

by A.F. STEADMAN



# The island is calling...

Skandar Smith has only ever wanted to be a unicorn rider. To be one of the lucky few selected to hatch a unicorn. To bond with it for life; to train together and race for glory.

To be a hero.

But just as Skandar's dream is about to come true, things take a more dangerous turn than he could ever have imagined. A dark and twisted enemy has stolen the Island's most powerful unicorn - and as the threat grows ever closer, Skandar discovers a secret that could blow apart his world forever...

Soar into a breathtaking world of heroes and unicorns as you've never seen them before, in this first book in the new bestselling fantasy adventure series for children age 9+, and fans of Harry Potter, Percy Jackson and Amari and the Night Brothers.

Chapter	Comprehension Questions	Writing Opportunities	Cross-Curricular Activities
Front cover, blurb and map of The Island found at the front of the book	<ul> <li>Based on the cover, what do you think the book will be about?</li> <li>Who do you think the main characters will be? Where do you think it will be set?</li> <li>What do you think the title means? Does it give you any ideas as to what the book will be about?</li> <li>Now, read the blurb. Does it confirm your thoughts, or has it changed your mind? Why?</li> <li>Look at the map of the Island found at the front of the book. Why do you think the author has decided to include this?</li> </ul>	Complete an OWI grid:  Observe – What can you see? Remember to look at the foreground and background of the cover.  Wonder – What questions do you have? Children could start their sentences with 'I wonder if'  Infer – Start your sentences with 'I think because' Can children explain why they think what they do?	ART • After reading the book, decide what elements you'd like to highlight and design your own alternative cover.
Prologue (pages xi-xii)	<ul> <li>What is a prologue? Why do you think this story has one?</li> <li>Read to the end of the prologue. What has happened?</li> <li>Why does the author repeat the phrase 'The cameraman the unicorns before he saw them' with different senses?</li> <li>How does A. F. Steadman set the scene effectively? Can you describe the mood and atmosphere of the prologue?</li> <li>What do you learn about these unicorns? How are they different from ones you may have previously read about?</li> </ul>	Unicorns are one of the oldest and most well-known mythical creatures, found in ancient texts and artwork from around the world. Write a fictional fact-file about these fantastical beasts, including how they are the national animal of Scotland.	COMPUTING • In small groups, children can create their own animations of the arrival of the unicorns and the action that takes place in the prologue. Think about how you can make it as dramatic as you can, with the additions of sound effects, transitions and different camera angles for effect.

### Chapter One: The Thief (pages 1-16)

- How old is Skandar? Why might this be significant?
- Who is Kenna? How can you tell that she has a special bond with Skandar?
- What has caused their father to find it hard to get up most days? Why does he act differently on Chaos Cup day?
- Name the four elements that are the core of the Hatchery exam. Which element do you think you would be allied to?
- Which memory does Skandar's father share with him about his mother? Why had Dad never told him that story before?
- Predict who you think the Weaver is. Why do you think the Weaver has stolen New-Age Frost from Aspen McGrath?

Imagine you are a spectator at the Chaos Cup. Write a setting description about what it is like on race day. Make sure to include the sights, sounds and smells of the day.

Imagine you are a journalist.
Write a report about the events
of the Weaver.

PSHE • Skandar's Dad's moods are described in this chapter in detail. Talk more about how emotions are a significant part of this story so far. Research mental health, grief and depression and the effects this can have on people, and look into the work charities do to help people who suffer with it.

# Chapter Two: Locked Out (pages 17-29)

- Why are so many questions asked at the start of this chapter? Who are they asked by? Why is the word 'SILENCE!' written in capital letters as a response to them?
- What does it mean if something is a 'big hoax', as Owen describes on page 18?
- What are the behaviours of a bully? List the reasons why Owen can be considered a bully in the story.
- Who comes to the rescue of Skandar? How does the author show that Owen is scared of Skandar's sister?
- Summarise in one word how Skandar and Kenna feel at the end of this chapter. Is it the same or different?

Skandar wishes he had a friend he could whisper with at the back of lessons. Write a hypothetical conversation that he would have with a whispering friend. What would they say? Use punctuation such as speech marks to show who is speaking.

**ART** • Drawing was the only thing Skandar really enjoyed other than unicorns. Draw what you think your unicorn would look like if you could hatch one.

LITERACY • In pairs, take turns arguing whether you think unicorns were ever once 'real' and what they would have been like had they existed.



# Chapter Three: The Hatchery Exam

(pages 30-47)

- Why does Skandar not have any memories of his mum? How does he feel about this? Why does he feel that he has to hide his sadness and him missing his mum with Dad and Kenna?
- How had Dad been 'acting oddly' according to Skandar? Can you find a foreboding warning in Dad's words about what could happen to Skandar's Hatchery exam on page 32?
- Why could Kenna never hate Skandar? In the story so far, find words and phrases that show she is a supportive sister to Skandar, even after failing in her own Hatchery exam.
- Who stops Skandar from taking his Hatchery exam? Why is this a total surprise to him?
- What does the woman at the door reveal to Skandar about why he didn't take the exam that morning? Should he go with her? Would you if you were in his position?

Write a character profile for Skandar. What are his personality traits, strengths and weaknesses? Include key quotes and descriptions from the text, including all that you know and can infer about him so far.

Write a diary entry from his perspective in which he shares his sadness about missing his mum. How does he really feel?

**HISTORY/ENGLISH** • Learn about the history of these mythical creatures and how they filled the imaginations of cultures across the world. Read some unicorn-based stories and myths. Have they always been seen as cute and fluffy?

**PSHE** • What is grief? How is it explored in this chapter? Make a note of the different emotions Skandar feels, his memories and how he finds ways to feel closer to his mother.

### Chapter Four: The Mirror Cliffs (pages 48-62)

- How is Skandar's shock at seeing a real unicorn for the first time shown? (stuttering, almost running the other way)
- Why didn't Agatha let Skandar sit the exam? Do you think he is as 'special' as she calls him?
- What does the title of this chapter refer to?
- What cover story does
   Agatha tell him to say if he
   is asked? What does she
   disclose about Skandar's
   mother? What item does she
   give to Skandar before she
   leaves? How do you think
   this will play a part later on
   in the story?
- Who is Bobby Bruna?
   Why is she immediately suspicious of Skandar? Do you think they will become friends or enemies?

Create an emotions graph to plot Skandar's changing thoughts and feelings throughout the last couple of chapters. You may wish to refer to key events such as: not being allowed to sit his exam, meeting Agatha, leaving Kenna behind, and flying on a unicorn for the first time.

#### HISTORY/GEOGRAPHY

• Find out more about the White Horse, a world-famous Bronze-Age prehistoric hillside figure, in Uffington, Oxfordshire. Discover how growing numbers of historians and campaigners believe it to actually be that of a mythical unicorn rather than a horse, and that they have launched a bid to make it a unicorn by adding a horn.



## Chapter Five: The Tunnel of the Living (pages 63-75)

- What does the phrase 'not the sharpest lemon in the tree' that Bobby says to Skandar mean on page 64?
- List the ways in which the author shows, rather than tells, the reader that Skandar is relieved after opening the Hatchery door.
- Which sights and sounds does Skandar experience in the Tunnel of the Living? What item of clothing does he use to comfort him here?
- How do the sentence descriptions of Amber show what type of person she is? What first impressions do you have of her?
- What does Dorian Manning say is the sign of a successful hatching? (when the unicorn horn punctures your palm)

Imagine you are Skandar in the Hatchery. Write down five burning questions that you have about hatching your unicorn that you are desperate to ask Dorian Manning but in the story you are unable to. **SCIENCE** • Consider the question: what do you think is inside an egg? Hypothesise about what is in an egg at various stages of hatching chickens. Using the internet and diagrams, observe the stages of hatching closely, discuss findings and record observations. Create an illustrated step-by-step guide to the hatching process with the events of what happens at each stage.

### Chapter Six: Scoundrel's Luck (pages 76-85)

Before reading the chapter:

 Define the word 'Scoundrel' in the title of this chapter. Use dictionaries if necessary. What do you think the significance of the title may mean for Skandar and his unicorn?

After reading the chapter:

- What literary technique is used in the sentence 'He could already see cracks spreading across the egg's surface, like ice breaking over a frozen lake.' on page 78? (simile)
- Which type of sweets does Skandar feed to his unicorn?
- How do we know that Skandar is growing in confidence on page 84?
- Do you think Scoundrel's Luck is a good name for Skandar's unicorn? Why? What name would you give to your unicorn?

Write the events of the chapter from Scoundrel Luck's perspective. Think about the different emotions the unicorn experiences as it hatches and its initial interactions with Skandar.

Create a timeline of events in the story so far which you can build on as you continue to read. **DRAMA** • Work in pairs to act out the exchanges between Skandar and Scoundrel's Luck during this chapter when the unicorn hatches. Think about body language, expression and tone to convey emotions. Freeze frame at different points and reflect on what each character is feeling.

**MUSIC** • Use a range of musical instruments to soundtrack the dramatic events of this chapter.



## Chapter Seven: The Death Element (pages 86-101)

- What causes the girl to scream at Skandar at the start of this chapter? How does the author also use humour on page 86?
- How does Skandar react to the news of his unicorn being allied to a fifth element and him being revealed as an illegal rider? What marking shows that Scoundrel's Luck is illegal?
- Why does Mitchell get more animated and exasperated in his responses to Skandar? What connections does he make between Skandar, his unicorn and the Weaver?
- What can you tell about the personalities of Bobby, Mitchell and Flo from the dialogue they have within this chapter? Which elements do you think they will be allied to?
- How does Skandar get rid of the wild unicorn?

Imagine you are Mitchell and you want to report Skandar to the sentinels for being an illegal rider. Write down your reasons for doing so. Now imagine you are Flo and you are hesitant to report Skandar. Write down your reasons for why you feel like this. Who is right in what they believe they should do?

MYTHOLOGY • Carry out some research into the existence of the five elements (fire, air, water, earth, and spirit) that were proposed by the Greeks and how they have played a part in alchemy, medicine, magic and astrology. Find out their meanings, symbols and qualities, as well as how they oppose each other. In groups, create a presentation on each element to share with your classmates.

#### Chapter Eight: The Eyrie (pages 102-115)

- True or false: Skandar feels anxious about being found out as an illegal rider associated with the spirit element. Find evidence from the text to show why you think it's true or false.
- Who do the group meet at the Eyrie?
- What else is Skandar worried about after talking to Albert?
- What new information do we learn about Mitchell and his family? How might knowing this information assist Skandar?
- What does Mitchell decide at the end of the chapter?
   Is he actually going to help Skandar?

There are descriptions of leaves being 'cornfield yellows, emerald greens, sea blues' in this chapter. Generate your own descriptions of objects based on their colour such as 'flame red' and 'ocean blue'. Write them in sentences to show your understanding.

**ART/GEOGRAPHY** • Draw and label a map of the Eyrie based on descriptions in this chapter.

LITERACY • Create a profile of each of the main child characters in the story so far (Bobby, Mitchell and Flo). Write down what you know about each of them already – add more detail as you read.



# Chapter Nine: The Fault Lines pages 116-136)

- What is the name of the title given to the official head of the Island?
- Act out the raw emotion in Aspen's voice as she spoke on page 118 to show your understanding of what this means.
- How do Mitchell and Flo create the distraction? Find a word on page 124 that describes a 'wild and noisy disorder or confusion'. (pandemonium)
- Who does Skandar have to answer to after having been 'identified' as a water wielder? (Instructor O'Sullivan)
- Why is this chapter ending with a one-word sentence of 'Ever' effective?

Consider the important themes in the story so far (e.g. friendship, family, trust, grief). Can you add any more? Create a 'Theme Sheet' to record any ideas as you read on.

Using the Eyrie as inspiration, write a description for your own magical school and a name.

**GEOGRAPHY** • We see Skandar experiencing the fault lines of the Island. Learn about fault lines in our world, which are long cracks in the planet's surface caused by the movement of Earth's tectonic plates. Find out why earthquakes occur along them and about notable ones such as the San Andreas Fault in California and the Anatolian Fault in Turkey, both of which are visible from space.

## **Chapter Ten: Silver Trouble** (pages 137-159)

- List at least three new nighttime noises that Skandar can hear when he is on the metal platform outside the entrance of his treehouse.
- Why does Bobby find it difficult to breathe? How does Skandar help her?
- What happens if the riders fail to finish above the bottom five in the Training Trial?
- How did Flo's mutation cause her appearance to change?
- What was Flo's original dream? Do you feel any sympathy for her?

Read over Skandar's letter to Kenna again, then write a letter in response from Kenna's perspective. You might like to include how you are feeling and questions that she has at this point in the story for Skandar.

**GEOGRAPHY/MUSIC:** The author describes a plethora of night-time sounds. What would make up a similar soundscape in your area?

**PSHE** • Note down at least three qualities that make Bobby and Flo a good friend to Skandar. Do the same for why Skandar makes a good friend to them.

### Chapter **Eleven:** Island **Secrets** (pages 160-180)

- What has caused the explosions? Are the children right to be worried?
- Why does Mitchell act in the hurtful way that he does towards Skandar? Do you think he is too easily influenced by his father or that he will learn to think for himself?
- How had Bobby changed as a result of her mutation?
- Why do the children feel suspicious about Joby Worsham?
- Do you think that Skandar has been brought to the Island by Agatha to fight for or against the Weaver?

Write a prediction paragraph explaining how you think Skandar might use the spirit element later on in the book. Will it be to work with or against the Weaver, or maybe someone else?

**GEOGRAPHY** • In the beginning of this chapter, Mitchell uses a compass to confirm the direction of the explosion. Understand how to use a compass, including knowing the four cardinal directions of north, south, east and west. Find out how to use it to calculate distance, scale linked to map reading.



#### What news does Flo receive Joby talks about the Island's **DRAMA** • Roleplay the Chapter about what has happened in newspaper, the Hatchery scene with Skandar and Joby **Twelve:** Fourpoint from her parents Herald. Imagine you are a Worsham. What is the impact Mutation in their letter? reporter that has discovered of each character's actions? (pages 181-197) that Skandar is a spirit wielder. What do you think each What is the one thing that Write some headlines for if character is really feeling and Amber and Skandar seem to this were to happen. What why? share in common? would they say? Use literary Read to the end of page **LITERACY** • Make a list of techniques to make them 186. Do you think Amber five questions that you have memorable. knows that Skandar is a about the story at the end of spirit wielder or a 'youthis chapter. What are your know-what' as he says? predictions for how this book will end? What do we learn about Instructor Worsham after he intervenes when he sees Skandar and Instructor Webb? Why is Joby Worsham sure that Amber won't say anything? How has she also lied about her father? **LITERACY/PSHE** • Jamie Chapter Do you sense a change in Create missing posters with Mitchell at the start of this talks to Skandar about being descriptions and rewards for Thirteen: chapter? Why? 'different'. Write down the shopkeeper, the bard, Chocolate the saddler's apprentice, the Skandar's qualities and Was Skandar right to Custard tavern owner and the two behaviours. How do they stand up to the bullying of (pages 198-217) blacksmiths that Jamie says make him different from Mitchell in the way that he have disappeared. everybody else? did by bringing Amber's father into it? **PSHE** • Write down a list of Who is the boy that Skandar your own unique qualities. meets outside of Scoundrel's What sort of hero or heroine would you be in your own stable? story? Why did Flo burst into tears when she saw the drawing that Skandar had done of the quartet with their unicorns? What does Skandar find out about Agatha? How does he plan to see her using Mitchell and when will this happen? Created by: Scott Evans | Twitter: @MrEPrimary | Blog/Website: TheReaderTeacher.com A.E. STEADMAN

#### How does the appearance of Pretend you are Instructor **LITERACY** • Define the word Chapter the snow take away all the O'Sullivan. Write a school 'magic'. How is the idea of Fourteen: stresses and strains that the report about Skandar and his magic explored in this chapter The Fire quartet had been feeling? recent training sessions. Give and the novel as a whole so **Festival** him a grade and suggestions far? What was the most (pages 218-243) on how he can improve his humiliating thing that had **CREATIVE WRITING • If** performance. happened to Skandar since you could create a magical he'd arrived on the Island? From what you know, write an festival, what would you Is Bobby right to feel slightly article about the spirit element call it? Write a paragraph to suspicious of Mitchell? Do and its capabilities. describe your magical festival, you think people are like taking inspiration from A. F. elements in that they have Steadman's writing style. different exteriors to how they feel on the inside? Describe the atmosphere when they arrive at the Fire Festival. Pick out the sensory description used by the author. How does Mitchell get them inside the prison? What advice and items does Agatha give to Skandar once inside? What can Skandar smell that Consider Joby's statement **LITERACY/DRAMA** • Using Chapter is causing such a stench? on page 260: 'Even if you name cards, pictures and Fifteen: could help, that doesn't mean string, create a police-style How does the author create **Stampede** you should'? Do you agree? suspect board of characters a sense of suspense with (pages 244-261) Write about a time when you you think could possibly be how the unicorns escape the have helped someone else the Weaver and those who stampede and The Book of out. What effect did it have are connected to the Weaver. Spirit? on them? Was it positive or Make notes and observations Besides the quartet's bonds negative? around the objects linked to their unicorns, what else to words, phrases and can Skandar see at the back paragraphs from the text. of the herd of wild unicorns? Summarise the character of Ira Henderson and his relationship with his son, Mitchell, in a sentence. What do the two girls wait for the guards to do at the palace as this is when they will be least interested in them?

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A.E. STEADMAN

#### **SCIENCE** • The term What does Kenna mean Write a monologue from Chapter when she writes that she '-resistant' means that a Amber's perspective. Consider Sixteen: feels like she is 'living in how she feels about events material does not let a **Sky Battles** black and white instead of so far, her father, her mother particular substance affect (pages 262-283) it. Whereas, '-proof' means colour' on page 264? and Skandar. Can you recreate her voice to make it sound a material does not let a What do you think is the authentic? particular substance enter it. difference between the To understand this further, unicorn's armour being illustrate this scientific 'element-resistant' and concept by using water to 'element-proof'? work out whether a range of Which element had Skandar materials are 'water-resistant' been expecting Amber to or 'water-proof'. use? Which one did she use instead? How do the parents of Amber and Mitchell have an influence on the characters of their children? Where does Joby say that the Eyrie is located? Chapter Why was the day of the How do you think Skandar can **DRAMA** • In groups of four, Chaos Cup Qualifiers the stop the Weaver from bonding recreate the scene where the Seventeen: day that Skandar's quarter people to wild unicorns? Write quartet meet the instructors. The Spirit chose to search for the spirit your own continuation and Use music and sound effects Den ending to the story predicting to create fear and tension. (pages 284-301) what you think will happen. You could even try adjusting Read to the end of page the tone and volume of your 285. Predict where you Create a character profile for voices for effect. think Skandar's mum's scarf Joby based on what you've came from. learned about him so far. **PSHE** • Consider the theme of What reasons does Skandar bravery in the book. What is provide for why the Weaver bravery? Who is brave? is called the Weaver from the spirit den drawings? Look at the leaflet that Skandar takes out of his pocket. What literary technique is repeatedly used in it? (rhetorical questions) Do you think Joby has been abducted by the Weaver or did he willingly join the Weaver? Created by: Scott Evans | Twitter: @MrEPrimary | Blog/Website: TheReaderTeacher.com A.F. STEADMAN

#### **LITERACY/PSHE •** How What is keeping Skandar Write a short summary of how Chapter awake at night? Skandar has changed from is the theme of resilience **Eighteen:** the start of the story. What has explored in the story? Give Would you agree that The Triumph he discovered about himself, five examples of times when Mitchell is a perfectionist? Tree his family, his friends, and the Skandar has shown resilience. Find evidence from the text (pages 302-313) world around him? Think about why resilience in this chapter that either is an important quality and proves or disproves this how you can show it in your statement. own life. Why is it a tradition that Hatchlings are brought to visit the Triumph Tree on the eve of the Training Trial? Who was the youngest rider ever to win the Chaos Cup? Where does Flo suggest they go to find out whether Erika is dead or alive? **DRAMA** • Create a Who always liked to be the What advice would you give Chapter 'Conscience Corridor'; half of leader of the quartet? to Skandar if you could speak Nineteen: the class stand on one side of to him about going to the What does Red Night's The Eyrie? Write down some words the room, persuading Skandar Delight do at the worst Graveyard of wisdom. to risk it and go to the Eyrie. possible moments? (pages 314-329) The other half stands on What happens when a Write a letter from Skandar to the other side, persuading unicorn dies? What custom Kenna, in which he describes Skandar to stay away like do the Islanders do to the how he feels about what has Mitchell says. Take turns bark of their tree once it's happened with the discovery walking through the corridor of his mother, Erika. grown? in-role as Skandar. How does What thoughts race through it feel? What would you do? Skandar's mind about his mother? Summarise in a sentence how he is feeling after he just found out his mother is alive and she's an Islander. Why does Bobby say she'll join Skandar at the prison? What does the way that she comforts Skandar show about her character?

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A.E. STEADMAN

## Chapter Twenty: The Training Trial (pages 330-344)

- What impact would Skandar being declared a nomad have on Jamie?
- Why is the repetition in the sentences 'Don't let me down. Don't let Scoundrel down. Don't let yourself down.' effective on page 331?
- What does it mean to feel butterflies? How does the author create a sense of unease and chaos in this chapter?
- How did Mitchell look out for Skandar and Scoundrel?
   Do these actions change what you think about him?
- Which unicorn has the Weaver taken and why? Predict what happens next at the end of this chapter with the Weaver.

Imagine you are a commentator describing the action of the Training Trial. Write what you would say as the unicorns go flying past. Think carefully about how you can accurately describe the fast-paced nature of the event with your words. Record your passages of speech to capture them.

HISTORY/ART • This chapter talks about the setting of the scrubland reminding Skandar of pictures he'd seen of the extinction of the dinosaurs. Look at pictures of what we presume it looked like on that day and use them to recreate pictures of what the scrubland would look like.

#### Chapter Twenty-One: The Weaver (pages 345-366)

- What does the Weaver call Joby? How has he been helping the Weaver?
- Read to the end of page 348.
   Do you think the Weaver will recognise Skandar as her son?
- Who is Agatha to Erika?
   Who is Agatha to Skander?
   (aunt)
- What makes Skandar feel frightened of the Weaver for the first time since he'd revealed who he was to her?
- How did the four friends break the bond of the Weaver?

In this chapter, Skandar and the Weaver talk about freedom. Write an acrostic for the word 'FREEDOM'. What does this word mean to you? LITERACY • Based on what you now know about Skandar's family in this chapter, draw their family tree.

**LITERACY** • Consider what makes the Weaver an effective villain or evil force in the story. Come up with your own villain or evil force.

# Chapter Twenty-Two: Home

(pages 367-379)

- Why did Skandar, Bobby, Flo and Mitchell decline Aspen's offer of a sentinel escort back to the Eyrie?
- What things would Skandar miss most about the Eyrie if he was declared a nomad and would have to leave?
- Who was at the very, very top of the leaderboard?
   What place had Skandar come in the Training Trial?
- Do you think Skandar will ever tell his dad and sister about the Weaver, or will the secret be revealed in another way?
- Why is the closing image of Skandar and Bobby so powerful?

Write a book review, including your own reflections and why you think others should read the book too.

Compare your predictions – were any of them correct?

**LITERACY** • For each of the main characters in the story, write a sentence summarising what they have learned about themselves.

**ART** • Design the cover for the next book in the series.

