

# Bloodtree Chronicles Bragonsthyme

By Elizabeth Pulford

- Reading • Writing • Art
- Health



## About the Book

*Bragonsthyme* is the second 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 the works of an evil trio. In this book, she is transported into the story of Bragonsthyme, where she must free its town from a curse that keeps the land in eternal winter. If she is unable to create a happy ending for the Bragonsthyme story, the magical ice dragons that live in the hills will be wiped out, and Lonis, the rightful king, will never be reunited with his beloved wife, Trinket. Familiar evil characters from *Sanspell*, the first book in the series, feature in this book. So, too, do Spindale's support team: her seven great-aunts; Nyrah, her fairy godmother; and Flint and Bramble, her young companions. Characters only alluded to in the first book, such as Flint's father, Lonis, also take on more central roles, and their stories are further explained.

Bragonsthyme is a land where words have great power. Spindale learns that she must collect three magical items: a moon drop, a piece of rare crystal and the evil master Treolle's last words. She must then take these items to Thyme, thought to be the last ice dragon, so that he can reverse a curse placed on Bragonsthyme. What's more, all this must be achieved before the sun sets. With help from others and by using all her knowledge, inner strength and intuition, Spindale sets about completing this seemingly impossible task. Rackenard, the Silvering Kingdom's powerful royal writer, is determined to stop Spindale, as is his unacknowledged evil daughter, Zezmena. In a dramatic climax, Spindale is knocked unconscious and then transported out of Bragonsthyme. It seems, however, that she and Thyme were just in time: they have saved Bragonsthyme.

## 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](http://www.elizabethpulford.co.nz)

## Writing Style

*Bragonsthyme* is a fantasy novel written in the third person. It 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 book is told from the point of view of the main character and heroine, Abigail, who is also known as Spindale. 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 book is composed of 36 short, action-packed chapters, grouped into three parts. It ends at a satisfactory point, while also leaving some questions unanswered, encouraging readers to seek out the final title in the series.



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# 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.

## 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 second book in the series. Have you read the first book? What was it about? In what ways might the second book be similar? In what ways 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

- What is so unusual about time in the place where Abigail is waiting to be picked up? (*Chapter 1: Waiting*)
- How does the author tell her new readers and remind her old readers about what happened in book one?
- Why does Abigail feel she can trust Captain Spinkle? Would you trust him? Why? (*Captain Spinkle*)
- Why were people in Abigail's hometown rude about her father? Do you think they were right to be rude? Why?
- Bragonsthyme is a place and a story. What makes it part of the Silvering Kingdom? (*Ice dragons*)
- Spinkle describes Bragonsthyme's ending as stuck 'somewhere between the now and the before'. What might this mean? Why is it hard to understand?
- What strange things does Abigail put in her pocket? Do you think they are moon drops, a dragon's breath or something else? Why?
- What name do the people in the Silvering Kingdom use for Abigail? (*A dreadful scare*)
- Why do you think Great-aunt June is so interested in whether Captain Spinkle asked about her? How might she have known him in the past?
- Why is Abigail nervous about entering Bragonsthyme?
- Trust is an important theme in this series. What is trust? In your life, who can you trust? How can you build trust in yourself?
- Why was the crystal mirror so special? Is it possible to make another one? Why? (*The crystal mirror*)
- What seemingly impossible task does Abigail need to do before she can find Bragonsthyme's happy ending?
- Flint is happy that his mother, Trinket, is home and safe.

Why, then, is he feeling restless? What does he want to do? Why doesn't he just go and do it? (*Flint makes a decision*)

- What does Flint think his father did? What does Trinket think happened to him? Who do you think is right? Why?
- What sort of person is Julinx? What sort of person is Bramble?
- What is so amazing about Great-aunt Tuesday's cottage? Why does Great-aunt June call it 'a wonderful convenience'? (*The secret language of poppies*)
- What do poppies mean to the great-aunts? What do poppies symbolise in our society?
- Why do the great-aunts think Abigail can save the Silvering Kingdom?
- What does the poison do to Abigail? What might it have done if she hadn't taken the antidote? (*A near tragedy*)
- What did Zezmena plan to do? What did she end up doing instead? (*Zezmena changes plans*)
- Why isn't Bragonsthyme called Dragonsthyme? What is thyme? (*This and that*)
- What was the agreement between Treolle and Rackenard? Which one do you think didn't keep his end of the bargain? Do you think Abigail's guess is correct?
- What is a seer? Do you think it matters which seer Flint visits? Why? (*Two discoveries*)
- What does Manas mean by 'His longing to see you has been his closest companion'? Does Flint believe it?
- What is a talisman? What did Rackenard do with his sword and talisman?
- Abigail and Flint have something in common. They both want the same thing. What is it? (*No time to dither*)
- What does Abigail wear around her neck? What two things must she be careful not to do with it?
- What happens to Abigail after she puts on the cloak?

## PART TWO

- Flint is going to travel in the direction of the weather. If you were to travel in the direction of the weather right now, in which direction would you head? (*Finding Bragonsthyme*)
- Why is Bramble upset?
- The author has inserted a section break between two of the paragraphs on page 92. Why did she put it here? How does it help the reader?
- What did Spindale's father mean when he said, 'Don't look behind. Always look forward. Once the day is done, leave it behind. Make amends if you need to, but better to give your all to the new day.'?



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- What was stopping Spindale from entering Bragonsthyme? How did she get past it?
- What did Spindale see over the edge of the bridge? Who do you think it could be?
- Zezmena thinks the crystal mirror was her property. Is she correct in this? Why? (*Deep in the woods*)
- What do you think Zezmena plans to do with all the items she is collecting?
- In what ways does the bakery in Bragonsthyme differ from an ordinary bakery? (*Seeking Shaasa*)
- The author uses the metaphor 'a sword of sunlight' on page 109. Why might she have used the word 'sword' rather than 'beam', 'shaft' or 'pool'?
- Now think about the metaphor 'the page of light' on page 111. Why might the author have used the word 'page' here?
- What did Shaasa say that sent Spindale into shock?
- What do you think happened to Spindale when she looked into the painting?
- Why do you think Bramble's voice turns sullen when Flint suggests Spindale is nearby? (*Flint is discouraged*)
- What might Manas have meant when she told Flint that 'by the third and sunlight you will have an archway to Bragonsthyme'? What sort of archway could it be?
- What theme connects the names of all the great-aunts?
- Why are the great-aunts discussing what has happened to Spindale and what will happen next as if they were simply discussing a book they were reading?
- Do you agree with Great-aunt Tuesday that the hero or heroine of a story needs to be in danger to make the story exciting? Why or why not?
- What do you think this chapter will be about? Who will meet whom? Why might it be bewildering? (*A most bewildering meeting*)
- What happened to most of the ice dragons?
- Where has Spindale ended up?
- Why is there no real time in Bragonsthyme?
- What use had Zezmena for the items she collected? Was your guess close? (*The shrewdness of Zezmena*)
- What does Rackenard use Treolle's grave to do?
- How do Flint and Bramble get into Bragonsthyme? How does Zezmena get in?
- What does the ice moon drop allow Spindale to do? (*Time to leave Thyme*)
- How did Rackenard betray Treolle?
- What two things did Thyme do to try to save Flute and the Silvering Kingdom?
- What did Treolle do to get revenge?
- Why does Thyme feel responsible for the loss of the ice dragons?
- Spindale wonders if the bullies at her school would have behaved better if they had been more cared about. Do you think she could be right? Why?
- Why does Spindale need to be careful using her locket?
- Why did Thyme tell Spindale there was no way out of the cave?
- Where does Spindale find a compass? How can this tool help her get out of the tunnels? (*Finding a way out*)
- Were Bramble and Flint right or wrong to steal food? Why? (*Lonis and an escape*)
- Why do you think the blind man was so interested in Zezmena? Who might he be?
- What does Zezmena want Ostle to do for her?
- Why does Spindale find Nyrah's message annoying? How does it help her?
- What does Rackenard want? Why might he want them?
- How does Spindale get ahead of Rackenard? (*An important meeting*)
- Who meets up at Shaasa's cottage?
- In what different ways is Shaasa able to help Flint, Bramble and Spindale?
- Why does Flint cry when he hears his father's story? (*Real or make-believe?*)
- Why is Flint really a prince?
- What is Rackenard's reason for being in Bragonsthyme?
- What does Shaasa mean when she says that knowledge is power?
- Why did Treolle want to harm the ice dragons even though they had done him no harm?
- What three things happened at the moment Treolle cast his oath, or curse?
- What three things does Spindale need to give Thyme to create a happy ending?
- The author refers to the number three several times in her writing. She is not the first person to do this. What sorts of stories often refer to things in threes?
- How is the talkative and inquisitive Mina helping Spindale?
- Where did Nyrah come from? What is her purpose? (*Chewing over options*)
- Do you think it is fair to leave the fate of a whole kingdom in the hands of one thirteen-year-old girl? Should Spindale try to do it alone, or should she get help from others?



## PART THREE

- If you were Flint would you want to save Bragonsthyme or meet up with your father for the first time? Why? (*The search begins*)
- Who do you think has captured Spindale?
- Why was Zezmena both annoyed and a little bit flattered by Mina's attention? (*Mina and her tricks*)
- Spindale thinks it is ironic that she is with Lonis and Flint is not. Why is it ironic? (*A request*)
- Why does Lonis tell Mina not to return to Zezmena?
- In Bragonsthyme, whatever you say leaves an impression. There is always some trace of what is spoken. Is that also true in our world? Do our words have power? Why?
- The author writes that Spindale saw the silver gleam of tears in Flint's eyes like ice melting. Why do you think she used the simile 'like ice melting'?
- How did Spindale get into the time citadel? (*Into the unknown*)
- How did Spindale get a piece of the crystal? (*A dangerous move*)
- How did she find the location of Treolle's last words?
- Who spoke the perilous words that give this chapter its title? Why were the words perilous? (*Perilous words*)
- Do you think Spindale is wise to tell no-one where to find Treolle's last words? Why? (*Getting there*)
- How does the author let us know there is going to be trouble ahead?
- Do you think it was right of Spindale to leave Flute trapped in the ice? Why? (*The bridge of mirrors*)
- How do the great-aunts know what is happening in Bragonsthyme? How does this chapter help build the tension in the story? (*The great-aunts gather*)
- How do Spindale's angry words to the bully Rackenard impact Zezmena? (*Rackenard strikes*)
- How does Spindale get away from Rackenard?
- How might Ostle play a part in the story's ending?
- How did Spindale get back to Thyme so quickly? Could she have achieved so much without the help of others such as Thyme, Bramble and Mina? (*The enchanted blue strand*)
- Why is Thyme in terrible danger?
- Why is Spindale unable to hear Flint? What is happening to her? (*Was Thyme in time?*)
- Are all the questions and mysteries resolved and explained at the end? If not, where might the answers be?
- Does the story have a happy ending? Why? What do you think will happen in the next book in the series?

## Activities

### ACTIVITY 1: IMPERFECT BUT INDISPENSABLE

Create a class list of the characteristics of Lonis and Mina. Point out that while these characters are very different, they both help Spindale achieve her goal; without either of them, she might have failed. Discuss how Lonis is almost perfect, like a fairy-tale hero. Then discuss how Mina has more faults and that it is these apparent faults that make her perfect for her role in the story.

Now help your students each pick a 'fault', such as being too talkative, too quiet, too nosy, too fussy or too messy. Next, help them create a character with this 'fault' and feature the character in a story where he or she ends up saving the day as a result of having this fault. The students can then share their finished stories with one another.

### ACTIVITY 2: AN AUTHOR'S INSPIRATION

Discuss where the author might have got her inspiration. Elicit that she most likely included elements of modern beliefs and values (e.g. a strong female main character), today's popular fantasy books (time travel) and ancient fairy tales (e.g. dragons). Discuss how other books they know also draw on similar sources. Ensure they understand that this is part of the creative process and not cheating.

Create a class chart titled *Bragonsthyme's Inspiration*. Have the students place words and images on the chart that show possible sources of inspiration. For example, a child could draw a mirror and write: *In Snow White the evil queen also has a magic mirror*. Display the chart on a wall.

### ACTIVITY 3: SERIOUS ABOUT SERIES

Talk about how *Bragonsthyme* is the second story in a trilogy. Elicit some of the advantages of reading a series, e.g. you can meet up with your favourite characters several times. Arrange for the students to present their favourite series to the class. They should point out what the series is about, how the books link up, how the characters change through the series (if they do), and why they enjoy the books.

### ACTIVITY 4: RECREATE BRAGONSTHYME

Ask the students to imagine they are making a movie of *Bragonsthyme*. Discuss what the set might look like, and collect information from the book (e.g. pages 33, 95–97, 105–106, 110). The students could also research old cottages in northern Europe as this is where many fairy tales originated. Finally, create a class mural or diagram that depicts the town accurately and also includes students' ideas.

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