

Teacher's Guide for Adventures in Thousandworld 1: The Darkenstar

Recommended for years 6-8



"The Darkenstar is superb. It has made my students want to read ... I work in a multicultural area, and the story resonated with them."

Marie, Swedish Year Six¹ teacher

"Thrilling and realistic! I enjoyed it, and I would love to read the sequel."

Isidor, 12

¹ In Sweden, students in Year Six are typically 12-13 years old.

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INTRODUCTION

ABOUT THE DARKENSTAR

Summary: *The Darkenstar* is a fantasy adventure aimed first and foremost at ages 10-13. The main character, a 12-year-old girl name Julia, feels forced to help her new classmate, the refugee boy Kasir. It soon turns out that Kasir has fled, not from any country that Julia has heard of, but from an entirely different world where he is a prince. Julia, Kasir and Julia’s 10-year-old brother Edvin are chased by living shadows and forced to flee to Kasir’s homeworld along with an old vagrant called the Troubadour. With Kasir and the Troubadour as their guides, Julia and Edvin must navigate a new language, a new culture and the unknown dangers of a new world. In Thousandworld, creativity functions as a kind of magic, and during the course of their journey, Julia and Edvin discover that their deceased father was a great hero there and that they have special creative talents that can help them in the struggle against the shadows. A powerful wordcrafter asks them to follow along to Kasir’s ruined home to fetch the shadows’ great weapon the Darkenstar and turn it against them. They succeed, but choose to destroy the weapon.

The chapters are fairly short and often end on a cliffhanger, and the reader is constantly enticed by hints about the mysterious backstory – who Julia’s father was, who the Troubadour was and what happened to him. According to many readers, the book is thrilling and suspenseful, creating a constant desire to keep reading. *The Darkenstar* is the first installment

in the fantasy series *Adventures in Thousandworld*, and upon finishing the book, it is likely that many students will be eager to read the sequel.

Themes: *The Darkenstar* touches upon some of the realities faced by refugees, including adjustment to a new culture and a new language, as Julia and Kasir “change places” as refugee and helper. Loss and grief are also important themes in the book as all of the main characters have lost someone dear to them – but hope springs up in the midst of their grief. Creativity is another important theme, as all of *Thousandworld* is built on the assumption that all people have different creative talents, and that these give them power to affect the world around them. As Julia’s creative talent is to influence others with encouraging or discouraging words, the book can also lead to discussions about how our words can affect others.

ABOUT THIS TEACHER’S GUIDE

Aims: This teacher’s guide has a twofold focus: developing pupils’ literacy skills, as well as inspiring pupils to express themselves creatively. To achieve the first aim, discussion questions, vocabulary words and writing activities have been selected to touch upon the eight reading content domains for Key Stage 2 laid out in the 2016 National Curriculum Test Framework documents:

2a: give / explain the meaning of words in context

2b: retrieve and record information / identify key details from fiction and non-fiction

2c: summarise main ideas from more than one paragraph

2d: make inferences from the text / explain and justify inferences with evidence from the text

2e: predict what might happen from details stated and implied

2f: identify / explain how information / narrative content is related and contributes to meaning as a whole

2g: identify / explain how meaning is enhanced through choice of words and phrases

2h: make comparisons within the text

(Department for Education, 2014)

The second aim is addressed in a number of reflection questions dealing specifically with the writer’s perspective or the craft of writing – with particular focus on the fantasy genre – as well as a number of suggested creative projects.

Structure and application:

This teacher's guide contains a **glossary of people, places and unique terms** which can be referred to if one has (for example) forgotten a character or a place name during the course of reading.

This section is followed by lists of **reflection questions** for each chapter. These questions may be used for individual thinking, partnered talk or class discussion, or a combination. The lists of questions may be used in their entirety, or the teacher may select one or two key questions to focus on reading comprehension or creative writing, or to adapt the teaching for younger or older students.

Ideally, questions and discussion should enhance the reading experience, not ruin it. The chapters are short, and the teacher is free to decide when to pause and discuss, and when it is appropriate to skip over a few questions and read "one more chapter". Allowing the pupils to enjoy the book can inspire them to pleasure reading on their own, which sometimes can be more impactful in the long run than discussions about individual chapters.

The final section of this teacher's guide contains a number of **activity suggestions**. One or more of these activities may be selected for use parallel to reading the book or upon completion. Among the suggested activities are creative writing projects focused on various aspects of the craft of writing.

GLOSSARY: PEOPLE, PLACES AND OTHER UNIQUE TERMS

In the fantasy genre, it is typical for the writer to create new world or to change significant details of our own world. Thus fantasy books tend to demand a certain level of vocabulary building of their readers, with names that one does not normally encounter, as well as places and concepts that one has no background knowledge of. This is part of the delight of fantasy; the reader has the chance to discover something completely new. Many readers may nevertheless need help keeping track of difficult names and unusual concepts. The following list comprises words that are unique to *Adventures in Thousandworld* or that are used in a unique way in the book. This list is not intended to be read in advance, but rather to serve as a guide to navigate the story's world in case one had missed or forgotten some detail in the course of reading.

PEOPLE

Angelica: A sculptor who was one of Klippsby's great artists as well as one of Thousandworld's greatest heroes. She created Paradisum and founded the Council that works to protect Thousandworld from the darkenwraiths. Her creator talent was sculpting, and she was among the most powerful creators. She died a tragic death in Trikonium several years ago.

Dawn: A winged doe created by Angelica. Dawn was her friend and companion in the struggle against the darkenwraiths.

Edvin: Julia's 10-year-old brother, son of Henrik Andersson. His creator talent is martial arts.

Harito: One of the Academy's martial arts instructors. He is similar in appearance to Lalora and may be related to her.

Henrik Andersson: Father to Julia and Edvin, known as a great hero in Thousandworld. He was a mighty creator with a talent for creating jewellery and other objects. He has been dead for several years.

Hullevin: A friendly young man who is one of Edvin's fellow martial arts students at the Academy. Edvin sits at his table at mealtimes.

Julia: The story's main character, the 12-year-old daughter of Henrik Andersson. Her creator talent is to influence others with her words, and she has great potential.

Kasir: The 12-year-old prince of the fallen domain Sulallia, currently a refugee. His creator talent is to draw and paint, and he has the potential to become a great creator.

Korak: A powerful darkenwraith who is assumed to be a leader among their ranks. He led the attack that destroyed Sulallia, and for the past several years he has sat in the throne room there, trying to open the chest containing the Darkenstar. He has the power to be in several places at once.

Lalora: An older girl who is the star martial arts pupil at the Academy. She is unpleasant to Julia and Edvin.

Lars-Petter Modéus (the Troubadour): A former music professor in Klippsby and hero in Thousandworld, Lars-Petter is currently a homeless alcoholic, mourning Angelica's demise and plagued by guilt. His creator talent is music, and he is extremely powerful.

Maja Liljestrom: Klippsby's greatest artist, who was active about a hundred years ago. In Thousandworld, she is a mighty creator with the talent of painting. She has created the beautiful domain Bonavita, where she lives.

Pallantu: A mighty creator who leads the Council in Paradisum, as well as the founder of its current capital city Pallantor. His main creator talent is wordcraft, but he has a multitude of other talents.

The Troubadour: (See "Lars-Petter Modéus")

PLACES:

Bloomington: Paradisum's former capital city, which was founded by Angelica and built with the help of the Troubadour and Henrik Andersson, among others.

Bonavita: Maja Liljestrom's domain, a lovely village which is currently surrounded by dark, dangerous woods and desert.

Klippsby: A small Swedish town that is home to Julia, Edvin, their mother and the Troubadour. It was once home to Henrik Andersson, Maja Liljestrom and Angelica.

Pallantor: Paradisum's new capital city, founded by Pallantu after the death of Angelica. The city is home to many powerful creators and to a large number of refugees who have fled to the safety of its white walls.

Paradisum: A domain that was once created by Angelica and is now ruled by Pallantu and the Council. Bloomington, which was its old capital city, can be found there, as well as its new capital, Pallantor.

Sulallia: A large, important domain that was once home to Kasir and his family, but which is currently a ruin under the control of the darkenwraiths. Although Sulallia has fallen and its people have been scattered, Sulallia is the most common language in Thousandworld.

Thousandworld: A magical world consisting of a vast number of smaller domains linked by portals. These domains include Bonavita, Paradisum, Sulallia and Trikonium, among others.

Trikonium: A domain that fell to the darkenwraiths several years ago. It was the site of the creation of the Darkenstar by the wicked genius Sindallus.

OTHER UNIQUE TERMS:

Creators: People with strong enough creator talents to create domains of their own.

Creator Talent: Any form of creative expression that can be used as a kind of magic in Thousandworld – for example, the Troubadour's music.

Darkenstar: The darkenwraiths' great weapon, which was created with the help of a wicked genius named Sindallus. The Darkenstar looks like a small ball of darkness, and among other things, it has the power to control thoughts, steal creator talents and allow the darkenwraiths to leave Thousandworld and enter our world. For many years, the Darkenstar has been kept in a locked chest in the throne room in Sulallia.

Darkenwraiths: Mysterious creatures that are currently ravaging Thousandworld. They come in many different forms, but their bodies always appear to be made out of shadows and oily black smoke.

Domain: A kind of miniature world or sub-world within Thousandworld. Creators can create these for themselves. Many domains are linked to each other by means of portals.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

Certain questions can be used with any chapter, for example:

- What do you think are the most important events that happened in this chapter?
- Did you find any difficult words in this chapter? What do you think they might mean based on the context?
- If you could ask one question of any character in this chapter, who would you choose and what would you ask?
- What do you think will happen in the next chapter? Support your prediction with details from the text.
- Do you see any similarities between the chapter and another book or your own life? (This can be made more specific if the teacher wants to focus on a certain event or aspect of the chapter.)

If variation or more specific questions are desired, the following may be used after reading their respective chapters:

Cover and first illustration:

- What kind of book is this? How do you see that? Can you think of any examples of similar books?
- What is the book about? Support your answer with details from the cover or the first illustration.
- Who do you think is the intended audience? Support your answer with details from the book.

Chapter 1:

- Who is Kasir? Why does Julia have to help him? Do you think this is good or bad, and why?
- Why does Julia get so shocked at the end of the chapter?
- When writing a chapter in a book, it is often a good idea to give the reader some new information and then to create questions or arouse curiosity so that the reader wants to continue reading to find out more. What new information have we learned in this chapter? (One example is enough.) What questions remain at the end of the chapter?

Chapter 2:

- Who is Edvin? How would you describe him?
- Why do you think Kasir is so confused when Julia finds him?
- Why did Kasir draw a picture of Jesus? What did Julia think when she saw it?
- “You know, if you stopped whistling like that, people would stop teasing you for it. It isn’t normal. You know, normal? If you want to fit in, you have to try to act like everyone else.” What do you think of Julia’s advice to Kasir? Why?

Chapter 3:

- How would you describe Julia’s family and their life? Support your answer with details from the text.
- Julia’s mum thinks that Kasir acts the way he does because he has experienced something awful. Julia says that Kasir isn’t the only one who has experienced something awful. Why does she say this? What do you think about her attitude towards Kasir?
- Why do you think Julia’s mum gets angry when Edvin copies Kasir?
- In the book, the reader only “sees” what Julia sees, and only knows what she knows. For example, the first time the reader gets a description of her is when she looks at herself in the mirror. Can you think of any other book in which the reader is told things that the main character doesn’t know?

Chapter 4:

- Who is the Troubadour? If you could ask him one question after this chapter, what would it be and why?
- Why does Julia feel bad at the end of the chapter? What would you do in her position?
- Things that happen in a book usually happen for a reason. The author has chosen every detail. Can you think of any detail in this chapter that could turn out to be important later in the story?

Chapter 5:

- When writing horror or suspense, an author often includes small hints in the text so that the reader understands that something frightening or exciting is about to happen, to build suspense. Do you see any hints like that in this chapter?
- Why is Julia frightened when she sees Kasir? How have the rumours she has heard affected her?
- Has anything in this chapter affected how you think about Kasir? If so, in what way?

Chapter 6:

- Do you think that the events in this chapter are a dream? Why or why not? Why do you think that Julia tells Edvin that it is a dream, but that he shouldn’t stop running?
- What do we learn about the Troubadour in this chapter? Do you remember any earlier hints that he might not be an ordinary vagrant?
- How does Kasir see the Troubadour? How does the Troubadour see himself? Support your answer with details from the text.

- What do you think is happening at the end of the chapter, when everything fades to black? Why?

Chapter 7:

- How would you describe the place where Julia and the others have ended up after leaving Klippsby?
- Why doesn't Julia trust the Troubadour? Do you think she is right or wrong not to trust him?
- Julia defends Kasir when the Troubadour says that everything is his fault. Why do you think she does this?

Chapter 8:

- How do you think it feels for Julia not to understand the language? Do you think that this affects her relationship with Kasir? Why or why not?
- Who is Maja? How does meeting her affect the other characters? Support your answer with details from the text.
- Why did the statue knight take Julia's ring?
- When an author writes suspense, it is common to let some chapters end on a "cliffhanger" – a situation that needs a solution or an explanation that will hopefully come in the next chapter. Why do you think authors do this? Would you call the ending of chapter 8 a cliffhanger? Why or why not?

Chapter 9:

- How would you describe Thousandworld? What is a domain? What is a creator?
- In fantasy books, it is common for the author to create a new world, often with some kind of magic. Can you think of any other books with made-up worlds?
- What is the main problem in Thousandworld? What does this problem have to do with Julia and her family?
- In fantasy stories, the author often has to explain a lot to the reader, since so much is new and made-up. A common strategy is to let one character explain things to another character. How has the author of *The Darkenstar* chosen to teach the reader about Thousandworld and how it works?

Chapter 10:

- Julia acts as if Kasir is teasing her when she tries to paint the raspberry. Do you think that is his intention? Why or why not?
- "Every person is unique," says Maja, "and every person can create." What do you think of this idea? Can you think of anything you have created?
- Sometimes the narrator calls Kasir "the refugee boy". Because the narrator is telling things from Julia's perspective, this probably means that she thinks of him as "the refugee boy". What do you think of the fact that she thinks of him that way? Is she a refugee herself now?

Chapter 11:

- How do Julia and the others manage to escape the seekers?
- Why do you think Edvin wants to learn Kasir's language? Would you like to learn new languages? Why or why not?
- The Troubadour speaks about how important it is to have a good friend. Julia seems to think that it is more important to fit in with the group and be accepted. Who do you think is more right? Why?

Chapter 12:

- Who or what is Dawn? Why is it so difficult for the Troubadour to kill her?
- What do you think has happened to Dawn and Bloomington? Why?
- When writing tragedy, it is common to give the reader an idea of how good or beautiful something was before it was destroyed or lost. Do you see any examples of tragedy in this chapter? Support your answer with details from the text.

Chapter 13:

- Who is Henrik Andersson? What have we learned about him in this chapter?
- How does Julia react when the Troubadour asks the boys to help him carry? Why? How would you react in Julia's situation?
- Previously, Julia was jealous of Kasir and his ability to draw. Now she encourages him and says that he's very talented. Why do you think she does this?

Chapter 14:

- Who is Korak? How would you describe him?
- How has Julia's relationship with Kasir changed compared to how it was at the beginning of the story?
- Fantasy books often contain creatures that do not exist in the real world. Sometimes authors use "standard creatures" that exist in other books – for example dragons or unicorns – and sometimes they invent creatures of their own. What has the author of *The Darkenstar* chosen to do? What kinds of creatures would you use if you were to write a fantasy book?

Chapter 15:

- How did Julia survive Korak's attack?
- How does Julia react when she has to eat food she has never seen before, with unfamiliar utensils? Have you ever been in a similar situation?
- How does Julia react when she hears that Edvin has saved her life? Why?

Chapter 16:

- Why does the Troubadour become angry? Support your answer with details from the text.

- What happens when Julia meets the little girl with the metal marbles, and why is it difficult for Julia?
- Do you notice anything different about how language works when Julia has arrived at the council? What has changed? Do you have any suggestions as to why?

Chapter 17:

- Why can everyone understand each other in the council chamber?
- Describe Pallantu. What do you think of him? Why?
- Do you see any possible hints that something significant might happen in later chapters? Do you believe that Julia will be involved? Support your answer with details from the text.

Chapter 18:

- What does Julia think of life at the Academy? Why?
- Imagine that you were supposed to eat at the cafeteria in the Academy for the first time and didn't know how anything worked. What would be difficult about this? What would you do?
- How does Julia feel when she remembers how she helped Kasir in school back home in Klippsby? Why?
- How would you describe Edvin's attitude about learning a new language? How do you think you would manage if you found yourself in a school where you could not speak the language?

Chapter 19:

- Why does Julia cry when she looks in the mirror?
- What conflicts do you see between characters in this chapter? Support your answer with details from the text.
- Kasir's creator talent is to paint, and Edvin's is martial arts. What kind of creator talent would you want to have?
- In many fantasy books, the author invents his or her own "magic system" – details and rules about how magic works. How would you describe the magic system in *The Darkenstar*? Can you think of a book or a movie in which magic works completely differently?

Chapter 20:

- What has Julia learned about herself in this chapter?
- Many of the creator talents in the book are connected to skills that exist in reality. For example, one can in fact create something new by painting, even if it doesn't come to life. Julia's talent is to influence people with her words. Is it possible to influence people with one's words in real life? How?
- What does Pallantu say about Kasir? Do you think he is correct? Why or why not?

Chapter 21:

- Why does Kasir want to take a break?
- How does it feel for Julia to encourage Edvin? Support your answer with details from the text.
- Why is Julia embarrassed by Kasir’s accent? Should she feel embarrassed? Why or why not?
- Do you think that Julia will use her power in good ways or bad ways? Why?

Chapter 22:

- Why doesn’t Kasir want Julia or Edvin to address him as “Your Highness”?
- Is the mirror important to Julia? Why or why not? Has her attitude towards it changed in any way?
- How is the Troubadour feeling emotionally? Support your answer with details from the text.
- Who do you think Julia trusts more – Pallantu or Kasir? Why? Do you think she is right or wrong?

Chapter 23:

- Who wins the competition between Julia and Kasir? How does this feel for Julia, and why? Is there any difference compared to the drawing competition at the beginning of the story?
- Why does Julia hope that Lalora would be weakened? Why do you think her attempt failed?
- How does Lalora treat Julia and Edvin? How do Julia and Edvin feel about this?

Chapter 24:

- What is Pallantu’s plan?
- Why does Julia feel hesitant about Pallantu’s plan? How does he convince her? Support your answer with details from the text.
- In writing a story, it is important to give the main character a goal – something he or she wants to accomplish. Sometimes this takes the form of multiple smaller goals in the beginning that lead to a main goal further along in the story. What goals has Julia had over the course of the story? What do you think is her most important goal in the story?

Chapter 25:

- How does Edvin react to Pallantu’s plan? Why do you think he reacts this way?
- Would you say that Kasir is popular or not? How would you describe his social life? Support your answer with details from the text.
- Small, odd details in a story often prove to be important later – the author has chosen to include them for a reason. What was strange about Julia hearing the door open late at night? What do you think it might mean?

Chapter 26:

- How did Kasir find out that they were going to Sulallia? Why do you think he wants to accompany them?
- How does it feel different for Julia to interact with Kasir when she understands his language? Has he changed in any way?
- If you were to rank the characters from most trustworthy to least trustworthy, how would your list look? Why?

Chapter 27:

- How would you describe the darkenwraiths' effect on Sulallia?
- Why does Kasir become angry and attack the darkenwraith?
- Pallantu promised that they would be completely safe if they went along with him. Does it seem like they are completely safe? Why or why not?

Chapter 28:

- Why can't Pallantu open the door? Why does Kasir want him to look away as he opens it?
- In this chapter, the narrator calls Kasir "the young prince" rather than "the refugee boy". This means that Julia no longer thinks of Kasir as "the refugee boy". Why do you think this has changed?
- While writing a story, an author will often "raise the stakes" by making things more and more dangerous or desperate for the main characters as the story approaches its end. Do you think this book follows that pattern? Why or why not?

Chapter 29:

- How does the mirror help Julia?
- Why doesn't Julia want to open the chest?
- Why doesn't Kasir want Pallantu to get the Darkenstar? Support your answer with details from the text.
- Why do you think Pallantu turns on the others? Were you expecting this to happen?

Chapter 30:

- What happened in Trikonium? Why has the Troubadour never spoken about it before?
- How did Julia and the others manage to defeat Pallantu?
- How did the Troubadour find hope again? Support your answer with details from the text.
- In many books, one can see the main characters develop. The events of the story change them step by step so that by the end of the story, they have changed. Have any characters developed in this story? If so, which ones, and how have they changed?

Chapter 31:

- "Their victories were, in fact, hers." What does this mean? Do you agree or disagree? Why?

- What does Julia realize about Kasir’s speech? What do you think about this?
- What does the Troubadour mean when he says that Julia and Edvin know who they are? What do you think he means when he says that they will find out who they can become?

ACTIVITY SUGGESTIONS

The following suggestions for writing exercises, writing projects and other activities are meant to stimulate the pupils to produce a creative response to the reading. The intention is not that they would do every activity on the list, but rather that the teacher would choose freely among the suggestions and choose something that would work best for the class or for individual pupils.

1. **Picture book summary.** Create a picture book with the most important events in *The Darkenstar* and a small picture for each scene. This may be done individually, in groups or as a whole class.
2. **Favorites.** Draw a picture of your favorite character or your favorite scene in *The Darkenstar*. Write a description of this character or scene, and explain your choice.
3. **Book review.** Write a review of the book, with a brief summary and an explanation of what you liked about the story and what you did not like about it.
4. **Darkenstar Theatre.** Prepare and perform a short skit of a selected scene from *The Darkenstar*.
5. **Your creator talent.** Write a short text about something creative that you like to do – for example singing, dancing, sports, drawing, building models, etc. Describe how your talent might work as a magical “creator talent” in Thousandworld, and how you would use it.
6. **Academy journal.** Describe a day or a whole week from the perspective of someone from our world who is starting out at the Academy in Paradisum, or from the perspective of someone from Paradisum who is starting out at your school. Think about how life in the new world would be different compared to what your character is used to. You may write about things that are positive, negative, and confusing. (You may choose how much of the language the character knows, but even if they know the language, they probably speak with a heavy accent and sometimes say the wrong thing.)
7. **Create your own world.** Draw a map of your world and write about the people there and how they live. Describe some of the creatures who live in your world – you may choose classic fantasy creatures, creatures you create yourself or a combination of the two. Are there any major problems or conflicts in your world that need to be solved? Anything that could become part of the plot of a fantasy story? Is there any special object in your world that could be part of a solution?
8. **Create your own character.** Create a character of your own who could work in *The Darkenstar* or who could be the main character in a story set in the world you created

in “Create your own world” above. Draw the character and write a description, including a goal: What does your character want to achieve? See if you can find a way to connect your character’s goal to a major problem in your fantasy world or in *The Darkenstar*.

9. **Fantasy story.** Use the details from “Create your own world” to write a short fantasy story. Before you begin your story, it is important to create a main character with a clear description and a clear goal, as well as a plan for how the main character can accomplish this goal and some obstacles that can make it a challenge.
10. **New perspectives.** Choose a chapter or scene from *The Darkenstar* and rewrite it from the perspective of a character other than Julia. For example, you might describe Kasir’s drawing and how he is disturbed by the fire alarm in Chapter 1, but with Kasir as the main character. Or you might write about the encounter with Dawn in Bloomington, but from the Troubadour’s perspective.
11. **Write Chapter 32.** Write your own chapter of *The Darkenstar* that takes place after Julia and the others have left Sulallia at the end of Chapter 31. If you need ideas, think about which problems remain to be solved, and try to find a way to solve one of them. You could also think about mysteries that have not yet been explained, and try to come up with an explanation of one. Your chapter could be about Julia or about a completely different main character – Kasir or Pallantu, for example. Another alternative is to write a chapter about something that happened during the course of the story but which was not included in the book – for example, Edwin’s first day at the Academy, or what Kasir did the night before they left for Sulallia.