

## The Thief

by

Megan Whalen Turner

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**Book Information**Megan Whalen Turner, The Thief

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219 Pages

Book Level: 6.0

Interest Level: MG+

Gen flaunts his ingenuity as a thief and relishes the adventure which takes him to a remote temple of the gods where he will attempt to steal a precious stone.

**Award:** ALA Notable/Best Books; BCCB Blue Ribbon Book; Newbery Honor; State Award

**Topics:** Adventure, Crime; Adventure, Travel; READNOW - Demco Media Turtleback Books, Demco Media - Read Now Grades 9+; Recommended Reading, YALSA Popular Paperbacks

**Main Characters**

Ambiades another young man in the expedition whose relationship with the others is often tense; a student of the magus, but betrays the group to the Attolians

Gen main character in the story, thought to be a common thief, but actually the Queen's Thief of Eddis

Pol a soldier whose primary goal on the expedition is to protect Sophos

Sophos a young man who is part of the expedition to find the Gift; late in the story it is learned he is heir to the throne of Sounis

the magus a very knowledgeable scholar and one of the powerful figures of the court of Sounis who plans the expedition to find Hamiathes's Gift and bring it back to Sounis

the queen of Eddis Gen's cousin, and the person for whom he seeks Hamiathes's Gift

**Vocabulary**

**dystopia** an imaginary place of total wretchedness

**incarnation** the embodiment of a god in earthly form

**manacles** shackles for the hands or wrists

**usurper** one who seeks to seize authority without right

**Synopsis**

Gen is being held as a thief in the prison of the king of Sounis. The king's magus selects him to accompany him on an expedition. Also accompanying them on the journey are Sophos and Ambiades, apprentices to the magus, and Pol, a soldier. The magus is seeking Hamiathes's Gift, an ancient treasure that entitles the bearer to the throne of Eddis. The magus plans to use Gen's skill as a thief to get the stone and give it to the king of Sounis. The ultimate goal of the plan is the king's marriage to the queen of Eddis and acquisition of her territory.

As the group travels to the Gift's hiding place, Gen is generally treated as a tool in the magus's plan. The magus wants him healthy, but cares little for him otherwise. Ambiades treats him with contempt. Sophos shows him some kindness and interest. Pol guards against Gen's escape, but also shows signs of care and respect for him.

The magus eventually leads Gen, Pol, and Sophos to a site beside a waterfall. Ambiades has been left behind guarding the horses. For three nights in a row the waterfall stops, and Gen enters a doorway in the rock behind the waterfall. Inside are several doors and a maze. On the third night Gen succeeds in finding a hidden temple and stealing Hamiathes's Gift, a stone, from the Great Goddess, Hephestia. In the temple, Gen sees the ancient gods and goddesses and feels their approval.

As the group, including Ambiades, is returning home, they battle four Attolian soldiers. After this, the magus notices Hamiathes's Gift is missing from the thong around his neck. They search in vain for the stone in the streambed where the battle took place. Knowing they will now be pursued, the group hurries for Sounis. Along the way Gen steals food and fresh horses for them. Gen feels he is being helped by the gods.

# Literacy Skills Teacher's Guide for

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At the foot of a secret mountain trail, knowing their pursuers are close behind, Gen leaves the group. He plans to hide until the soldiers have gone. However, when he realizes the soldiers know about the secret trail, he attacks them. He is injured and wakes up in an Attolian prison.

In the prison Gen is reunited with the magus and Sophos. Gen learns Ambiades had betrayed the group to the Attolians. Gen also learns Pol pushed Ambiades off the mountain and fell off himself. At this point, it is clear the magus has new respect for Gen. Gen, Sophos, and the magus have come to care for each other.

Although he is badly injured, Gen helps Sophos and the magus escape from the Attolian prison. The group is pursued by the Attolians. Gen guides them to an encampment of Eddisian soldiers.

The three are taken to the palace of Eddis. Gen pulls Hamiathes's Gift from its hiding place in his hair and gives it to the queen of Eddis. Gen is really Eugenides, the Queen's Thief. His imprisonment in Sounis and travels with the magus were all part of Gen's plan to acquire the Gift for his own queen. Sophos is revealed to be the nephew of the king of Sounis and heir to the Sounisian throne. Gen acknowledges his new belief and trust in the old gods. Eventually, Gen, the magus, and Sophos part as friends.

### Open-Ended Questions

Use these open-ended questions as the basis for class discussions, student presentations, or extended writing assignments.

#### Literary Analysis

At several points in the book, Gen and the magus tell stories or myths about the gods. What was the author's purpose in including these myths in the story?

*The myths give background for Hamiathes's Gift and the characters. They help the reader understand the influence of the gods in the story, Gen's role as the Queen's Thief, and his relationship to the god of thieves.*

#### Inferential Comprehension

When Gen reflected on his relationship with Pol, he predicted that Pol would have allowed him to escape once the group was in the mountains. Why did Gen believe this?

*Pol had surmised Gen was from Eddis and not a common thief. Although he had probably known for quite some time, he had not told the magus. Gen believed this showed Pol liked him and would have been willing to let him slip away, without Hamiathes's Gift, of course.*

#### Inferential Comprehension

Lyopidus died in the great fire, and Eugenides felt responsible. However, it could be said that Lyopidus actually caused his own death. How could you use information from the story to support this point of view?

*Eugenides stole the thunderbolts for the second time because Lyopidus provoked him to do so. If Lyopidus had not set out to humiliate Eugenides, the fire would never have happened, and Lyopidus would have lived.*

#### Inferential Comprehension

It would have been easier for Gen to escape from the Attolian prison alone. Why did he take the magus and Sophos with him?

*Gen had come to think of the magus and Sophos as his companions, his friends. He didn't want to leave them to die in the prison.*

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### Teachable Skills

**Recognizing Plot** Every story contains some kind of conflict or struggle between two opposing forces. The major forms conflict can take are man vs. man, man vs. nature, man vs. self, and man vs. society. In *The Thief*, conflict takes place at several levels, and twists of the plot reveal changes in those conflicts. Throughout much of the book a reader would likely identify the major conflict as being between Gen and the magus. By the end of the story, however, Ambiades would most likely be named as the villain of the tale. At another level, the kingdoms of the area are engaged in a struggle for supremacy and control of the region. Gen engages in a personal struggle regarding the role of the gods in his life. There is also tension between the gods. Have students identify as many conflicts as they can in the story. Which of those conflicts would be considered the central problem of the story. The antagonist in a story is a character that creates the conflict. Does this story have an antagonist, and if so, who is it?

**Recognizing Setting** The setting of *The Thief* is important to the plot of the story. The geography of the area is discussed by the main characters and described as their journey progresses. Have students work in groups to skim the story for descriptions of Sounis, Eddis, Attolia, and their locations. Each group should construct a map that shows the countries, the landscape, the rivers, and the locations of key events in the story. Have groups compare their maps and justify their renderings with quotations from the book. After discussing each group's map, construct one large map that depicts the area as accurately as possible.

**Understanding Hist./Cultural Factors** The gods play an important role in *The Thief*. In the author's note at the end of the book, the author says that she made up the gods used in the story. However, some of them share a name and a resemblance to the gods of ancient Greek mythology. The role that the gods play in the society represented in the book can certainly be

compared to that of the Greek Pantheon. Have each student read about one of the Greek gods. Share what students have read and look for parallels between the stories of the Greeks and the stories of the gods used in *The Thief*.

**Making Predictions** Several predictions are made at the end of the story. Sophos predicts that Gen and the queen will one day be married, while Gen believes the queen will marry Sophos. Discuss the possibility of either of these outcomes in light of background given in the story. Discuss the futures of the countries involved in the story. Have students write a sequel to *The Thief* that reflects the information they know about the characters and the region.