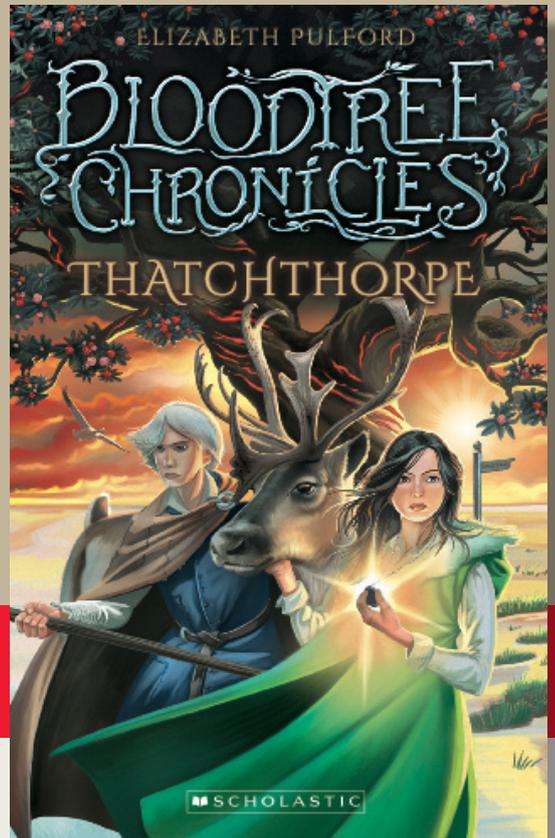


Bloodtree Chronicles Thatchthorpe

By Elizabeth Pulford

- Reading • Writing • Character Analysis
- Story Structure



About the Book

Thatchthorpe is the third and final story in a fantasy trilogy for pre-teens by Elizabeth Pulford. Its main character, Abigail, is a seemingly ordinary, story-loving child whose daily encounters involve few friends but many bullies. Abigail has another life, however, in a magical fairy-tale kingdom, where she is the heroine, Spindale, destined to save the people from a wintry curse. In this book, she enters the Silvering Kingdom in an unplanned manner. While waiting for Great-aunt June to pick her up, she is instead tricked into entering a booby-trapped carriage and whisked away to a prison cell at the top of Catsquin Castle. A magnificent gown has been ordered for her by the castle's cruel owner Uselfair, who plans to dress her up and present her to the evil Rackenard as a pig girl. Rackenard, meanwhile, has poisoned the king and plans to marry the queen as soon as the king dies. He will then rule all of Silvering Kingdom and his cruelty will have no bounds.

Within the castle, Spindale meets Berry, a large oafish young man who cannot speak and who is allowed to 'play' cat and mouse with her. Her efforts to escape are assisted by Furrow, a shrewd and courageous teenager who works within the castle. She would not have been successful, however, if Berry had not revealed an unexpected benevolent side and let Spindale evade him. Spindale then meets up with her old allies, Flint and Bramble. Together they must find a mysterious man known as Thatchthorpe and also a written document, which contains the only proof of the true heir to the Silvering throne. With the help of an enormous snow goose and Thatchthorpe himself, Spindale is able to return the correct king, Lonis, to the throne. Before she can do so, however, she is first captured by the wicked Zezmena and once more returned to Catsquin Castle as a prisoner. It is only in unlocking the magic contained within her treasured locket that the truth is revealed.

About the author

Elizabeth Pulford is the author of Scholastic's *The Littlest Angel* series, *Far, Far from Home*, *The Quest for the Rotten Egg*, *Can't Catch Me*, *On a Rabbit Hunt*, *Shut the Gate* and *Jelly-legs*. She was born in Canada, raised and educated in Dunedin, and currently lives in Waikouaiti, Otago. For more information, visit Elizabeth's website: www.elizabethpulford.co.nz

Writing Style

Thatchthorpe is the third book in a fantasy trilogy. The series is rich with metaphor and atmospheric descriptions that engage all five senses as well as the imagination. Readers are transported into a timeless fairy-tale world filled with magic and mystery. Most of the series is told from the point of view of the main character and heroine, Abigail, who becomes Spindale when she enters the fairy-tale kingdom of Silvering. Other parts are told from the perspectives of important characters such as Flint, Zezmena and the great-aunts. This allows the reader to understand aspects of the story that Abigail does not yet comprehend and for tension to be created. The books are each composed of 36 short, action-packed chapters, grouped into three parts. *Thatchthorpe* brings the trilogy to a satisfying, happy ending, answering all the questions left unanswered by the two previous books.



teacher toolkit

 SCHOLASTIC

Shared Learning and Discussion Points

Answering the questions below will help your students more fully comprehend the story. Class or group discussions will help them identify details they might otherwise miss. This is especially true for students with comprehension difficulties. The emphasis, however, should be on enjoying the story.

ASK YOUR STUDENTS:

- Look at the front cover. What do you think this book will be about? Look at both the title and the picture for clues.
- This is the third book and last book in the series. Have you read the first two books? What were they about? In what ways might this book be similar? How might it differ?
- Now read the text on the back cover. What clues does it give you about the story? What sort of novel is it? (Fantasy) What other fantasy stories do you know?

PART ONE

- Why do you think the author is telling us Abigail's thoughts in this first chapter? (*Chapter 1: At the beginning ... again*)
- What do you think Nyrah means when she says, 'You would do well to remember that I am never more than a thought away'?
- What mistake has Abigail made? Why do you think she is feeling tired rather than panicked? (*An unexpected arrival*)
- Why does Abigail feel like quitting when she never has before? (*Catsquin Castle*)
- What might be the significance of the poppy?
- How does Abigail find out what is going on? What does she find out? (*A horrible thought*)
- Abigail thinks that Usselfair is not likely to 'tolerate fools'. What does this mean? (*Meeting Usselfair*)
- What is Usselfair's plan for Abigail?
- Why is Abigail fairly certain that it is neither Rackenard or Zezmena who captured her? (*Hatching an escape plan*)
- What is Abigail's escape plan?
- What might Flint's father mean when he talks about a situation needing to ripen like a piece of fruit? (*Flint goes for a ride*)
- Why does the red truck interest Flint so much?
- What does Great-aunt June think the writer has done wrong? How does she plan to fix the situation?
- Do you think Furrow will be a good character or an evil character? Why? (*At last*)
- If you were Abigail, would you trust Furrow? (*Abigail's punishment*)

- What is Abigail's punishment? Why is this worse than being sent to the principal's office?
- Why doesn't Rackenard want the truth known? (*Great-aunt June tells Flint a story*)
- What task do Flint and Spindale need to do to save the Silvering Kingdom and the Bloodtree?
- Who is Berry really?
- What does Berry do to help Abigail? Why might he have done it? (*The unexpectedness of Berry*)
- Who is Elk? What is Elk? (*Meeting Elk*)
- How do you think Furrow has got hold of Spindale's green cloak?
- Why was Flint prepared to let himself be captured?

PART TWO

- What does Zezmena want more than anything else? (*Zezmena is summoned to the castle*)
- What does Rackenard want from Zezmena?
- Do you think it is a coincidence that the king has become ill at the same time as his unknown twin brother has been released from a spell? Why? (*What to do next?*)
- Which do you think is more important: Thatchthorpe or the script?
- How does Zezmena know where Spindale is? How does she know about Rackenard's plans? Why does she not want Rackenard to know of her knowledge? (*Decisions*)
- Was the ivy poisonous? In what way was it dangerous? (*Dangerous ivy and wordworms*)
- What is wordworm? Why is it a problem?
- Like Abigail, the great-aunts turn to their father's words to find strength in hard times. Do you think they are right to do this?
- What might be the meaning of Spindale's dream?
- What is the pun in the title of this chapter? (*The prickly arrival of Bramble*)
- What is the same about the options that Flint's father gave him?
- How does Flint help himself escape from the trap?
- What other famous story features an evil woman and a magical mirror? (*Veivaine is desperate*)
- What three things has Zezmena created in order to catch Spindale? How does she plan to trick her?
- Who is Igna? Why is she a danger to Zezmena and to Veivaine?



teacher toolkit

 SCHOLASTIC

- What happens to Vevaine? How does Zezmena release her? How is she permanently changed?
- What discovery does Spindale make? (*A discovery*)
- Where does the snow goose take Spindale? (*The snow goose and wordworming*)
- How is Tuesday planning to get rid of the wordworm? What might be the consequences?
- What does the author mean by ‘meanwhile, in another part of the story ...’? (*Finding answers*)
- How does Spindale get out of the cavern behind the waterfall?
- Who is Hunt, and why has he always felt guilty? Do you think he should feel guilty? Why?
- Why did Usselfair hate Resta?
- Where is Abigail’s father in the real world? Do you think it was right of Thatchthorpe to tell Spindale? Why?
- Why is Spindale feeling anxious while listening to Thatchthorpe talk (*Encryptions*)
- Why does Flint feel it is important to wait for Spindale even though he and Bramble are freezing cold?
- Where are the two halves of the hidden document?
- Zezmena believes that the reliability of her magic lies not in the spells themselves, but in the interpretation of them. What might she mean by this? (*Danger in the air*)
- Do you think it was a good idea of Spindale’s to share what she knew about the secret code with Flint and Bramble?
- Spindale does not have answers to all Flint’s and Bramble’s questions, so she simply says, ‘The solutions will be there when we need them.’ Do you think her words reassure Flint and Bramble? Why?
- How does Zezmena capture Spindale?
- Do think Berry should be punished for shooting the snow goose? Why?
- Why does Spindale scratch symbols into her arm?
- How does Spindale distract the seamstresses so she can get her things? (*Too late?*)
- Where does Spindale find the locket? How does she make sure Berry won’t know she has taken it? (*Off to a wedding*)
- Why do you think there is no crowd gathered for the wedding?
- Do you think Spindale has cracked the code? Why has nothing happened yet? Do you think anything will happen? If so, what?
- Why is it lucky for Ostle that Zezmena has found a dead raven? (*Preparing a deadly enchantment*)
- Do you think Zezmena’s spell will work? Why?
- How do the people learn the truth? (*Silvering Kingdom learns the truth*)
- Where does Rackenard run to hide?
- What does Zezmena do to Rackenard and the queen?
- Who will be in the new royal family? (*Saying goodbye*)
- Do you think Great-aunt June will write books about Furrow and Bramble? Who else might write these books?
- Why do you think Spindale is not allowed to keep the cloak?
- Who does Abigail say hello to rather than goodbye in this chapter? How do you think she feels?
Does Tor’s mother remind you of anyone?
- What is the twist at the end of this tale?

PART THREE

- How has Zezmena unknowingly done Spindale a favour? (*The locket*)
- What does Zezmena do to the locket? Why does she do it?
- How does the locket end up in Usselfair’s hands? (*Ding-dong the king is dead*)
- Why is Flint so angry?
- What has Berry done and why? How do you think Spindale will react? (*Preparation*)
- What does Eve mean when she says that writers sometimes need to make characters do something difficult, something that goes against the grain? Why would a writer need to do this? (*Refusing to give up*)
- Who has helped get the wrist band while Spindale was locked up? (*Two different tales*)

Activities

ACTIVITY 1: WHAT’S IN A NAME?

Discuss with your class how fantasy writers often create new names for their characters. Point out that while these names may seem like nonsense words, they often have clues to the a character’s personality hidden within them. Allow your students to talk about the names of characters that have been invented for other series they have read. Encourage them to talk about any hidden meanings within the names.

Next, point out that in *Thatchthorpe* the character of Vevaine is very vain, or conceited about her appearance. Together, list other characters from the book. Discuss possible inspirations for their names (e.g. Flint is a solid character who can be depended on like a rock. He also has hidden abilities, just as flint rock can start fires).

Lastly, encourage the students to come up with names for two new characters, an evil character and a good character. They must also give reasons for their characters’ names that match their personalities. Allow the students to share their new names and meanings with one another.



teacher toolkit

 SCHOLASTIC

ACTIVITY 2: THE HEROINE'S HELPERS

Remind your students how on page 269, near the end of the book, Flint says, 'You did it!' but Spindale corrects him and says, 'No ... we did it.' Create a class list of all the characters in the book who assist Spindale in one way or another. Some students may be surprised how long this list is. Ask: *would you have preferred Spindale to have done everything on her own? Why?* Discuss the students' responses, and encourage them to think about the lead characters in other fantasy stories they have read. Do these characters achieve their goals alone, or do others help them?

Assist the students in planning a chapter of a *Bloodtree Chronicle* in which Spindale must escape from one of Zezmena's evil plans. This could be done in pairs, small groups or individually. The only criteria is that while Spindale must solve the problem herself, she must also be helped by another character. Help the students realise that the planning stage is crucial to the success of the story. Encourage them to rewrite and rearrange their plans until they work well. Once this has been achieved, allow them to write their chapters and share them with one another.

ACTIVITY 3: THE MYSTERY OF FURROW

Through *Thatchthorpe*, there are some clues that the author is intrigued with the character of Furrow and perhaps would like to write books in which she is the central character. Ask: what is a furrow? (a trench made by a plough in which seeds are planted) Discuss what sort of person might have a name like this. Then help your students investigate Furrow's character in more detail. Direct them to pages 65–75, 78–79, 91–95, 137, 233–239, 241 and 270.

Help them to create a character map for Furrow. You could use a graphic organiser in which there are four boxes headed: Description, Personality, Feelings, and Behaviour (character map templates can be found easily on the Internet). The students should list traits that belong to Furrow and give evidence for each trait from the book. For example: *She is a fast thinker – when Usselfair saw her leading Abigail out of the castle, she was able to think quickly and pretend that she had caught Abigail.*

ACTIVITY 4: TYING UP THE ENDS

This task will suit students who have read and enjoyed all three books in the *Bloodtree Chronicles* series. First discuss how, at the end of a book, an author usually brings to a satisfactory conclusion all the problems and unknown mysteries that have kept the readers intrigued.

Next, discuss the nature of an ongoing series such as this one: at the end of each book, the most pressing problems within the book are resolved, but some other problems remain (e.g. the secret of the locket, and the fate of Abigail's father). Create a two-column chart on a whiteboard with the headings: *Completes the Book* and *Completes the Series*.

The chart lists the problems and mysteries that were resolved at the end of *Thatchthorpe*. The students' task is to identify these things and put them under the correct headings. Help them add one item to each column, and then allow them to complete the chart either in pairs, groups or individually. At the end, allow them to share and compare their charts.

Written by Mary Atkinson



teacher toolkit

 SCHOLASTIC