

T. A. BARRON

DISCUSSION GUIDE

The Merlin Effect

One of the *Adventures of Kate*

ISBN: 0-441-01222-1

About the Book

“Kate Gordon travels to a remote lagoon in Baja California, hoping to help her father discover a sunken Spanish galleon that disappeared centuries ago.

In time, she learns that the ship may have carried something far more valuable than all the gold and silver aboard — a mysterious drinking horn out of Arthurian legend, which may have led to the demise of the wizard Merlin.”

Reviews

“Here is a story to celebrate.”

— *Madeleine L’Engle*

“T. A. Barron keeps adding exciting dimensions of creativity and imagination to his work.”

— *Lloyd Alexander*

“The greatest wizard of them all continues to inspire.”

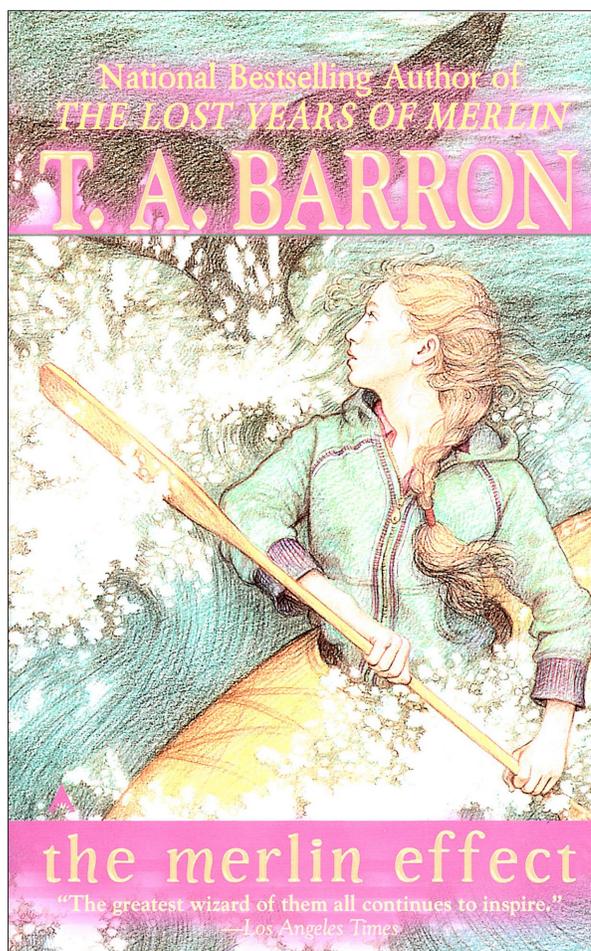
— *Los Angeles Times*

Discuss

All page and chapter references used in this guide are from the 2004 Ace edition of *The Merlin Effect*.

1. Prior to reading *The Merlin Effect*, ask students to discuss which of the following is the most important to them:
 - The opportunity to make choices
 - The need to “see” in order to “believe”
 - The need to achieve perfection
 - The importance of power

After finishing the book, revisit these statements with students to see if their opinions have changed.



DISCUSSION GUIDE, CONTINUED

- Remind students that one aspect of good fantasy is that the story is grounded in reality, moves to fantasy, and then returns to reality. Ask students to discuss how this progression is shown in this book. Why does this progression create a more believable fantasy?
- In Chapter VIII (page 81), Kate suggests calling Isabella's theory about the aging process the Merlin Effect. While this explains one meaning of the book's title, ask students if there are other meanings. What is Merlin's effect on Kate at the beginning and end of the book? What is Merlin's effect on Jim, Terry, and Isabella? Is Merlin's effect positive or negative? How does Merlin affect unseen characters such as Kate's mother?
- Merlin's Horn is the thirteenth treasure. Thirteen has long been believed to be an unlucky number. Have students debate whether or not this magical horn is lucky or unlucky. Does it create or destroy?
- Ask students to reread the description of the twelve treasures Emrys created (Chapter IV, page 31). Then ask students if they could create twelve "perfect" treasures what would they be? What do Emrys' treasures tell readers about Emrys? What do the students' treasures tell students about themselves?
- Which pair of characters show the most similarity? The least?
 - Kate and Merlin
 - Merlin and Emrys
 - Emrys and Jim
 - Jim and Terry
 - Terry and Kate
- Remind students that setting can help reveal a story's theme. The majority of the action in *The Merlin Effect* takes place underwater, blending ancient and modern time. Question students as to why the ocean is such a good setting for this story. Would a setting in a mountain cave have been as effective?
- In her book *Thursday's Child*, Sheila Egoff defines fantasy as "a literature of paradox. It is the discovery of the real within the unreal, the credible within the incredible, the believable within the unbelievable." What are the real, the credible, the believable elements in *The Merlin Effect*? Terry has a difficult time finding the real within the unreal. Why is Terry's skepticism important in this fantasy?
- In Chapter VII (page 68), Kate tells Isabella that she would enjoy "creating something." By the end of the book, she holds the Horn and, with it, the power to create. Yet she returns the Horn to the ocean. Have students talk about this choice. What has Kate decided about creation? At the end of the book, has she accomplished her goal of "creating something?"
- Have students discuss how choice, power, and creation affect Merlin, Kate, Nimue, and Terry. Do these three words mean the same to each character? Is this book more about the power of choice or the power of creation? Are the two powers somehow related?
- In meeting Merlin, Kate has become a part of the legends surrounding him, the Horn, and the search for the Horn. Put students in groups and have them write a ballad that might be sung in centuries to come about Kate and Merlin's Horn.

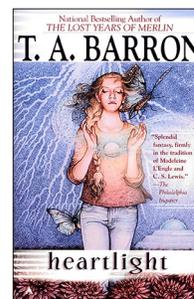
Other Adventures of Kate Books



The Ancient One



Heartlight Saga
Combined
Edition



Heartlight