horse, and the flying box. Have students work in small groups to design a machine that would serve a useful purpose for children. Students should brainstorm ideas, make preliminary and final sketches, and present their design to the class.

about corby flood

Corby Flood and her family are about to set sail on a rather ramshackle cruise ship, the S.S. *Euphonia*. On-board, among the odd passengers and eccentric crew, there is a strange group of men in bowler hats who call themselves the Brotherhood of Clowns. There's also a melancholy wailing sound coming from the hold. It's strictly out of bounds, but Corby can't help investigating.

questions for group discussion

- Corby records her observations on the notes pages of the *Hoffendick Guide*. How do Corby's observational skills serve her throughout the story?
- Corby is so furious that the clowns have imprisoned a living thing in a crate that she feels her "blood begin to boil." (p. 133) What does this expression mean? What are examples of things that make your blood boil with anger?

curriculum connection

- Corby reads from the *Hoffendick Guide*, a travel book chock full of descriptions and illustrations of fascinating places in her world. Have student choose to research a place in their world and create their own mini version of a travel booklet, similar to the *Hoffendick Guide*. Give students time at the conclusion of this project to share their books with the class.

about hugo pepper

After his adventure-seeking, storytelling parents are eaten by polar bears in the Frozen North when he is just a baby, Hugo Pepper is found and raised by reindeer herders. One day he discovers a flying sled with a very special compass—one that can be set to "Home." And so Hugo arrives in Firefly Square—to discover a group of very excellent friends, and a dastardly enemy.

questions for group discussion

- Why did Hugo have to leave Harvi and Sarvi, even though it was painfully difficult to do so? Has there ever been a moment in your life where you knew you had to do something for your own good, even though doing it would cause you pain?
- Elliot de Mille, the evil editor-in-chief of *The Firefly Quarterly*, misuses his position to spread gossip, nasty rumors, and private information, all for his

own personal gain. Why is it important for the press to be fair and impartial?

curriculum connection

- Many of the illustrations in *Hugo Pepper* are in silhouette. Work with the school art teacher to help students learn about the history of silhouette art and how students can use silhouetting techniques to illustrate simple stories.