

Discussion Questions

What elements of this story make it a fantasy? What other genres apply to this story and why?

Explain how Robert's character grows during the story. List at least 3 things that are changed for Robert by the end of the story.

Which mythological character in this story is your favorite? Why?

Robert's story is a quest. Create a timeline for his journey.

Define Robert's internal and external struggles in the story.

Cross – Curriculum Tie Ins

Art – The stated purpose of the Syndicate of Cheese is to protect the world from “evil and bad taste”. Of course, the definition of good and bad taste is subjective. Create a collage from magazine pictures that contrasts your own concept of “good taste” and “bad taste”.

History – Robert and Janine have to search underground for the buried statue of Poseidon from the lost city of Eliki. Archaeologists search for clues to ancient civilizations by excavating ruins. Use an encyclopedia to read about how archaeologists work. Make a schematic of an archaeological dig of your own mythical city. Place items that might be found in different sections of your grid.

Science 1 – Cheese plays a major role in this story. Find out how cheese is made. Create a process chart for cheese making.

Science 2 – Make cheese as part of a laboratory experiment. There are several references to cheese-making labs on the internet. One page with two good experiments (including questions for a lab report) is maintained by Stephen Fuller, a science instructor in the Kansas City, Missouri school district. His website, *Lab Dad's Laboratory* can be accessed at [HYPERLINK "http://www.geocities.com/CapeCanaveral/Hall/1410/index.html"](http://www.geocities.com/CapeCanaveral/Hall/1410/index.html) <http://www.geocities.com/CapeCanaveral/Hall/1410/index.html> . Look under the Food Labs.

Language Arts 1 – Riddles are an ancient form of communication. Many riddles have become part of our common culture and language. Create a riddle scrapbook with original riddles and favorite riddles you know. Illustrate your riddles.

Language Arts 2 - Research Homer. Who was he? Read an adaptation of one of his stories, such as Mary Pope Osborne's “Tales from the Odyssey” series. Find

out about the circumstances surrounding his famous riddle.

Foreign Language – The names of many characters in this story are the phonetic spellings of Greek words. Using a Greek online dictionary, find the Greek spelling of these words: dog, dolphin, dwarf, bird, and fairy. Choose one character and rename that character in a foreign language. Create a personal card for your character with physical characteristics expressed in that language. (A personal card is similar to a baseball card with characteristics and picture.)

Recipe

Madame Gorgonzola's 222 Grilled Cheese Sandwich

Ingredients: 2 slices of your favorite cheese, 2 slices of bread, 2 tablespoons of butter

Directions:

Place the cheese between the slices of bread.

Spread one tablespoon of butter onto the top slice of bread.

Place one tablespoon of butter into a skillet and melt it on medium heat.

Put the sandwich in the skillet, with the unbuttered slice of bread face down, and press the sandwich down with a spatula.

After the bottom slice of bread is golden brown, flip the sandwich and press down with the spatula again. When the second side of bread is golden brown, remove the sandwich from the skillet and turn off the stove.

Eat it and enjoy.

Remember to have an adult supervise when you use the stove. You can change the type of cheese or type of bread to give your sandwich a secret, special twist.

Project or Craft Ideas

1. Word Search Code

Robert and Janine find their father's message about traveling through the Swiss cheese tunnels by completing the word search he leaves for them in the tip of Poseidon's trident. Pick a theme, such as types of cookies, or vehicles, or whatever you want, and use those to create a word search that has a secret message embedded between the words.

Riddle me this

Riddles are among the oldest forms of puzzles. Daimonas posed several riddles for Robert. Thankfully, Robert solved them all. Have a riddle contest in your class. Each person creates a riddle and presents it. The person who guesses the most

riddles correctly wins.

Web links

Encyclopedia Mythica: HYPERLINK "<http://www.pantheon.org/>" <http://www.pantheon.org/>

All about cheese: HYPERLINK "<http://www.cheese.com/>" <http://www.cheese.com/>

Folklore of Elike: HYPERLINK "<http://www.helike.org/index.shtml>" <http://www.helike.org/index.shtml>

All about Homer: HYPERLINK "<http://www.historyforkids.org/learn/greeks/literature/homer.htm>" <http://www.historyforkids.org/learn/greeks/literature/homer.htm>

Riddles: HYPERLINK "<http://thinks.com/riddles/a1-riddles.htm>" <http://thinks.com/riddles/a1-riddles.htm>

State Standards

These standards are cited for the author's home state of Louisiana. They were accessed through *Education World* (HYPERLINK "<http://www.educationworld.com/standards/state/index.shtml>" <http://www.educationworld.com/standards/state/index.shtml>) These standards are a sampling of some of the standards addressed by the activities in this guide. Standards for all 50 states may be accessed from *Education World*, or from respective state departments of education.

Visual Art Standard – ART Activity

Standard: Students develop creative expression through the application of knowledge, ideas, communication skills, organizational abilities, and imagination.

Benchmarks – Grades 5 - 8

VA-CE-M1 Demonstrate art methods and techniques in visual representations based on research of imagery; (2, 3)

VA-CE-M2 Select and apply media, techniques, and technology to visually express and communicate; (1, 2, 3)

VA-CE-M3 Use the elements and principles of design and art vocabulary to visually express and describe individual ideas; (1, 2)

Language Arts Standards – various activities

Standard 5 Students locate, select, and synthesize information from a variety of texts, media, references, and technological sources to acquire and communicate knowledge.

Benchmarks – Grades 5-8

ELA-5-M1: Identifying and using organizational features of printed text, other media, and electronic information (e.g., microprint, CD-ROM, e-mail)* (1, 3, 4)

ELA-5-M2: Integrating information sources* (1, 3, 4, 5)

ELA-5-M3: Locating, gathering, and selecting information using formal outlining, paraphrasing, interviewing, and surveying to produce documented texts and graphics* (1, 3, 4)

ELA-5-M4: Using available technology to produce, revise, and publish a variety of works (e.g., documented research reports, investigative reports, annotated bibliographies)* (1, 3, 4)

ELA-5-M5: Citing references using various formats (e.g., endnotes, bibliography)* (1, 4)

ELA-5-M6: Identifying and interpreting graphic organizers (e.g., flowcharts, timelines, tree diagrams)* (1, 2, 3, 4, 5)

Foreign Language Standard – Foreign Language Activity

COMMUNICATION STRAND STANDARD 1

Interpretive Mode: Students understand and interpret spoken and written communication in the target language on a variety of topics.

BEGINNING STAGE BENCHMARKS - Grades 4-5

CM-1-B4 identifying familiar people, events, places, animals, and things based on oral and/or simple written descriptions; (1)

Science Standards – Science Activities

BENCHMARKS Grades 5-8

A. THE ABILITIES NECESSARY TO DO SCIENTIFIC INQUIRY

SI-M-A2 designing and conducting a scientific investigation; (1, 2, 3, 4, 5)

SI-M-A4 developing descriptions, explanations, and graphs using data; (1, 2, 3, 4)

SI-M-A7 communicating scientific procedures, information, and explanations; (1, 3)

SI-M-A8 utilizing safety procedures during scientific investigations. (3, 5)

Author Bio

Donna St. Cyr is a children's author, school librarian, and former science teacher living in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. She has written stories and articles for *Highlights*, *Cricket*, *Boys' Life*, *Hopscotch*, *Boys' Quest* and other children's magazines. She holds a BS in Zoology and an MLIS in Library Science, both from Louisiana State University. *Secrets of the Cheese Syndicate* is her first novel.

Secrets of the Cheese Syndicate by Donna St. Cyr
Books

Blooming Tree Press/CBAY

Teacher Guide