

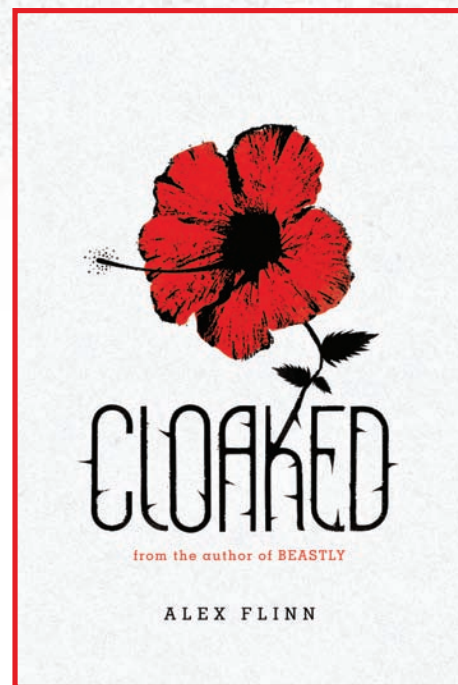
CLOAKED

By **ALEX FLINN**

Discussion Guide

About the Book

Welcome to sunny South Beach, Florida! Too bad Johnny is stuck at the Coral Reef Grand, working in the hotel shoe repair shop. Nothing exciting ever happens there . . . until the beautiful Princess Victoriana comes to stay. Johnny gets more than just a little eye candy when Victoriana invites him to her suite—he gets the adventure of a lifetime. Johnny is asked to lead a quest to find Princess Victoriana’s brother, Prince Philippe, who’s been transformed into a frog by the Zalkenbourgian witch Sieglinde. Transported to the Keys via a magical cloak, Johnny enlists the help of a fox named Todd, whom he talks to with the help of an enchanted earpiece. But is he prepared to be thwarted by spells, giants, or an evil witch? And will he even want Victoriana’s promised reward? One thing is for sure—this will be nothing short of a magical summer. . . .



Questions for Discussion

1. Why do you think the author chose the quote from Ralph Waldo Emerson that begins the book? What does this quote mean to you? What does it mean in the context of the story?
2. Many fairy tales are set in kingdoms and countries “far, far away.” Why do you think the author chose to set this story in the real places of South Beach, Florida, and the Florida Keys, as well as in the imaginary places of Aloria and Zalkenbourg? How do the settings make the story different from other fairy tales you’ve read?
3. How are Johnny and Ryan alike? How are they different? Also compare and contrast the characters of Meg and Princess Victoriana. With which character do you most identify?
4. When Princess Victoriana tells Johnny about her brother, Philippe, and the curse that has been put on him, Johnny does not believe her. What do you think of Princess Victoriana’s belief in magic? Does it make her crazy, as Johnny suggests? Why does Johnny want to believe in magic, even though he doesn’t quite?
5. Have you ever seen anything strange or unexplainable and ignored it because you didn’t believe what your eyes were telling you? Do you believe in magic? Do you think magic is an important part of life? Why, or why not?
6. Victoriana and Philippe promise Johnny and Meg that they will marry them for finding Philippe and restoring him to human form. What do Johnny and Meg think of the idea of marriage to a princess and prince? What would you do if you were offered a royal marriage in exchange for completing a quest?
7. The fox wants Johnny to prove himself worthy before agreeing to help him. Do you think this is fair? Why or why not? Think of another story in which the hero has to prove him- or herself—how is Johnny’s situation different, and how is it similar?
8. It’s common in fairy tales for characters to change throughout the story. How does Johnny change during the course of his quest?
9. Johnny believes that in order for him to have a great life, he needs to experience something life-changing. At the end of the book, his life has changed. What is responsible for the change in Johnny’s life—magic, or real, natural, ordinary events?
10. Why were the “used-to-bes”—Cornelius the rat, Todd the fox, the swans, and Philippe the frog prince—transformed into animals? Do you see parallels between the used-to-bes’ animal forms and their human personalities? If you were to be magically transformed into an animal, what animal do you think you’d become?
11. Johnny says at one point, “Maybe the crazy people are the only ones who know the truth” (p. 201). How many real, historical people can you think of who were thought to be crazy and then proven to be correct? What did they have in common?

Questions for Discussion continued on the next page . . .

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12. Why does the fox ask Johnny to kill him, and how does Johnny react to the request? What would you have thought if you were in Johnny's place? Have you ever been asked to perform a task that seemed unthinkable or absurd? What did you do, and what was the outcome of the situation?
13. Philippe's curse will be broken by a kiss from someone who has love in her heart, and the swans' curse can also be broken by an act of love. Consider the roles of

love, hate, and anger in the curses in this story and in other fairy tales. Does it make sense that most curses are born of hate and anger and broken by love? Why or why not?

14. Could this story have ended with the line "And they lived happily ever after"? Do you believe there's such a thing as "happily ever after"? If your life were a fairy tale, what would "happily ever after" mean for you?

Extension Activities

1. **Four Truths and a Lie.** Fairy tales are full of secrets and deceptions, and so is this game. Find a partner, and tell him or her five things about yourself—four things that are true, and one thing you've made up. Have your partner guess which one of the five statements is the lie. Then switch roles and you guess which of your partner's statements is false. (Hint: Make the lies believable and it will be more difficult and more fun to guess!)
2. **Fairy Tale "Mash-Ups."** Read three or more fairy tales—they can be from Hans Christian Andersen, the Grimm Brothers, or any other author or source—and combine the stories into your own "mash-up," as Alex Flinn does in *Cloaked*.
3. **The A to Z of Travel.** Miami and the Florida Keys offer tourists sun, beaches, delicious food, shopping, and cultural activities, among other things. If someone were looking to visit the countries of Aloria and Zalkenbourg, what would they be looking for? Write, design, and create

a travel brochure advertising the highlights of these two countries for visitors.

4. **Fashion Forward.** Johnny Marco is about to become one of Miami's hottest new shoe designers. Try your own hand at designing by creating ensembles for Princess Victoriana, Meg, Prince Philippe, and Johnny to wear when the princess and the prince return to Aloria. Don't forget to include shoes, clothes, and accessories!
5. **The Zalkenbourgian Witch Trial.** Sieglinde, the Zalkenbourgian witch, has been captured and is on trial for turning Prince Philippe into a frog and attempting to take over the country of Aloria. Stage a mock trial with a judge, jury, lawyers, and an audience. Assign roles: Who will prosecute and who will defend the witch? Who will be witnesses? Have each person develop his or her character, and then stage the trial (complete with a jury verdict).

About the Author



Gene Flinn

Alex Flinn loves fairy tales and is also the author of *Beastly*, a modern retelling of *Beauty and the Beast* that is now a feature film starring Vanessa Hudgens, and *A Kiss in Time*, an edgy twist on *Sleeping Beauty*. Her other books include *Breathing Underwater*, an American Library Association Top 10 Best Book for Young Adults; *Breaking Point*; *Nothing to Lose*; *Fade to Black*; and *Diva*. Alex lives in Palmetto Bay, Florida. You can visit her on the web at www.alexflinn.com.

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Discussion guide created by Robert A. Zupperoli, Teacher, Bridgeport, CT. 02/11