



**The White
Horse Talisman**
Andrea Spalding

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**Dance of
the Stones**
Andrea Spalding

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Andrea Spalding's **The White Horse Talisman and Dance of the Stones**

The Summer of Magic Quartet – Book I

In *The White Horse Talisman*, Chantel and Adam are visiting their British cousins, Holly and Owen, for the summer. When Chantel sees a shooting star streak through the sky and awaken the ancient magical horse that is carved into the downs, the four children are drawn into an adventure, guided by four Wise Ones, Ava, Myrddin, Equus and the Lady. The children set out to help the Great White Horse Equus find his mate and regain his magical talisman. But as the horse rises, so does the dragon. The age-old struggle between good and evil threatens the bond between Chantel and Adam and endangers the quest.

The Summer of Magic Quartet – Book II

In *Dance of the Stones*, the four children are off on their second quest, this time to recover Ava's circlet, buried eons ago in the Stone Circle of Avebury. In this story, Owen is the character chosen to be witness to the past with Ava's guidance. The Dark Being has drawn closer and an evil wraith who hides beneath the stones has awakened. When Equus confronts the Dark Being and Ava is injured, the four children are left on their own to discover the ritual that will release the circlet. The future of their world as they know it depends on their success.

The Author

Award-winning author Andrea Spalding has written many popular books for children, including juvenile novels *Finders Keepers* and *An Island of My Own*, Young Readers *Phoebe and the Gypsy* and *The Keeper and the Crows* and picture books *Me and Mr. Mab*, *It's Raining, It's Pouring* and *Solomon's Tree*. An accomplished storyteller, Andrea hails from England, where she was long steeped in ancient lore, lore that now finds its full expression in the first two volumes of the Summer of Magic Quartet. She lives with her husband on Pender Island, B.C.

Watch for the third volume of the quartet, *Heart of the Hill* in 2004!

Ideas, topics and activities for *The White Horse Talisman*

- Get a map of England and locate Uffington and the downs where the horse is carved. Find books and look on the Internet to find out what is known about the Great White Horse. Do a Google search for Uffington white horse. Art: Draw the white horse shape with white chalk on black or dark blue paper.
- Art: using the map of Uffington as reference, make a class mural of the area showing incidents from the story.
- Write a radio play of the scene with Holly and the dragon and her rescue by Owen and Adam. Or write a radio play about your favourite scene from *Dance of the Stones*. Choose friends to read it into a tape recorder and play it back to the class.
- A number of fantasies contain four children. Read Susan Cooper's *Dark is Rising* sequence and C.S. Lewis's *Narnia Chronicles* and discuss similarities and differences with the Summer of Magic Quartet. Why do you think four is such a popular number for fantasy stories?
- Fantasies like *The White Horse Talisman* have a lot of the same elements that fairy tales do, a quest, for example. Reread some favourite fairy tales and make a chart listing the similarities you can find.
- At the beginning of *The White Horse Talisman*, the Wise Ones surrender their magical tools. Equus gives up his talisman, Ava, her circlet, Myrddin, his staff, and The Lady, her necklace. Martin Springett has included all four talismans at the corners of the map at the beginning of both books. Go through the book and read the italicized sections about the Wise Ones again. Then choose either Ava, Myrddin or The Lady, and write a chapter or a short story about how you think she or he will regain the talisman. How will the children help? Remember, you are not trying to predict Andrea Spalding's story. You are writing your own.
- Choose a section of the text to perform with a small group.
- Try to imagine what the Place Beyond Morning looks like. Then draw or paint it, Wise Ones included. Or you could paint it on a large scale as a backdrop for a readers' theatre performance of one of the italicized scenes in the books.
- Have four children in your class volunteer to be Chantel, Adam, Owen and Holly for a day or a half a day. Choose a point in the story. For example, it could be after the story is over, while they are waiting for the next adventure, or it could be just as they are entering the vale of the red horse,

or they could move through the story over the course of the day. Chantel needs crutches after she has broken her leg. Adam needs to be angry. The talisman or half talisman is needed if appropriate. Think about what other props you might need. The children do not act out the story, but they stay in their roles through the course of regular classroom activities including recess and lunch if that's what you decide. The rest of the class interacts with them as if they were the characters. They can ask questions about motivation, about what they plan to do next, etc. If you wish, you could have children be the Wise Ones as well either that day or on another day.

- The dragon in *The White Horse Talisman* is the earthbound embodiment of evil. Write a scene of the story from his point of view. Or paint him. Then create your own characters who are earthbound embodiments of evil. You could create them through writing, art, performance or all three. Which ones do you think will be featured in Books II, III and IV?

Ideas, topics and activities for *Dance of the Stones*

(Please note that there is some overlap between this and the above list.)

- Look up Avebury on a map and learn what you can about the history of the Stone Circle.
- Choose a secondary character in *Dance of the Stones* and write several journal entries from his or her point of view. The teenage girl would be a great choice!
- The wraith is the earthbound embodiment of evil in *Dance of the Stones*. It lives under the ground, just as the dragon does in the first book. Write a scene of the story from the point of view of the wraith. Or create a scene in which the wraith and the dragon speak to each other, telling each other about the challenges they face. Or paint these characters. Then create your own characters who are earthbound embodiments of evil. You could create them through writing, art, performance or all three. Which ones do you think will be featured in Books III and IV?
- Have four children in your class volunteer to be Chantel, Adam, Owen and Holly for a day or a half a day. Choose a point in the story. For example, it could be while they are trying to figure out how to help Ava, or they could move through the story over the course of the day. Think about what props you might need. The children do not act out the story, but they stay in their roles through the course of regular classroom activities including

recess and lunch if that's what you decide. The rest of the class interacts with them as if they were the characters. They can ask questions about motivation, about what they plan to do next, etc. If you wish, you could have children be the Wise Ones as well either that day or on another day.

- Write a radio play about your favourite scene from *Dance of the Stones*. Choose friends to read it into a tape recorder and play it back to the class.
- A number of fantasies contain four children. Read Susan Cooper's *Dark is Rising* sequence and C.S. Lewis's *Narnia Chronicles* and discuss similarities and differences with the Summer of Magic Quartet. Why do you think four is such a popular number for fantasy stories?
- What if a character from another of your favourite fantasies met up with the four children from *The Summer of Magic Quartet*? Write a story or create a scene in which characters cross from one story into another.
- Fantasies like *Dance of the Stones* have a lot of the same elements that fairy tales do, a quest, for example. Reread some favourite fairy tales and make a chart listing the similarities you can find.
- At the beginning of *The White Horse Talisman*, the Wise Ones surrender their magical tools. Equus gives up his talisman, Ava, her circlet, Myrddin, his staff, and The Lady, her necklace. Martin Springett has included all four talismans at the corners of the map at the beginning of both books. Go through the *Dance of the Stones* and read the italicized sections about the Wise Ones again. Then choose either Myrddin or The Lady, and write a chapter or a short story or a dramatic piece about how you think she or he will regain the talisman. How will the children help? Remember, you are not trying to predict Andrea Spalding's story. You are writing your own.
- Choose a section of the text to perform with a small group.
- Try to imagine what the Place Beyond Morning looks like. Then draw or paint it, Wise Ones included. Or you could paint it on a large scale as a backdrop for a readers' theatre performance of one of the italicized scenes in the books.

To find out more about the magical sites in Andrea Spalding's stories, go to <http://witcombe.sbc.edu>, scroll down and click on Earth Mysteries.

To find out more about how Andrea Spalding wrote the stories and where she got her ideas, read her detailed author's notes at the end of the books.