

## Paladero: The Riders of Thunder Realm Teachers Notes

Written by Steven Lochran

Published by Hardie Grant Egmont, July 2016

### SUMMARY

**Paladero: The Riders of Thunder Realm** is set in the land of Thunder Realm, where knights known as paladeros herd dinosaurs as livestock during peace-time, and take up arms during war.

The hero is 15-year-old orphan Joss, a young apprentice who has always wanted to become a paladero. In order to prove himself worthy, he must go on The Way – a treacherous journey through the kingdom to retrieve a rare Questing Egg.

Three other apprentices – made his brethren in a bonding ceremony – go with Joss on the quest. They must face off against witches, bloodthirsty monsters on the way. But even more challenging, they must face their own shadows and monsters, secrets and suspicions, which keep them apart. And they won't live through the quest if they're divided.

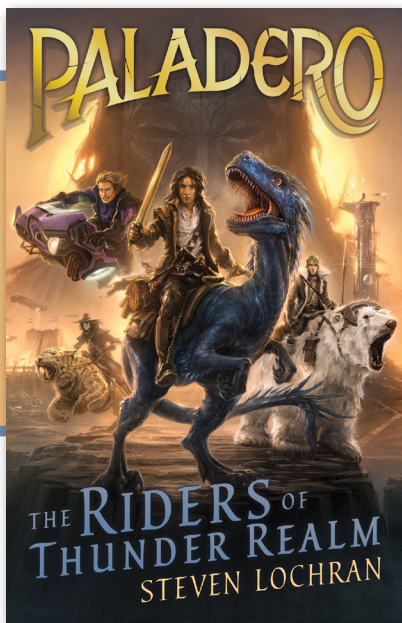
The characters in *Paladero* are brilliantly crafted and provide a wonderful opportunity for class study. Steven Lochran has created a fantasy world where the characters break with gender stereotypes. Women and men are heroes and brethren. Gender is more complicated than anatomy. The interpersonal relationships are complex, divides created by socio-economic backgrounds and cultures.

The world of *Paladero* is a spectacular mix. Dinosaurs coexist with jetcars and illuminators. Lost civilisations litter a landscape that feels both ancient and futuristic. The characters face dilemmas such as the treatment of animals, the value of tradition when it threatens endangered species, the importance of a person's past in shaping their future. The scope of the world – history on a huge stage – gives the reader a chance to see how humans can impact their world, from dinosaur to jetcar. It makes for a great discussion on genre too – and the fun that students can have mixing elements from fiction and creating something new.

Steven Lochran's language allows students to see how ideas can be sharpened through careful choice of verbs, how humour can be used to lighten tension, and to endear the reader to characters. Vocabulary is accessible but allows for student extension.

*Paladero* could be studied in combination with creation myths, ghost stories, fairytales, fantasy, science fiction and myths. Joss' lost home has parallels with the lost city of Atlantis.

There's a lot of fun to be had from this novel in the classroom and a wealth of ideas for class study.



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### About the Author

Steven Lochran spent his childhood writing stories and now he does it for a living. He graduated from Queensland University of Technology with a Bachelor's degree in Creative Writing, and has worked as a film critic, projectionist and DJ. He's spent the last decade in the publishing industry surrounded by books, as well as writing the **VANGUARD PRIME** and **PALADERO** series. He lives in Melbourne with his wife and two spoilt cats.

## PRE-READING ACTIVITIES

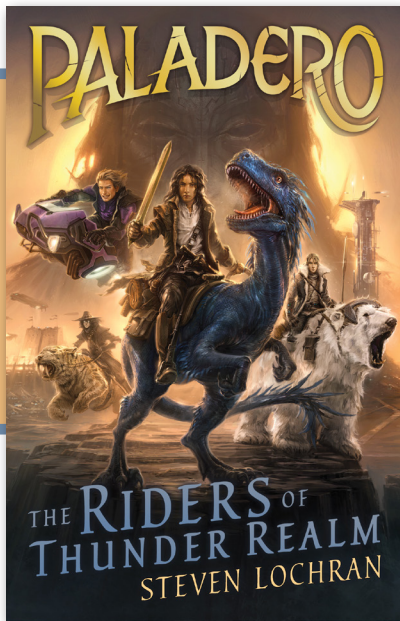
### Cover

Study the cover of *Paladero*.

- Make a list of the animals and objects that you see. In what historical period do you think this novel is set? Give reasons for your answer.
- As a class, discuss what you like about the cover.
- How has the designer created excitement through the layout? (Consider things such as the open mouths of the animals, the focus on the sword, the face in the background and the typography.)

The positioning of characters on the cover can show their importance in the narrative.

- Based on the cover, who would you say is the main character?
- Would you say the characters are close to each other? Why or why not?
- What do the character's clothes show about their differences?
- What might the characters have in common?
- How does the stare of the character on the dinosaur make you feel? (Teachers might talk about connection through the eye contact. The other characters are in the distance, which can make them seem isolated.)



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### Guide to Thunder Realm

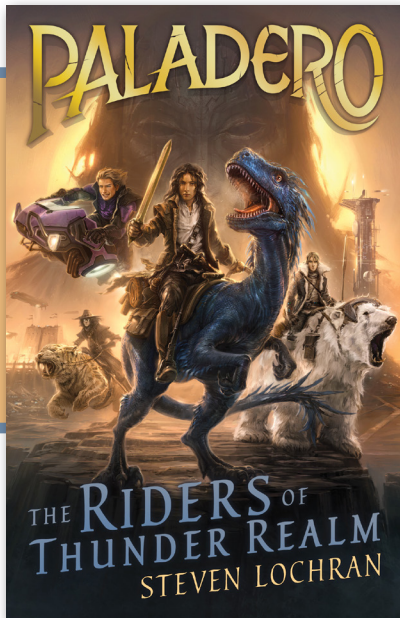
The Thunder Realm is a fantastically strange and dangerous world. As you read, compile a guide for newcomers. Include things such as:

- Dinosaurs they are likely to meet (include pictures and descriptions)
- Threats they are likely to encounter
- People who might help them
- Rules they should know
- Maps that might be of use
- A cover that conveys the importance of the guide

### Activities

Paladero is set in a world very different to ours, but the novel raises interesting questions. Complete the following activities before you begin.

- Do you believe people make their own luck? Explain your answer.
- Do you believe in ghosts?
- What is the most important quality in a friend?
- Write a paragraph about a friend who's important to you.
- Make a list of some things you would like to do, but are prohibited from doing because you're too young. Share your list with a partner. Discuss which restrictions are fair and which are unfair.
- The novel explores the importance of tradition. As a class, discuss some traditions that exist in your families.



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### READING ACTIVITIES

#### COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

Answer the questions below as you read. Include the meanings of words in the Paladero Vocabulary section in your Guide to the Thunder Realm.

#### Chapter One – A Violent and Monstrous End

**General vocabulary:** bucked, craggy/craggier, bolas.

**Paladero vocabulary:** Thunder Lizard, the Sleeping King.

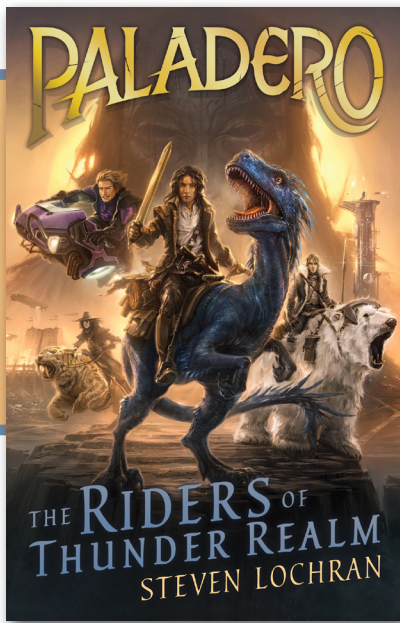
- What makes the opening sentence so good?
- What things do we learn about Joss and Azof in this chapter?
- What questions do you have after reading this chapter?

#### Chapter Two – A Will of Stone

**General vocabulary:** pox, shirking, gorget, predicament, ornate, calamity, shrewd, retractable.

**Paladero vocabulary:** prentice, song sword, paladeros, Champion's Blade, Blade Keeper, a skyborne, humming blade.

- What's wrong with Sur Wallace?
- Draw or describe Sur Verity's physical appearance. How do you think she lost one eye?
- Choose three words to describe Sur Verity.
- Why does Joss run the Gauntlet?
- We learn something important about Joss' past in this chapter on page 11. What is it?
- Who is Edgar and what do we learn about him?



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### Chapter Three – A Stroke of Luck

**General vocabulary:** lumbering, gait, profound, gawk, herbivores, carnivores, plumage, rouse, cybernetic, insignia, emblem, intoned, embellishment, marauding.

**Paladero vocabulary:** illuminators, illumcameras, jetcarts, Thunder Realm, Ai, mechanoid butlers, Illustra, waterskin, the regent, the Gauntlet.

- How does Joss manage to impersonate Sur Wallace?
- Why is Joss wary of rich people?
- Describe or draw Azof.
- Why does Joss have a thunder lizard to call his own?
- What's the aim of the Gauntlet?

### Chapter Four – A Ring of Fire

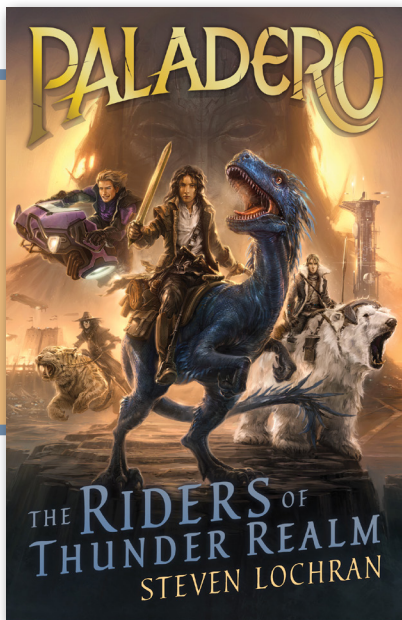
**General vocabulary:** visage, laxatives, perilous, puny.

- How long has the Tournament been held?
- What event in Joss' past sparked his dreams of glory?
- In what way is Joss unusual?

### Chapter Five – A Cry of Terror

**General vocabulary:** unnervingly, emanated, scrutinized, vestments, hunkered, adulation, carbuncle, perished, charade.

- What happened to Sur Tiberius?
- How does Joss save Sur Luther Zadkille?
- What level of sympathy do you have for the King of the Thunder Lizards? Do you think sports that involve animals like this are wrong? Why or why not?
- How does Merryll Merl's commentary build suspense?
- Describe Sur Luther in three words.



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### Chapter Six – An Imposter Revealed

**General vocabulary:** ferocity, taut, imposter, fretting, paternal.

**Paladero vocabulary:** Mother Mab.

- Who is Regent Augustus Greel?
- What's Sur Verity's reaction to Joss' actions?
- Something terrible about Joss' past is hinted at in this chapter. What is it?

### Chapter Seven – A Sky Full of Stars

**General vocabulary:** subdued, ruminated, lolling, brusque, prudent, insolence, claustrophobic.

**Paladero vocabulary:** cargo jets, tapering, pommel, Zadkille Station, fieldservs.

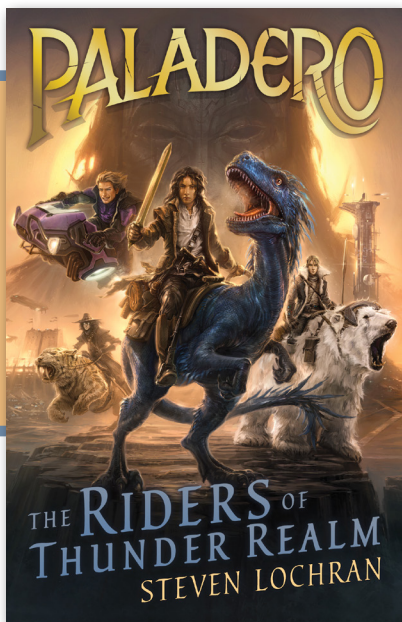
- Why was Zadkille Station's supremacy undeniable?
- Why might the Round Shield Ranch have persisted in the traditions of the paladero? Why do particular traditions endure?
- What kind of a friend is Edgar?
- What township did Joss grow up in?
- Describe Round Shield Ranch.
- What would Joss' life be like if he became a paladero?
- What's unsettling about Lord Malkus' appearance?

### Chapter Eight – A Promise Kept

**General vocabulary:** cyborg, ire, articulating, flagrant, insubordination, accolades, effigies, pious, obscured, deity, gawping, brethren.

**Paladero vocabulary:** questing egg, hellwater, the Way.

- Describe Lord Malkus.
- Why is a Questing Egg important? List some other fairytales that involve eggs.
- Why doesn't Joss touch the Sleeping King's statue for luck?
- What happened to the island city of Daheed?
- What role has Lord Malkus playing in Joss' life?
- What is the importance of being sent on the Way?



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### Chapter Nine – A Town Called Resilient

**General vocabulary:** impending, bode, endorsed, traversed, hubris, talisman.

**Paladero vocabulary:** microraptors, spriggans, The Resilient, mechanoid spider.

- What went wrong with the hovertrain?
- Why did they call the hovertrain the Resilient?
- What was the lesson taken from the accident?
- How does the Champion's Blade help Joss?

### Chapter Ten – The World at their Feet

**General vocabulary:** negotiating, corrosive, succumb, discreetly, apex, dour.

**Paladero vocabulary:** shanty village.

- What do we learn about Joss' father in this chapter?
- Who lives in the shanty village?
- What does Joss' attitude towards animals show about him?

### Chapter Eleven – A Vision of Glory

**General vocabulary:** disorientated, glyphs, mystics, exotic, guttural, orb, predatory, billowed.

**Paladero vocabulary:** the Constellation Key.

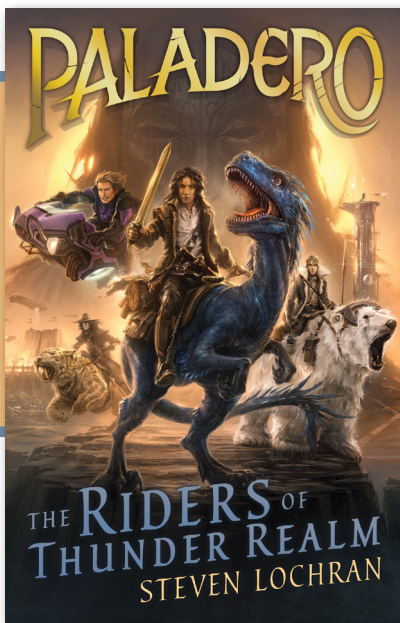
- Who is Thrall and what does he want from Joss?
- What does Thrall offer Joss?
- If Thrall appeared to you, and offered you what you desperately desire, what would it be?
- Who is the Stitched Witch?
- What is the Constellation Key?

### Chapter Twelve – A Waking Dream

**General vocabulary:** surreal, corroded, mired, naïve, garb, courtesans, nostalgia, gumption, bewilderment, bandolier.

**Paladero vocabulary:** service mechanoids, sky pirates, aeronauts, the Nameless, zamaraqs.

- What dangers are involved in the Way?
- What makes the difference between life and death on the Way?
- What do you learn about the Stitched Witch?
- Describe each of Joss' brethren. Explain how he feels about each one.



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### Chapter Thirteen – A Thousand Eyes

**General vocabulary:** ascension, relish, irrational, fates, entwined, disdain.

**Paladero vocabulary:** mounts, brethren.

- Name Joss' brethren.
- Why is there so much emphasis on tradition?
- What is the binding ceremony?
- What is their task?
- What worries Joss in this chapter?
- What are the mounts? Describe the mounts of Zeke, Hero and Drake.

### Chapter Fourteen – A Meeting in Darkness

**General vocabulary:** luminous, regal, substance, vex.

- How would you describe the relationship between Thrall and the Stitched Witch? (Do you think he likes her? Fears her? Hates her?)

### Chapter Fifteen – A Shadow of Pain

**General vocabulary:** muster, corralled, menagerie, dire, amiable, terrain, infirmary, scrutinising, catamarans, descended, protruding.

**Paladero vocabulary:** a Scryer, humming knife, The Barbed Forest.

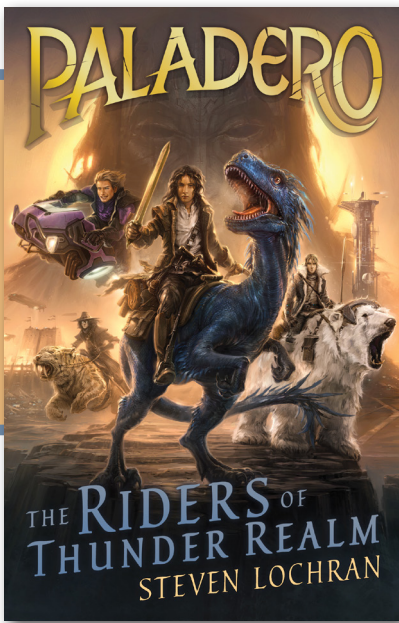
- What things do the brethren disagree on during this chapter?
- What more do we learn about Daheed in this chapter? How is it different to Orphan House?
- Describe the Barbed Forest in three words.

### Chapter Sixteen – A Stampede of Spiny Limbs

**General Vocabulary:** carapaces, segmented, scythes, mandibles, bulbous, kindling, ravenous, convulsed.

- What saves them in this chapter?





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### Chapter Seventeen – A Secret in the Direst of Times

**General vocabulary:** fae, dense, peril, unabashed, withering, festooned, pretense.

- Why does Hero like Bittersweet?
- What is Ganymede Drake's secret?

### Chapter Eighteen – A Swarm of Conflicting Thoughts

**General vocabulary:** revelation, ricocheted, pallor.

- How does Joss feel about Drake's secret?
- Drake's secret isn't about shame. It's not about a mask. How does Drake explain it?

### Chapter Nineteen – A Moth and a Monster

**General vocabulary:** recuperating, incessant, eluded, remuneration, imminent, sylphs, selkies, descended.

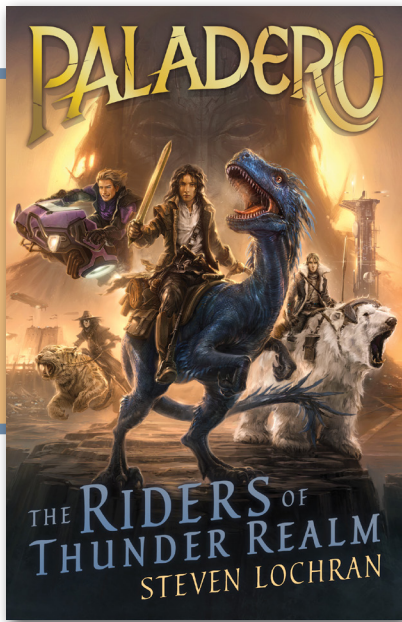
**Paladero vocabulary:** neutraliser.

- What is life like on Zadkille Station?
- Why might Zeke avoid the subject of his family?
- What deal do Zeke and Joss make?
- Do you trust Zeke? Why or why not?
- How did the Spriggan end up in a new world?
- 'Everyone has a shadow' Bittersweet tells them. What are the shadows of each of the brethren? What is her advice regarding shadows?

### Chapter Twenty – A Rider in Blood-Red Armour

**General vocabulary:** exert, illiterate, foliage, effusive, wry, bisected, leveling, jaundiced.

- Where are they headed? What things does Bittersweet tell them they will find there?
- What trouble do they meet in this chapter?



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### Chapter Twenty-One – A Furious Blaze

**General vocabulary:** encrusted, barter, lackeys, futile.

**Paladero vocabulary:** illumisphere.

- Why does Joss give the Grim Rider the key?
- What else does the Grim Rider take?
- What's the effect of calling Hero 'sweetheart'? How does it make her seem like less of a threat?

### Chapter Twenty-Two – A Winding Serpent's Tail

**General vocabulary:** sentiment, palatial, tessellating, imperious, serrated, obscured.

**Paladero vocabulary:** weredragons.

- What does Joss reveal and discover in this chapter?
- What is the plan to get the key and blade back?
- What do we learn about weredragons?
- Joss isn't certain who he can trust. Who do you trust out of Hero, Drake and Zeke?

### Chapter Twenty-Three – A Raptor on the Hunt

**General vocabulary:** subterranean, infinite, lavish, magma, agile, frenzy, catacombs, scion, pivoted.

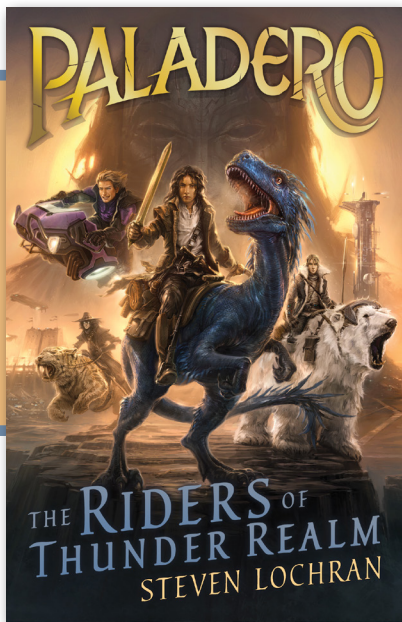
**Paladero vocabulary:** the Serpentrain.

- What is the Serpentrain?
- Why is it an unseen wonder for the paladero folk?
- What do they want from Crimson?

### Chapter Twenty-Four – A Black Archway

**General vocabulary:** lanky, concealed, fume, vagrants, dank, trinket.

- What does the word 'poached' mean?
- Why is Joss so angry with the man in a canvas robes?
- Why won't Crimson go all the way to the undercity with them?



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### Chapter Twenty-Five – A Living Shadow

**General vocabulary:** femurs, wraiths, debris, entombed, baroque.

- What do you think is the most exciting part of this chapter?

### Chapter Twenty-Six – A Tiny Glimpse of Fury

**General vocabulary:** rouse, misappropriated, rectify.

- How does Thrall summon the witch?
- Do you think Thrall will remain obedient to the witch for much longer? Give a reason for your answer.

### Chapter Twenty-Seven – An End to Civility

**General vocabulary:** cleaved, resolute, garb, pervasive, speculate, albino, enigmatic.

**Paladero vocabulary:** illumivox machine.

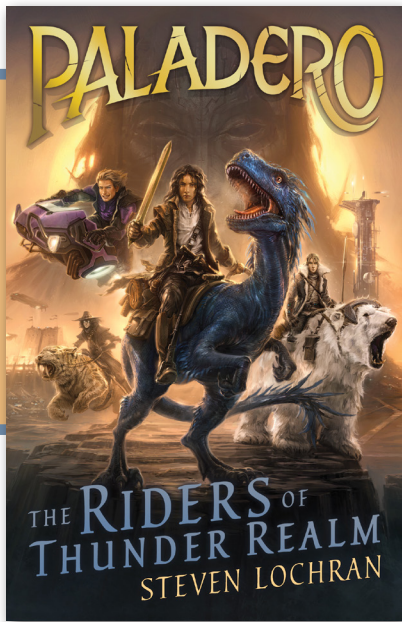
- Where are they headed in this chapter?
- Where does Joss hide the key and who sees him do it?
- How do the brethren become closer in this chapter?
- Does Joss really have to feel so alone? What other options does he have?

### Chapter Twenty-Eight – A Forgotten Order

**General vocabulary:** traversing, fugitive, relics, apparition, cronies, pacify, begrudgingly, camaraderie, serenity, arbitration, conspiracy, placid, inscrutable, sabotage.

**Paladero vocabulary:** Kahnrani, Quetzalcoatlus.

- What happened at The Forgotten Order?
- What does The Forgotten Order's landscape look like?
- Who are the restless dead?
- Why do Hero and Zeke in this chapter? Whose opinion would you trust?
- What does a Questing Bird look like?
- What do we learn about Zeke's family in this chapter? What do we learn about Hero's?
- How does Joss show his strength in this chapter?



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### Chapter Twenty-Nine – A Scratch or Two

**General vocabulary:** debris, smithereens, consolatory, colossal.

- What is stampeding towards them?
- How does Zeke think he can stop them?
- Do you think Zeke has betrayed them? Why or why not?

### Chapter Thirty – A City of Ghosts

**General vocabulary:** fortifications, salvaged, muted, belfry.

- What does Joss realise about Drake in this chapter?
- In what way is there something wrong about the place?
- Joss still has faith in Zeke. Do you?

### Chapter Thirty-One – An Impossible Creature

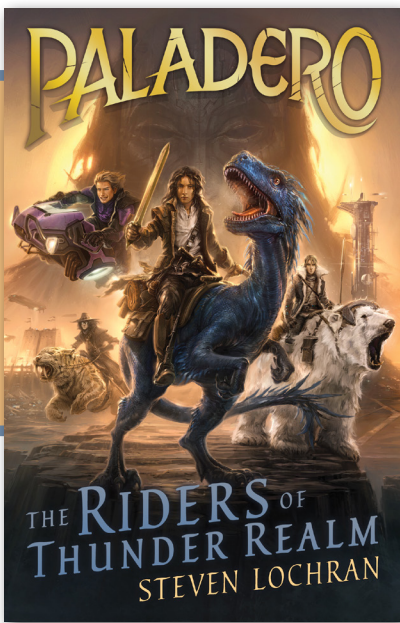
**General vocabulary:** legacy, runt, sabotage.

- What do we find out about Zeke? What are his motives? What is your opinion of him?
- What will happen if Zeke throws the eggs and destroys the Questing Bird?

### Chapter Thirty-Two – A Mortal Witness

**General vocabulary:** concoction, ritual, tarnished, abomination, tendons, reverberating.

- Where does Joss wake?
- Why is the Skeletal Dragon an abomination?
- What do you find most terrifying about the Stitched Witch?
- What is the true nature of the sword?
- Zeke has done something truly terrifying. Do you have sympathy for him? Why or why not?



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### Chapter Thirty-Four – A Crash and a Cry of Pain

**General vocabulary:** adhering, winced, severity, brandishing.

- If you were Zeke, what would you do in this chapter?
- Predict what you think will happen in the next chapter.

### Chapter Thirty-Five – A Last Survivor

**General vocabulary:** debris, bile, recoiled, fanatic, ravenous.

- Were your predictions correct?
- What happens to Thrall?

### Chapter Thirty-Six – A Family Reunion

**General vocabulary:** regal, gingerly, melancholy, monolith.

- Zeke wants to come back with them. Should he be allowed?
- Why can't Joss, Hero and Drake take the eggs back with them as proof that they completed their quest?

### Chapter Thirty-Seven – A Journey Just Begun

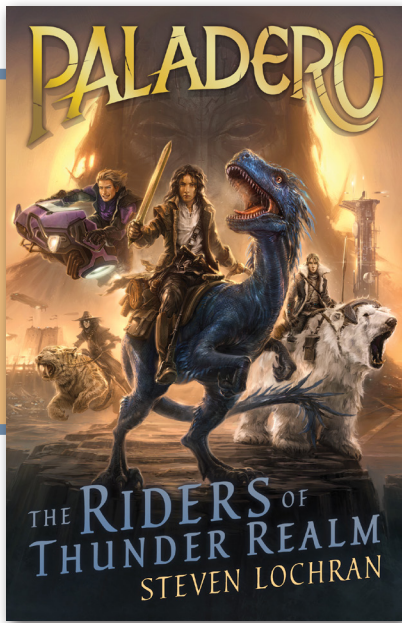
**General vocabulary:** disengaged, vista, stoic, traversed.

- What argument does Joss put to the Grandmaster about tradition?
- How are the three truly brethren now?
- What great challenge lies ahead for Joss, Hero and Drake?

### Epilogue

**General vocabulary:** emissaries, legions.

- Did you predict Thrall's actions?



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## ACTIVITIES

### Novel Map

On page 99, Joss sees a map of Ai spread out on the table before him. Using information given in the novel, and your imagination, draw a map of Ai for your Guide to Thunder Realm.

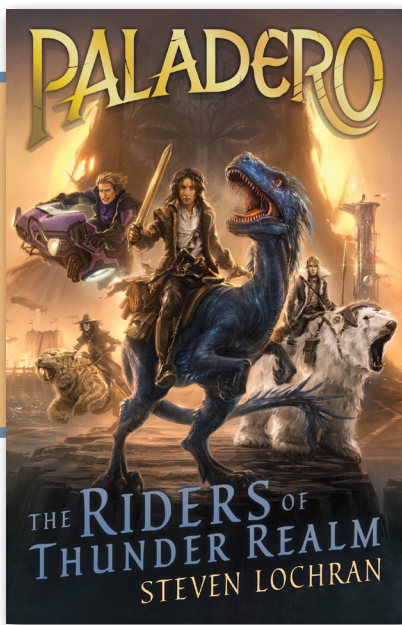
Mark on your map what you see as the most important events of the novel. Discuss with the class why you have chosen to highlight these events. Do they show something about a particular character? Do they show change in a character? Do they reveal a key theme? Are they important to maintain suspense and keep your interest piqued?

### Characters

Choose two of the characters in the novel and complete the following chart.

Joss	
Physical appearance	
Personality	
Background	
Positive qualities	
Negative qualities	
Things I have in common with this character	

What do you have in common with Zeke?



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### Themes

Steven Lochran explores many powerful themes in this novel. In pairs, choose one theme and find two quotes and one example from the text to illustrate it. Share your findings with the class.

- The importance of friendship
- Protection of the environment
- Protection of animals
- Being true to yourself/identify
- Choice
- Courage
- Survival
- Guilt/redemption
- Conflict
- Importance of tradition versus the impact of tradition
- Grief/loss
- Impact of poverty

### Language

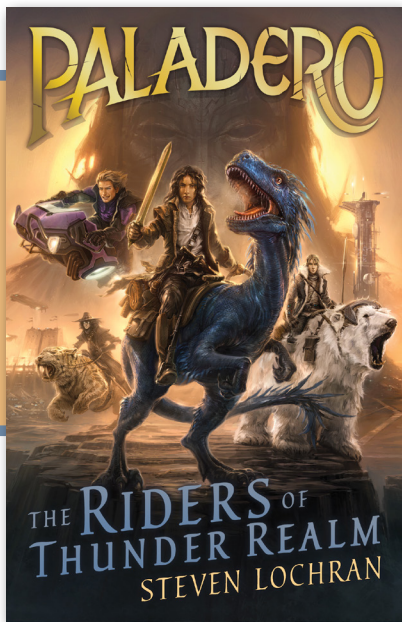
Steven Lochran describes people and places vividly. Choose your favourite description in the novel and read it to a friend. Note any of the following language markers in your chosen description:

- Simile
- Alliteration
- Appeals to the senses (sight, hearing, taste, touch and smell)
- Humour
- Repetition

The novel is high on suspense. How does the writer create this feeling? Look at:

- The titles of chapters
- The last sentence of chapters
- The length of chapters
- The length of sentences
- The detail included

Write a suspenseful paragraph about an encounter with a dangerous creature. Use some of the techniques that the author has used to bring the paragraph alive. Remember to choose an exciting title!



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### EXTENDED ACTIVITIES

#### Lost Civilisations

- Make a list of the civilisations that have disappeared or relocated in *Paladero*.
- Re-read Bittersweet's explanation of what happened to her people. Can you make a connection between the spriggans and other cultures? (Teachers might consider Indigenous Australians, Native Americans, for example.) Discuss this as a class.
- Discuss the factors that exist in our world that can put a culture or world at risk.
- Discuss the factors that can put a species at risk. In the novel, it was tradition that threatened the Questioning Bird. Is this the case for our society? What traditions or set behaviours are putting our world at risk?

#### Myth and Fairytale

The author borrows elements from myths and fairytales to enrich his work. Below are just some of the references to myth. Find some more in the novel and add to the list.

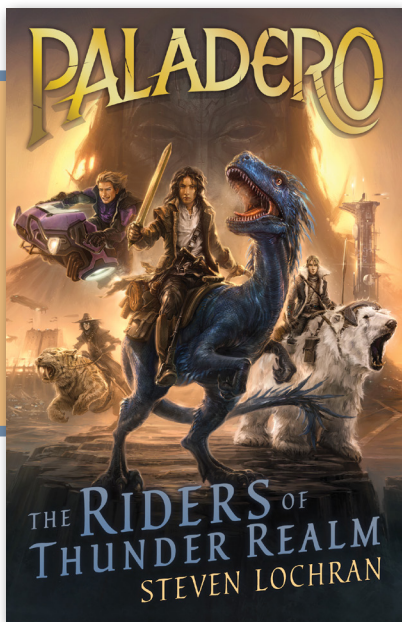
- The Lost City of Atlantis
- The phoenix

#### Unexpected Combinations

*Paladero* tells the story of cowboy knights, an unexpected combination. The name of the novel comes from an unexpected combination.

- What is the origin of the word 'paladin'? What does it mean?
- What is the Spanish word for cowboy?
- How do you think the author might have come up with the name?
- The author has not only drawn from myth and fairytale, but other genres too. In pairs, make a list of other genres that appear in the novel. Share your answers with the class.
- Can you think of any other films or books that cross genres and time periods like this? What are they?
- As a class, brainstorm some interesting possibilities for the mixing of genres





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Write a short story where you combine different elements from different genres. You might combine World War II with cowboys. You might write a modern day fairytale. You might pit dinosaurs against humans, as the author of Paladero has done.

OR

Use Steven Lochran's world and characters and write an extra chapter. It might be a chapter that happens in the middle of the novel, or the first chapter of the next novel in the series.

### Debate/Discussion Topics

Tradition is never valuable. Discuss.

The highest priority in our society must be the environment.

Hurting animals is never okay.

Class and gender should not define us. Discuss in relation to the novel.

Friendship is one of the hardest things in the world to do well, but the most important.

### Comparison Texts

The following fiction titles may provide some opportunities for comparison studies. Suggested thematic comparisons are provided in brackets.

#### Books

Percy Jackson series, Rick Riordan, Miramax Books (myths, adventure stories)

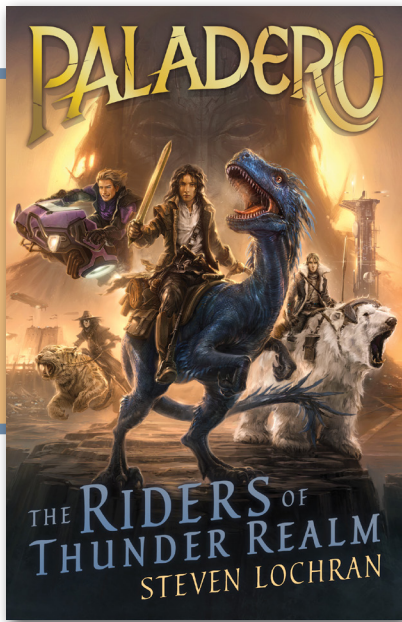
*Fairy Tales (Penguin Classics Deluxe Edition)*, Hans Christian Anderson, Penguin Group USA, 2011 (fairytale elements)

*Frankenstein* by Mary Shelley, Penguin, 2003 (mixing of genres – romance and gothic, myth, ethics)

*The Moonshadow Series* by Simon Higgins, Random House, 2011 (friendship, loyalty, adventure)

*The Summoner Trilogy* by Taran Matharu, Abrams books for Younger Readers, 2015 (orphans, adventure, friendship, bravery)

*Ancient Stories, New Voices, Dust Echoes* <http://www.abc.net.au/dustechoes/default.htm>  
(animated dreamtime stories, loyalty, friendship)



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Published by Hardie Grant Egmont, July 2016

### Film

*Star Wars* (combination of different genres to create a new genre)

*Shrek* (use of fairytales, mixing of fairytales)

*The Princess Bride* (study of new fairytales drawing on old)

*Ghostbusters* (mixing of genres)

### Teacher Reference

BBC Learning School has great resources on Greek myths online [http://www.bbc.co.uk/learning/schoolradio/subjects/history/ancient\\_greek\\_myths/myth/persephone](http://www.bbc.co.uk/learning/schoolradio/subjects/history/ancient_greek_myths/myth/persephone)

*Mythology: Timeless Tales of Gods and Heroes* by Edith Hamilton, Little Brown and Company, 2011

*Magic for Beginners* by Kelly Link, Random House Trade Paperbacks, 2014 (interesting mixing of genres, elements of magic, witches, robots)