



THE MASTERY CLUB

- See the Invisible, Hear the Silent, Do the Impossible

By Liliane Grace

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TEACHER'S NOTES – DISCUSSION POINTS

Synopsis

Natalie has long been fascinated with witches and wizards and the world of fantasy, but she actually wants to do 'real magic' – she wants to be able to wave a wand and truly help people. In fact, she keeps a wand under her bed, but sadly, it's only a stick from the garden, and her magic is all made up and doesn't seem to have any real effect in the world.

Until Nina bursts into her life. Green-haired, unpredictable Nina has been home educated for most of her life and is attending school for the first time. Coming from a family that has studied and talked about universal laws since she was a baby, and believes in setting challenges for themselves, she is now itching to form her own 'Mastery Club', a place where she and some friends might be able to dream big and realise their dreams – and support each other along the way.

Nina singles out Natalie, and in doing so, opens Natalie's mind and world to some startling possibilities and a stimulating family. Nina is living with her aunt and uncle temporarily while her parents are overseas fulfilling a life goal: trekking in Nepal. These creative and unusual relatives warmly welcome Natalie, and together, the four of them share ideas about the nature of reality and the possibilities for the human mind.

Eventually Natalie's three friends, Billy, Clare and Sandy, join the Mastery Club, and enthusiasm builds as each person learns about his or her potential and the tools available to them: visualisation, affirmations, treasure maps... One by one they identify a goal or challenge that they wish to undertake, everything from passing maths tests to manifesting a family holiday on the Greek Isles. Mentors turn up, there are crises to face and obstacles to deal with, and the Mastery Club powers on to a happy ending.

Themes

- * We create our reality.
- * The world is our mirror.
- * Everything/everyone is connected.
- * The physical world is an illusion.
- * 'First in mind, then in body'.
- * When the student is ready, the teacher appears.
- * There is never a positive without a negative and vice versa (i.e. the law of polarity).

CHARACTER PROFILE

Major Characters

Natalie is the narrator of the story. She is a quiet Year 6 student at primary school who has a fascination for magic. Despite knowing that she ‘should’ have outgrown childhood fantasy games of being a good witch, she still has a pretend wand under her bed. When Nina comes into her life talking about ‘real magic’, Natalie is instantly magnetised to her. She is confronted by Nina’s maturity and skills, and asks herself questions about her own ability to contribute to others as the story progresses. She emerges with greater confidence in herself.

Nina is a green-haired young girl, about the same age, who has been home educated thus far. She has been brought up by parents who are keen students of universal laws and personal development principles, and she loves these concepts herself. It is her family’s ‘culture’ to take on challenges, and when the story opens her parents have recently headed overseas to fulfill a lifelong dream: trekking in Nepal. Nina is staying with her aunt and uncle while they are away, and taking on the challenge of experiencing school. She cruises into this new environment with the mark of leadership, singling Natalie out on her first day as a suitable friend, and inviting her to join a ‘Mastery Club’. Despite being a confident, mature and well-informed young person, she has her own challenges to face when her parents become lost in a snowstorm and when one of her new friends confronts her for being ‘perfect’.

Billy is Natalie’s school friend. At the beginning of the story he is feeling miserable following the recent separation of his parents, and the arrival into his home of his mother’s boyfriend, Terry. He is also threatened by Nina’s arrival into the school and her instant friendship with Natalie, but is eventually won over and joins the Mastery Club. Billy sets the goal of achieving a mountain bike. By the end of the book he is more accepting of his new step-father, and beginning to reconnect with his own father.

Clare is Natalie’s school friend. She is a mousey young girl with a tendency to be bullied. She has been raised by a single mother since she was two years old, and holds a fairly entrenched ‘victim’ view of the world. She sets the goal of improving in maths, and grows in confidence and self-awareness as the story progresses.

Sandy is Natalie’s school friend. A strong, almost forceful character, she has taken on the responsibility of exhorting Clare to stand up to bullies, while struggling with her own overbearing father. Sandy surprises her friends by revealing both a talent for pottery and an interest in acting. She sets the goal of achieving a major role in the school production of *The Wizard Of Oz*.

Liz is Nina’s aunt, and her mother’s sister. A semi-retired successful model, she is an attractive, highly creative woman who contributes to the children’s learnings along the road to mastery, particularly with regard to the principle of sowing and reaping (in the garden), dealing with bullies, and stepping into one’s power by ‘acting as if’.

Nuncle is Nina’s uncle. An ex-physicist turned I.T. consultant, he has a compelling interest in consciousness and ‘creation on demand’. Nuncle offers his support to the fledgeling ‘Mastery Club’, and becomes their loved mentor. He is the creator, in the book, of the game, ‘Good Stuff, Bad Stuff’, which offers children an opportunity to better understand the law of polarity and to apply some of the principles they have been learning about.

Minor Characters

Beth Howard is Natalie's mother. She runs her own business from home and is a busy woman with high expectations. (Other children: Evan and Katie.)

'Dad' is Natalie's father. He is a barrister with a successful business, but he has a tendency to make bad investment decisions. Shortly after the story begins, he discovers that he has lost a significant amount of money, and this causes much stress at home.

Rosie is Nina's mother. She is a photographer with a hippie bent, fulfilling a long-time dream of trekking in Nepal.

Pete is Nina's musician father. He and Rosie own an alpaca farm. Together they go trekking in Nepal.

Robin Kersey is an author who visits the school to teach creative writing as part of an arts program.

Evelyn Mackie is a sculptor who visits the school to teach pottery as part of an arts program.

Bea is an old woman who used to be a singer. Nina and Natalie run into her during their weekend at the beach house.

Gran is Natalie's great grand-mother. She dies during the story, shortly after her 80th birthday, giving Natalie more food for thought and growth.

Granma is Natalie's grandmother, Gran's daughter.

Ella is Natalie's fourteen year old cousin. Natalie has several other cousins who are present but not active in the story.

Sid and **Ria** are Natalie's aunt and uncle on her father's side. **Kim** is a cousin, also from the Howard family.

**** Discussion Topics * Questions for Discussion***

1. What is the purpose of mastery the way that Nina sees it?
2. What is meant by 'universal laws'? Give examples.
3. Nina and Nuncle refer to a study regarding a basketball experiment. (Find this study on the internet for yourself.) Have you heard of sports people using the power of their mind to influence their results? Have you ever applied this principle yourself? With what results? (You might also like to research the findings of Sports Psychologist Denis Waitley.)
4. Natalie's friends are initially very suspicious of Nina. Why? What makes them change?
5. What is meant by 'see the invisible, hear the silent, do the impossible'?
6. What is meant by 'first in mind, then in body'?

7. Nina and Nuncle speak to Natalie about the ‘boomerang law’ of cause and effect – that what you put out comes back to you. Liz gives another example of this universal law: that as we sow, we reap, whether in the physical or the metaphysical. Find evidence for this in the characters’ lives and in your life.
8. Internet research: ‘the effect of meditation on crime’. Have you ever meditated? Why/how do you think this phenomenon works?
9. What critical role does minor character, Bea, play?
10. Natalie finds that she is receiving the same message that we ‘create our reality’ from all sorts of unexpected people. Who are they?
11. Nina presents the idea that the victim of bullying ‘calls it in’ for the purpose of assisting them in growing/becoming whole. Study the comments made by Liz, Rosie, Nina and Nuncle in Chapters 29, 30 and 32, and discuss.
12. Explain the Law of Polarity and apply this principle to your own life or ‘sample circumstances’. i.e. everything exists within a polarity – there can’t be an ‘up’ without a ‘down’. What’s the benefit/‘up’ of an apparent ‘down’ such as losing money or being sick and missing out on an anticipated social event?
13. Nina has been home educated. When Sandy expresses a desire to also be home educated, she lists the following activities that she would engage in if she was in charge of her own curriculum: “Sleep. Go to the Roller Skating Rink. Pottery. Swimming. Theatre. Athletics.” What do you think of her curriculum?
14. How does Sandy’s father help her to grow?
15. Nina is described as ‘[looking] like an alien’ when she first arrives at the school. What effect does this have on the reader’s perception of her? Does this perception persist? What might have been the author’s intention in suggesting that possibility?
16. There are several controversial ideas presented in *The Mastery Club*, such as the idea that we create our own reality, that we live on after we die, that we attract bullies into our lives... Does the author impose or suggest those ideas to the reader? Does she make a good argument for them?
17. What is the drawback to mastery?
18. Has Natalie mastered ‘real magic’ by the end of the book?

Author

Liliane Grace won her first Creative Writing Competition at the age of seventeen and has been writing seriously since then, with numerous articles and short stories published in various magazines and anthologies, and short plays performed in amateur theatre. *The Mastery Club* is her first full-length book. An adventure in self-publishing, it is midway through its fourth print run, is a medallist in the 2007 U.S. Independent Book Publisher Award (Youth Fiction category), and has been published in China, Taiwan, Hong Kong and Macau. Liliane’s three children have been engaged in home-based learning. She has taught Creative Writing Skills to adults and school-aged students since the late ‘80s, and been engaged in her own Personal Development study since she was a teenager.