

MICHAEL P. SPRADLIN

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The Youngest Templar *Orphan of Destiny*

BOOK THREE

by Michael P. Spradlin

About the book:

Tristan and his companions—the fiery archer Robard Hode and the assassin maid Maryam—have escaped to England. But tragedy has occurred at Tristan's beloved abbey while he was away, and Robard's home in Sherwood Forest suffers under the rule of the Sheriff of Nottingham. Many obstacles still prevent them from delivering the Holy Grail into safe hands. Tristan must defeat the evil Sir Hugh in one final battle. And he must learn the secret of his birth, a secret Richard the Lionheart and Eleanor of Aquitaine are willing to kill to protect!



About the author:

In addition to penning the international bestselling *Youngest Templar* trilogy, Michael P. Spradlin is also the author of the *Spy Goddess* novels and several picture books. He lives for the day he can become a full-time writer. He was born in a small town in Michigan and grew up with a healthy and natural suspicion of all Hoosiers and Buckeyes. When he is not writing, he travels the world in his fully automated yacht, aboard which he enjoys cooking, water skiing and plotting Total World Domination. He's just kidding about that last part. He really doesn't enjoy water skiing.

Praise for the series:

"This is a winner!"- *KLIATT*, starred review

"[A] stirring saga" – *Booklist*

"[M]emorable." – *The Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books*

"Brilliant" and "Riveting" – *School Library Journal*

Author Interview:

1. **Did you map out the entire series from the beginning or did fate play a hand in any of the writing?**

I use what I call the "Umbrella Approach." I sort of know where the story starts and ends in a general way, but I then let the characters take over and tell the rest. It's much better for me that way. A perfect example is the character Robard. Originally, I thought he and Tristan would meet briefly in Book One, then reconnect in Book Three. But the moment he stepped on the page he was so forceful he demanded to stay. And the series is so much the richer for it.

2. **What have you learned about writing while creating this riveting series?**

I hope I've improved as a writer from book to book and as always I've discovered that my characters are always oh so much smarter than me.

3. **What can your fans look forward to next?**

My next book is called *The Raven's Shadow*. It takes place in Washington DC in 1825 and features a teenage Charles Darwin, Edgar Allan Poe and Abraham Lincoln who must team up and save the world from an ancient evil the world will someday come to know as Count Dracula.

Pre-reading:

Brainstorm a list of everything a reader should know or remember about Tristan, our young hero, and his companions Robard and Maryam. At the end of each chapter make a prediction about what you think will happen next and why.

DISCUSSION GUIDE:

1. Who is speaking in the prologue? Why is he struggling? What are his problems and conflicts?

2. In the opening chapter Maryam is set to hang in the gallows. What happens? Why does the Queen offer a threat to Tristan? Do you believe her?
3. What happens to Tristan in Calais? Have you ever suffered a serious injury? What can be the effects? How does it change their journey throughout the novel?
4. In chapter three Tristan is delirious with pain and fever. What images appear to him? Who are Tristan's enemies? Why do they want to stop him?
5. Where do the heroes finally land? Why does this make Robard so happy? Where are you happiest?
6. How has Dover changed from when Tristan was there last? What do you think happened to this thriving town?
7. What does Robard believe Tristan should do with Sir Hugh? Do you think his opinion is justified or not?
8. The troupe generally follows Tristan's decisions. Would you? With whom do you agree with in the story: Tristan? Robard? or Maryam? In a battle whom would you want by your side? Why?
9. How is Tristan able to turn the people of Dover against Sir Hugh and company?
10. What would Sir Hugh do with the Holy Grail? In modern times, is there an equivalent to this type of power? How is power wielded between nations and factions in modern countries?
11. Who is Little John? How do they come across him? Why does Robard object to him at first? How does he gain his trust and prove his worth?
12. Maryam tells Tristan concerning his feelings for Celia, " You don't choose love, Tristan, love chooses you." (p.91) Do you agree? Does it seem that who we end up loving is somehow not quite under our own control?
13. Describe what Tristan discovers at St. Albans. What and who are left? What does he learn of his heritage?

14. Does he believe he could actually be from nobility? Who would be his father? How does this explain some of the troubles he has faced?
15. Describe the long journey to Robard's home. How does it compare to a long journey you've taken?
16. Explain why the trio makes friends with bandits. How did they turn to this lifestyle? What would it take to turn you into a bandit?
17. How is Robard's early life not exactly as he described it? What has happened in his absence? Would you react more like Tristan or Robard? Why does Robard knock Tristan unconscious?
18. How does Tristan handle the situation with Shire Reeve? What does Robard do for his countrymen? How does this gain their loyalty? What happens in Calais? Who does Sir Hugh have on his side? How does Tristan try to drive a wedge between them? Who comes to their rescue in the keep?
19. How does Robard decide is the only long-term way to defeat the Shire and others like him? How does he ask for Tristan's help? Predict how he will help others in the future (from what you have read in other books or films)?
20. List the steps Robard and Tristan design to defeat the Shire Reeve in the forest. What do they use to defeat them? Why do the people of Sherwood come to fight?
21. Why do Robard and Maryam insist on accompanying Tristan all the way to Rosslyn? To whom would you make this type of oath, if anyone? Why?
22. Describe their journey to Scotland. What does Robard discover after his tutoring? How do the locals treat them?
23. When they finally reach Rosslyn, what discoveries does Tristan make? Why must he finally face Sir Hugh?
24. Describe the final battle between Tristan and Sir Hugh. How does he deal with his nemesis? In the end, is his quest successful?

25. Discuss the ending: what are the heroes plans for the future? Where does Tristan decide he must go? Predict what he will be doing in five years.

PROJECTS:

Language Arts:

Writing:

Write three letters as you read the novel. One as Tristan (to Celia, perhaps?) as Robard (to his mother?) and Maryam (to a sister or cousin at home?) about what they have seen and discovered.

Reading:

Good readers always make predictions as they read about what they think will happen next. Predictions are not just grabbed from the air but are based on what they know about story, clues from the book itself, and what they know about the genre they're reading. At the end of each chapter, write a prediction based on the evidence. Use page numbers to support your predictions. Remember: predictions are often wrong! Readers love to be wrong!

Art:

Design a movie poster, which is based off the series.

-or-

Draw, paint or sculpt your favorite scene from this novel or the other two Templar books.

History:

Research one of these topics from the novel: English history, Robin Hood, The Knights Templar, Scottish clan history, Holy Grail, the crusades, medicine in the middle ages, etc.

This guide was created by [Tracie Vaughn Zimmer](#), a reading specialist and children's author. Visit her website to find hundreds of guides to children's literature.