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Coresfield Photography

Angie Sage was born in London and grew up in the Thames Valley, London, and Kent. The mother of two grown daughters, she now lives with her husband in Somerset in the west of England in a very old house in the middle of a village. The west of England is a **Magyk** place, with marshes, ancient ports, and ruined castles. It is a great place to live and write Septimus Heap. When not writing, Angie likes to sail her boat, *Muriel*. Angie is also the author-illustrator of many picture books, as well as the author of the Araminta Spookie series.

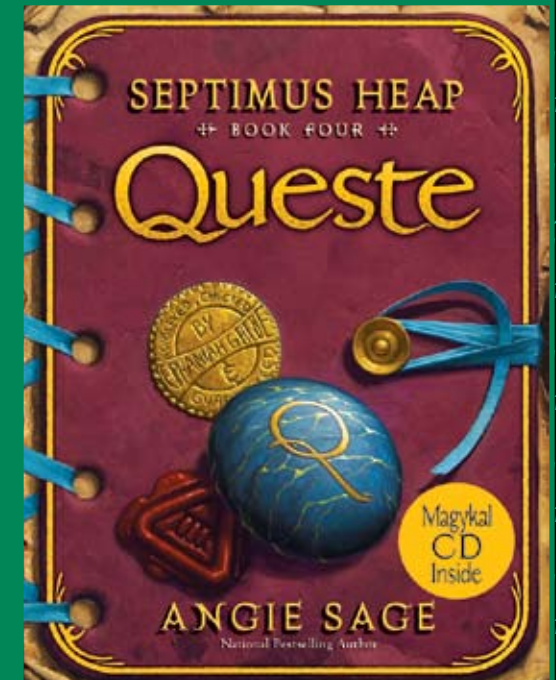
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Reading Group Guide



Septimus Heap, Book Four: Queste
By Angie Sage

Septimus Heap: Queste

Angie Sage's fourth Septimus Heap novel is a dark and humorous adventure pitting good against evil and true friendship against jealousy, greed, deception, and revenge. Wizard Apprentice Septimus Heap, Princess Jenna, and their faithful friend Beetle go on a personal quest to retrieve Nicko Heap and his friend Snorri who are lost in **Time** and believed to be imprisoned in the House of Foryx. Septimus also embarks on the Apprentice's cursed **Queste**, which is controlled by the ghost of the evil Tertius Fume. Through perseverance, bravery, help from loyal friends, and **Magyk**, both quests are successful.

Discussion Questions

1. What is the difference between a quest and a **Queste**? Why does Septimus have to go on the **Queste** before he has completed his wizard's Apprenticeship? How are Septimus's two quests interrelated?
2. The battle between good and evil is prominent in this story. Identify the characters who you feel are good and those who are evil. Discuss their pivotal roles in the development of the plot.
3. The author uses colors to distinguish occupations and rank in *Queste*. Pretend that you are opening a closet in the Wizard Tower and that you find robes in the following colors: purple, red, blue, green, white, and black and gold. To whom might these robes belong?
4. Two ancient professions are key to the **Queste**: alchemy and necromancy. What are these professions and who in the story practices them?
5. What do Ephaniah Grebe and Stanley have in common? Their roles are not what you would expect considering who they are. How do they help Jenna, Septimus, and Beetle?

6. Although *Queste* is filled with ghosts, **Darke Magyk**, and witches, it also has much humor to balance and lighten the atmosphere. The author has chosen many of her names of people and places using “tongue in cheek” humor. Discuss the humor in the following names: Terry Tarsal, the Heap family, Boris Catchpole, Jillie Djinn, Hildegard, and Spit Fyre. What other humorous names can you find? Why are they funny?
7. Family and friendship are important elements in this story. Of all the characters, who would you most want to be friends with? Why? What qualities do you value in a friend?
8. In Chapter 39, Septimus remarks that Princess Jenna and ExtraOrdinary Wizard Marcia Overstrand are similar. Do you agree or disagree? Find evidence in the novel to support your position.
9. “Stupid” is a powerful word that is used in *Queste*. Which characters and actions are described as stupid? How is this word significant to the story?
10. The actions of Merrin Meredith trigger the call for a **Queste** and encourage Tertius Fume to continue on his path of evil. Do you think Merrin is to be pitied or vilified? Explain your opinion.
11. How might you explain that Silas Heap’s bedtime story to his children reflects the actual events at the House of Foryx? What might the author be suggesting about the power of stories?
12. Septimus is the only wizard to complete the **Queste** successfully. He could not have done so without a team effort from his friends and family. Discuss those characters who facilitate Septimus’s success. How do they aid Septimus? Why is it often necessary to work with others as a team? How might relying on the help of others bring out the best in you?

Extension Activities

- 1. Debate: Time vs. time.** Although Hoteb-Ra was forbidden to dabble with **Time**, he broke the rules and discovered the secret of suspending **Time**, thereby creating centuries of repercussions. Divide into two groups and discuss the advantages and disadvantages of being able to alter **Time**. Do you think modern scientists should attempt to uncover this secret? Why? Assign one group to take the position of wanting to alter **Time** and the other group to be against it. Stage a debate in which you defend your group's position using thoughtful arguments and evidence from *Queste*.
- 2. Magical land with magical words.** The author has created a unique atmosphere in her story by altering the spellings of ordinary words and placing them in bold type, thereby making the words "special." As a group, choose a location for your own magical land—for example, your classroom, school, home, playground, or library—and make a list of special words for your land. Define how your special words differ in meaning from the same words spelled traditionally.
- 3. Definition quest.** The words listed below are all used in the telling of Septimus's fourth adventure. Use a dictionary to define at least ten of these words. Then write a paragraph about *Queste* that includes at least five of the words you looked up. Read your paragraph aloud to the group.

abyss	indenture	tendrill
amok	jinn	tinker
amulet	miasma	treacle
Camera Obscura	oblivion	trepidation
eddy	potion	vault
expunge	precipice	vortex
hector	provocation	warren
hermetic	scribe	wraith
hex	snippet	

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