

BOOKNOTES

EDUCATORS GUIDE

the books of ember

Grades 4–8

The City of Ember
The People of Sparks
The Prophet of Yonwood

pre-reading activity

Nickie Randolph, the young protagonist in *The Prophet of Yonwood*, says she wants to “do something helpful for the world, what that would be she had no idea, but the world needed help badly. She would keep her eyes open for an opportunity.” (p. 14) The protagonists in *The City of Ember* and *The People of Sparks*, DuPrau’s other two novels, also seek ways to help their communities. Brainstorm the needs of the school and local community with students. Then ask them to write a journal entry on how they can make a difference and ultimately help the world.

about the novels of Jeanne DuPrau

Come inside DuPrau’s imaginary worlds, where the characters may be fictional, but their reactions to potential catastrophes remind us what all humans are capable of when faced with the threat of war, starvation, or extinction.

The City of Ember

Yearling paperback
0-375-82274-7

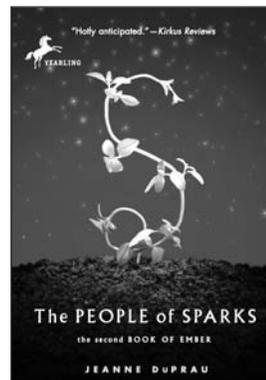
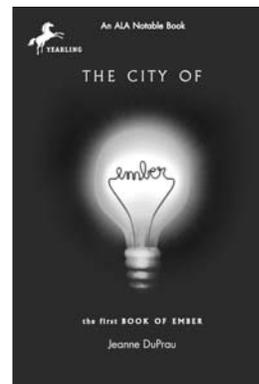
Random House Children’s Books
hardcover • 0-375-82273-9

GLB/reinforced library binding
0-375-92274-1

Listening Library cassette
0-8072-2075-2

Listening Library compact disc
0-7393-3167-1

An ALA Notable Book for Children



The People of Sparks

Yearling paperback
0-375-82825-7

Random House Children’s Books
hardcover • 0-375-82824-9

GLB/reinforced library binding
0-375-92824-3

Listening Library cassette
1-4000-8488-1

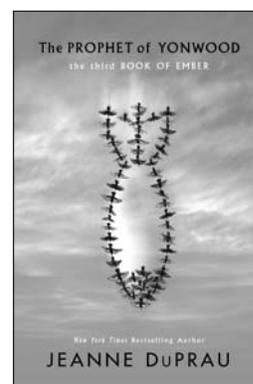
Listening Library compact disc
0-7393-3169-8

The Prophet of Yonwood

Random House Children’s Books
hardcover • 0-375-87526-3

GLB/reinforced hardcover binding
0-375-97526-8

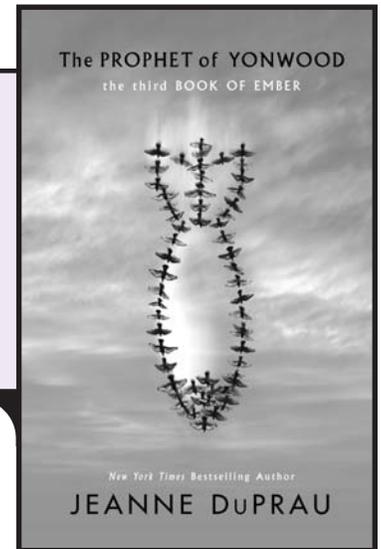
Listening Library compact disc
0-7393-3109-4



the prophet of yonwood

about the book

Nickie Randolph is a young girl in the town of Yonwood, where the local prophet's predictions of doom and destruction have inspired the townspeople to build a "shield of goodness" against impending evil.



connecting to the curriculum

LANGUAGE ARTS—Nickie instantly falls in love with her grandfather's home in Yonwood. She describes the rooms of the house as "majestic" and decides to "point out good things about Greenhaven as often as she could, to change Crystal's mind about selling it." (p. 51) Review the elements of persuasive writing. Ask students to pretend they are Nickie and write a letter persuading Crystal to buy the house in Yonwood and remain there as a resident.

SCIENCE—Grover introduces readers to his love of snakes. He shows us how to care for snakes, and even describes how their jaws work. (pp. 185 & 187 respectively) Ask students to make a pamphlet featuring a type of snake. Include pictures of the snake along with explanations of how to care for it. Have students focus on one aspect of the snake's anatomy, like Grover did when he described the expandable jaws of his snake.

SOCIAL STUDIES—Police officers demand to enter Hoyt McCoy's house without a warrant, citing that a threat to security changes the rules. (p. 206) Ask students to investigate this claim in order to understand the constitutional rights of

American citizens regarding their rights to privacy. In what instances can privacy laws be waived? Have your class research the standards for attaining a search warrant and design a search warrant for Officer Gurney to enter Hoyt's home.

HISTORY—Mrs. Beeson becomes overly zealous in her attempt to wipe out evil. Hoyt McCoy says that "these days Mrs. Beeson was seeing something wicked everywhere she looked." (p. 207) Ask students to research periods in history, like the Salem Witch Trials, when citizens became zealots in the face of fear. Ask students to write an essay comparing the events surrounding the witch trials to the events in *The Prophet of Yonwood*.

PERFORMING ARTS—Nickie describes Hoyt McCoy's home as a "star-spangled chamber of night." (p. 250) Ask students to imagine the inside of Hoyt's celestial habitat and capture its essence with the composition of a song or a painting.

vocabulary from the books of ember

The Prophet of Yonwood

jaunty (p. 62), *blustery* (p. 100), *ardently* (p. 143), *flailed* (p. 217), *stymied* (p. 269), *vacillating* (p. 351)

The City of Ember

resonant (p. 29), *enmeshed* (p. 55), *moldering* (p. 57), *pungent* (p. 59), *chortled* (p. 92)

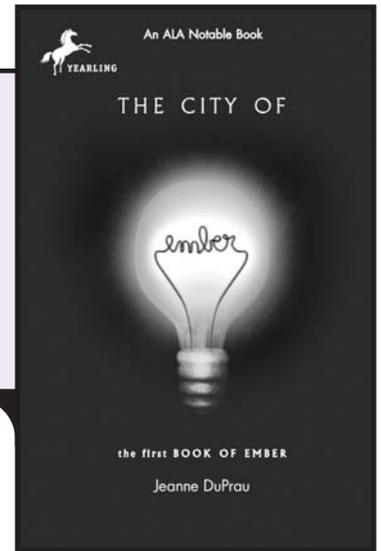
The People of Sparks

tasseled (p.25), *flummoxed* (p.67), *thermodynamics* (p.110)

the city of ember

about the book

In the underground city of Ember, young Lina and Doon struggle with clues in order to reveal both the history of their city and a way to save the population before their source of light dwindles away to nothing.



connecting to the curriculum

ECONOMICS—The principles of supply and demand dictate what resources are available in the towns of Ember (and Sparks). As Lina says in *The City of Ember*, “You can’t divide a can of applesauce evenly among all the people in the city.” (p. 153) Teach students about the concept of supply and demand and ask them to make a list of all the items in the novel that are in demand. Then ask students to think about the creative ways in which the novel’s characters supply these items.

SCIENCE—The waning light source in *The City of Ember* emphasizes the importance of electricity. Have students

research the fundamentals of electricity. How does it work? Who discovered it? What are the key scientific principles behind it? As an extension, encourage students to explore the Watt’s on Your Mind Web site to learn about wasting electricity (see below).

MUSIC—The townspeople of Ember have a “Song of the City” that describes the town and its people. Ask students to write a song, the lyrics of which reflect the spirit and the mission of their community and describe the kind of people who live there. Encourage students to use melodies that reflect the tone of the written descriptions.

internet resources

Department of Homeland Security

www.dhs.gov/dhspublic/theme_home6.jsp

The Department of Homeland Security’s official site where students can explore the functions of this department and its impact on American civil liberties.

Famous American Trials: Salem Witch Trials

www.law.umkc.edu/faculty/projects/ftrials/salem/SALEM.HTM

This site, hosted by the University of Missouri—Kansas City, outlines the fearful group hysteria of the Salem Witch Trials.

New York Times Daily Lesson Plan

www.nytimes.com/learning/teachers/lessons/19990708thursday.html

Contains activities that illustrate how electricity flows through basic circuits (grade 6–12).

Watt’s on Your Mind

www.wattsnew.com/wattsnew3/castlegate/castlegate.html

An interactive game about wasting energy (upper elementary).

Black Dog’s Word Puzzles for Kids

blackdog4kids.com/games/word/

Fun word puzzles like the one Lina deciphers to exit Ember.

Kids RegenTeaching Themes: Health Kids, Healthy Planet

www.kidsregen.org/educators/educators2.php?section=eduNga&ID=3#evaluating

This Web site suggests activities for teaching students about both gardening and its history.

the people of sparks

about the book

Followed by fellow Emberites, Lina and Doon emerge from the underground city and are taken in by the first town they encounter—but the additional population puts a strain on the town's resources, inciting conflict.

connecting to the curriculum

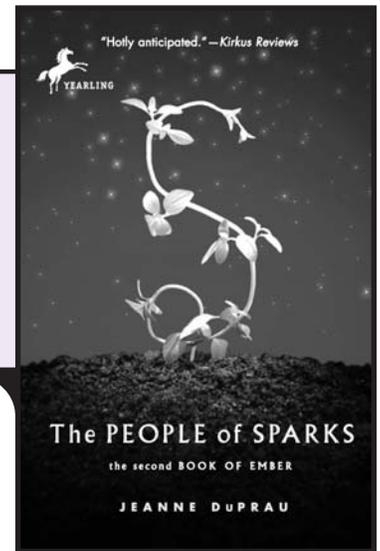
LANGUAGE ARTS—Ask students to write a magazine article for a travel magazine that describes either Sparks (or Ember) as a travel destination. Cite lines from either text that describe what it's like to live there. Ask students to use elements of descriptive language like imagery, simile, and metaphor in their writing.

SOCIAL STUDIES & GEOGRAPHY—When the citizens of Ember escape their dark society for a more promising land, they become refugees. Ask students to define the word refugee and research the global refugee crisis. Provide your

students with a brief overview of the top 10 locations on the planet with the highest population of refugees, then ask them to each choose one, and give a three page overview of that location's current refugee situation as well as a brief history of its cause.

SCIENCE—The idea of growing food and nurturing plants from seeds is paramount in both Ember and Sparks. Have students grow food from seeds and research the science behind it, like photosynthesis and the life cycle of a plant.

Check out the Author Spotlight on **Jeanne DuPrau** at www.randomhouse.com/teachers and visit the author's official site at www.jeanneduprau.com



about the author

Jeanne DuPrau writes for several hours each day and finds inspiration in a quote from Thomas Mann that says, "A writer is someone for whom writing is harder than it is for other people." This quote guides DuPrau's writing, which she often finds to be a challenging task. DuPrau knew she wanted to be a writer at a young age and has tried related careers in teaching, technical writing, and editing. She has written three novels, six books of nonfiction, and essays and stories. She lives in California where she loves to garden.

on the web

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