

# Teachers' Guide

Eric Walters, John Wilson, Ted Staunton,  
Richard Scrimger, Norah McClintock,  
Sigmund Brouwer and Shane Peacock

## SEVEN THE SERIES

In the classroom



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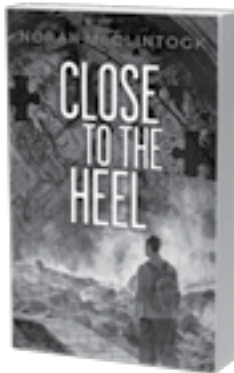
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Seven (the series)

## Seven (the series)

When David McLean, beloved grandfather and avid adventurer, dies at the age of ninety-two, he leaves behind a very unusual will that outlines the seven tasks he has set for his seven grandsons. Eric Walters and six other well-known authors—John Wilson, Ted Staunton, Richard Scrimger, Norah McClintock, Sigmund Brouwer and Shane Peacock—bring their signature styles to a series of adventures that take readers from the top of Kilimanjaro to the bottom of the Mediterranean.

Seven (the series) is a great collection of books to use in the classroom. The varied writing styles, popular authors and compelling storylines provide endless possibilities for group discussion, independent reading and ways to enhance reader engagement.



## Chapter I: The Genesis of Seven (the series)

*Writing is a fairly solitary profession...*

We read each other's books and get to know each other—but the writing is done alone. I started thinking about a story where a beloved grandfather dies and leaves his grandson the task of spreading his ashes from the top of Mount Kilimanjaro. Then I wondered, what if he had more than one grandson? What if he had seven? I thought about my favorite writers and their different styles and wondered how each writer would approach this same narrative. Because we wanted strong, original stories and we didn't want to limit the authors' creativity, the potential writers were told the books could be almost any length and any genre. They were free to craft the entire story with the only caveat being that we had a core beginning—the death of the grandfather—and that individual stories include references to the other books.

*We wanted creative, wonderful writers who were flexible and able to write from a male perspective. I made some phone calls.*

Some of the writers plunged in before the end of the call. Others needed a day to think it over. In quick succession though, all seven of us signed on, and we were off. Instantly, messages started to fly between the writers as we crafted our individual stories and then “reshaped” aspects to fit in with what the others were writing. For my book, I climbed Mount Kilimanjaro. There, atop the mountain, I sent a text message to John Wilson, just as the character in my book sends one to the character in John's book. I can only hope that the readers will enjoy these unique books as much as we all enjoyed writing them.

—Eric Walters

Seven (the series)

## Chapter 2: Book Summaries and Author Information

### *Between Heaven and Earth* by Eric Walters

#### **Grandson: DJ (Age 17)**

DJ is David McLean's eldest grandson, so it stands to reason that he be the one to scatter his beloved grandfather's ashes. At least that's how DJ sees it. He's always been the best at everything—sports, school, looking after his fatherless family—so climbing Kilimanjaro is just another thing he'll accomplish almost effortlessly. Or so he thinks, until he arrives in Tanzania and everything starts to go wrong. He's detained at immigration, he gets robbed, his climbing group includes an old lady and he gets stuck with the first ever female porter. Forced to go *polepole* (slowly), DJ finds out the hard way that youth, fitness level and drive have nothing to do with success on the mountain—or in life.

**Eric Walters** began writing in 1993 as a way to entice his grade five students into becoming more interested in reading and writing. At the end of the year, one student suggested that he try to have his story published. Since that first creation, Eric has published nearly seventy novels. His novels have all become bestsellers and have won over eighty awards. Often his stories incorporate themes that reflect his background in education and social work and his commitment to humanitarian and social-justice issues. He is a tireless presenter, speaking to over 70,000 students per year in schools across the country. Eric lives in Mississauga, Ontario, with his wife and three children.

### *Lost Cause* by John Wilson

#### **Grandson: Steve (Age 17)**

Steve thinks a trip to Europe is out of the question—until he hears his grandfather's will. Suddenly he's off to Spain, armed with only a letter from his grandfather that sends him to a specific address in Barcelona. There he meets a girl named Laia and finds a trunk containing some of his grandfather's possessions, including a journal he kept during the time he fought with the International Brigades in the Spanish Civil War. Steve decides to trace his grandfather's footsteps through Spain, and with Laia's help, he visits the battlefields and ruined towns that shaped his grandfather's young life, and begins to understand the power of history and the transformative nature of passion for a righteous cause.

Born in Edinburgh, Scotland, **John Wilson** grew up on the Isle of Skye and outside Glasgow without the slightest idea that he would ever write books. After a degree in Geology from St. Andrews University, he worked in Zimbabwe and Alberta before taking up writing full-time and moving out to Lantzville on Vancouver Island in 1991. John is addicted to history and firmly believes that the past must have been just as

exciting, confusing and complex to those who lived through it as our world is to us. Every one of his seventeen novels and six nonfiction books for kids, teens and adults deals with the past. His tales involve intelligent dinosaurs, angry socialist coal miners, confused boys caught up in the First and Second World Wars, and the terrors faced by lost Arctic explorers. John spends significant portions of his year traveling across the country telling stories from his books and their historical background and getting young readers (particularly but not exclusively boys) energized and wanting to read and find out more about the past.

### ***Jump Cut* by Ted Staunton**

#### **Grandson: Spencer (Age 17)**

Spencer loves movies, but real life is boring, right? When his late grandfather's will reveals the tasks he wants his grandsons to undertake, Spencer thinks he got screwed. He's not going to France or Spain or Africa. He's not even getting a cool tattoo, like his younger brother. No, he's going to Buffalo to get a kiss from an ancient movie star. Gross. And he's supposed to film it. Grosser. But Spencer hasn't bargained on Gloria Lorraine, star of the silver screen back in the day. Gloria has big plans—plans that involve her granddaughter AmberLea, a gun, a baker who might be a gangster, some real gangsters and a road trip to Nowheresville, Ontario. After being shot at, jumping into an icy lake and confronting some angry bikers, Spencer finally realizes that real life can be as exciting (and dangerous) as reel life.

**Ted Staunton** divides his time between writing and a busy schedule as a speaker, workshop leader, storyteller and musical performer for children and adults. His previous books include the well-loved Green Applestreet Gang series, the Cyril and Maggie series, the Morgan series, *Puddleman*, *Simon's Surprise*, several titles in the Dreadful Truth series, including the Canadian Children's Centre Our Choice selection *The Dreadful Truth: Confederation* and the acclaimed *Hope Springs a Leak*, which was shortlisted for both a Silver Birch Award and a Hackmatack Award. Ted lives in Port Hope, Ontario.

### ***Ink Me* by Richard Scrimger**

#### **Grandson: Bunny (Age 15)**

Bunny (real name Bernard) doesn't understand why his late grandfather wants him to get a tattoo. Actually, Bunny doesn't understand a lot of things, so it's good that his older brother, Spencer, is happy to explain things to him. But this is a task Bunny is supposed to do on his own, and nobody is more surprised than Bunny when, after he gets tattooed, he is befriended by a kid named Jaden and adopted into Jaden's gang. The gang hangs out at a gym, where Bunny learns to fight, but when it finally dawns on him that the gang is involved in some pretty shady—and dangerous—business, Bunny is torn between his loyalty to his new friends and doing what he knows is right.



**Richard Scrimger** is the award-winning author of more than fifteen books for children and adults. Richard's middle-school novel *The Nose from Jupiter* won the Mr. Christie Award and his books have appeared on lists such as ALA's Kid's Pick of the List and ALA's Notable Book List. His books have been translated into Dutch, French, German, Thai, Korean, Portuguese, Slovenian, Italian and Polish. The father of four children, he has written humorous pieces about his family life for *The Globe and Mail* and *Chatelaine*.

### *Close to the Heel* by Norah McClintock

#### **Grandson: Rennie (Age 17)**

No one is more surprised than Rennie to hear that his late grandfather, whom he hardly knew, has left a mission for him to fulfill. Rennie is to fly to Iceland and deliver a message from beyond the grave, but when he gets there, nothing is simple or straightforward. For one thing, Brynja, the teenage daughter of the family he's staying with, is downright hostile. Her father Einar, who is to be Rennie's guide in Iceland, is preoccupied with looking after his elderly father-in-law, an old friend of Rennie's grandfather. Bored and a little bit annoyed, Rennie explores the town and becomes aware that the family is dealing with more than their grief over Brynja's mother's death the year before. Before he realizes what is happening, his curiosity puts Rennie in grave danger, with no one to trust and no one to save him except himself.

**Norah McClintock's** fascinating mysteries are hard to put down. She is a five-time winner of the Crime Writers of Canada's Arthur Ellis Award for Best Juvenile Crime Novel. Although Norah is a freelance editor, she still manages to write at least one novel a year. Norah grew up in Montreal, Quebec, and now lives with her family in Toronto, Ontario. Visit [www.web.net/~nmbooks](http://www.web.net/~nmbooks) for more information.

### *Devil's Pass* by Sigmund Brouwer

#### **Grandson: Jim Webb (Age 17)**

Seventeen-year-old Webb's abusive stepfather has made it impossible for him to live at home, so Webb survives on the streets of Toronto by busking with his guitar and working as a dishwasher. When Webb's grandfather dies, his will stipulates that his grandsons fulfill specific requests. Webb's task takes him to the Canol Trail in Canada's Far North, where he finds out that there are much scarier things than the cold and the occasional grizzly bear. With a Native guide, two German tourists and his guitar for company, Webb is forced to confront terrible events in his grandfather's past and somehow deal with the pain and confusion of his own life.

With close to three million books in print, **Sigmund Brouwer** is the bestselling author of books for both children and adults, including titles in the Orca Echoes,

Orca Currents and Orca Sports series. In the last ten years, he has given writing workshops to students in schools from the Arctic Circle to inner-city Los Angeles, and has appeared on ABC's *Good Morning America*. For more information about Sigmund's presentations, visit [www.rockandroll-literacy.com](http://www.rockandroll-literacy.com). Sigmund and his family live half the year in Nashville, Tennessee, and half the year in Red Deer, Alberta.

### ***Last Message by Shane Peacock***

#### **Grandson: Adam (Age 16)**

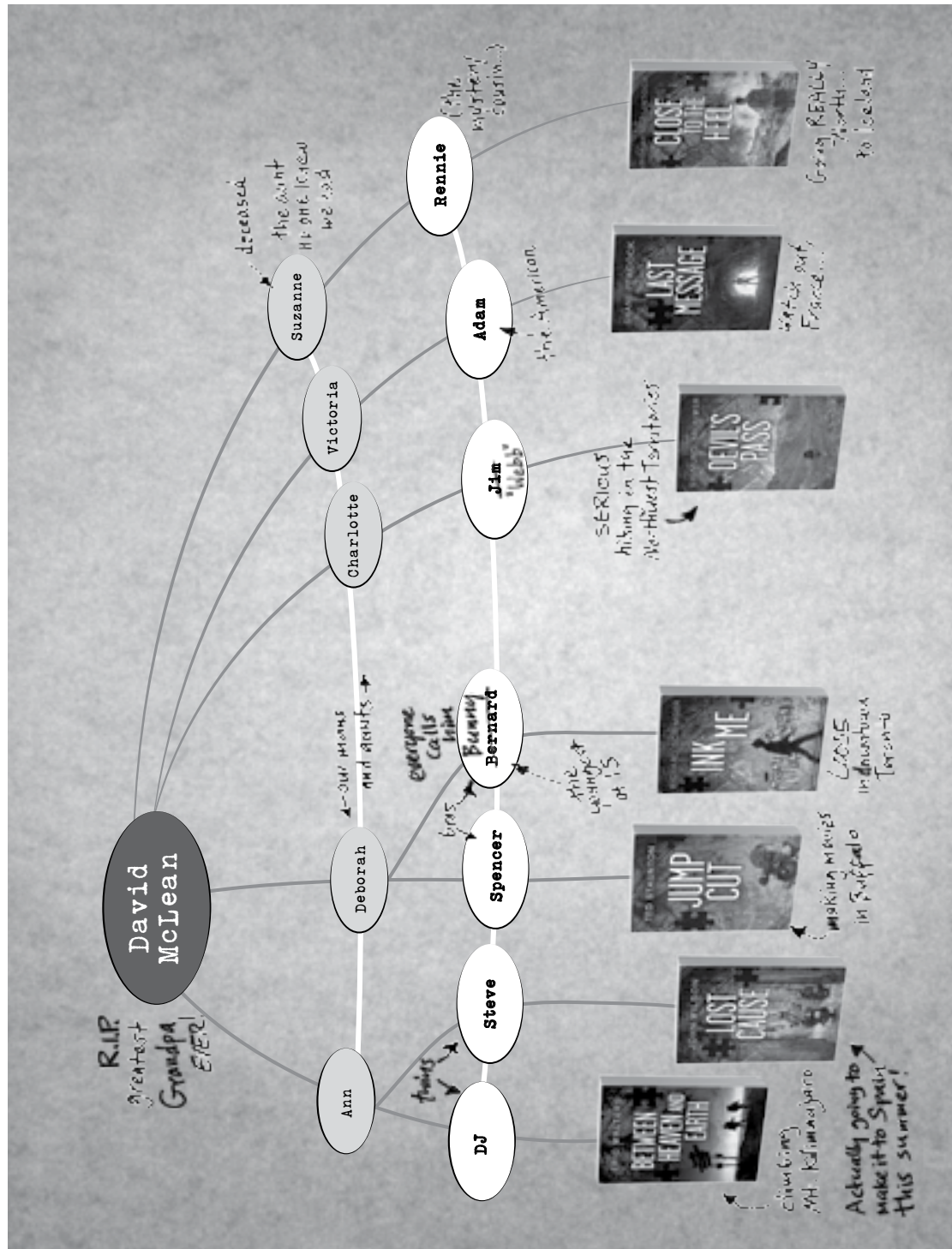
Adam has a good life in Buffalo: great parents, a cute girlfriend, adequate grades. He's not the best at anything, but he's not the worst either. He secretly lusts after Vanessa, the hottest girl in school, and when his dead grandfather's will stipulates that he go on a mission to France, Adam figures he might just have a chance to impress Vanessa and change his life from good to great. When he gets to France, he discovers he has not one but three near-impossible tasks before him. He also discovers a dark and shameful episode from his grandfather's past, something Adam is supposed to make amends for. But how can he do that when he barely speaks the language and his tasks become more and more dangerous? Despite the odds, Adam finds a way to fulfill his grandfather's wishes and, in the process, become worthy of bearing his name.

**Shane Peacock** is a biographer, a journalist, a screenwriter and the author of more than ten books for young readers, including The Boy Sherlock Holmes series. His work has been nominated for numerous awards, including several National Magazine Awards and the Arthur Ellis Award for Crime Fiction. Because Shane often writes about unusual subjects, his research methods have, at times, been out of the ordinary too; he has learned the arts of tight-rope walking, silent killing, trapeze flying and sumo eating, all in the service of his art. Shane and his wife, journalist Sophie Kneisel, live with their three children on a small farm near Cobourg, Ontario, where he continues to search for and imagine larger-than-life characters. In his spare time he enjoys playing hockey, reading and walking the wire, pretending that he is the hero in each story.

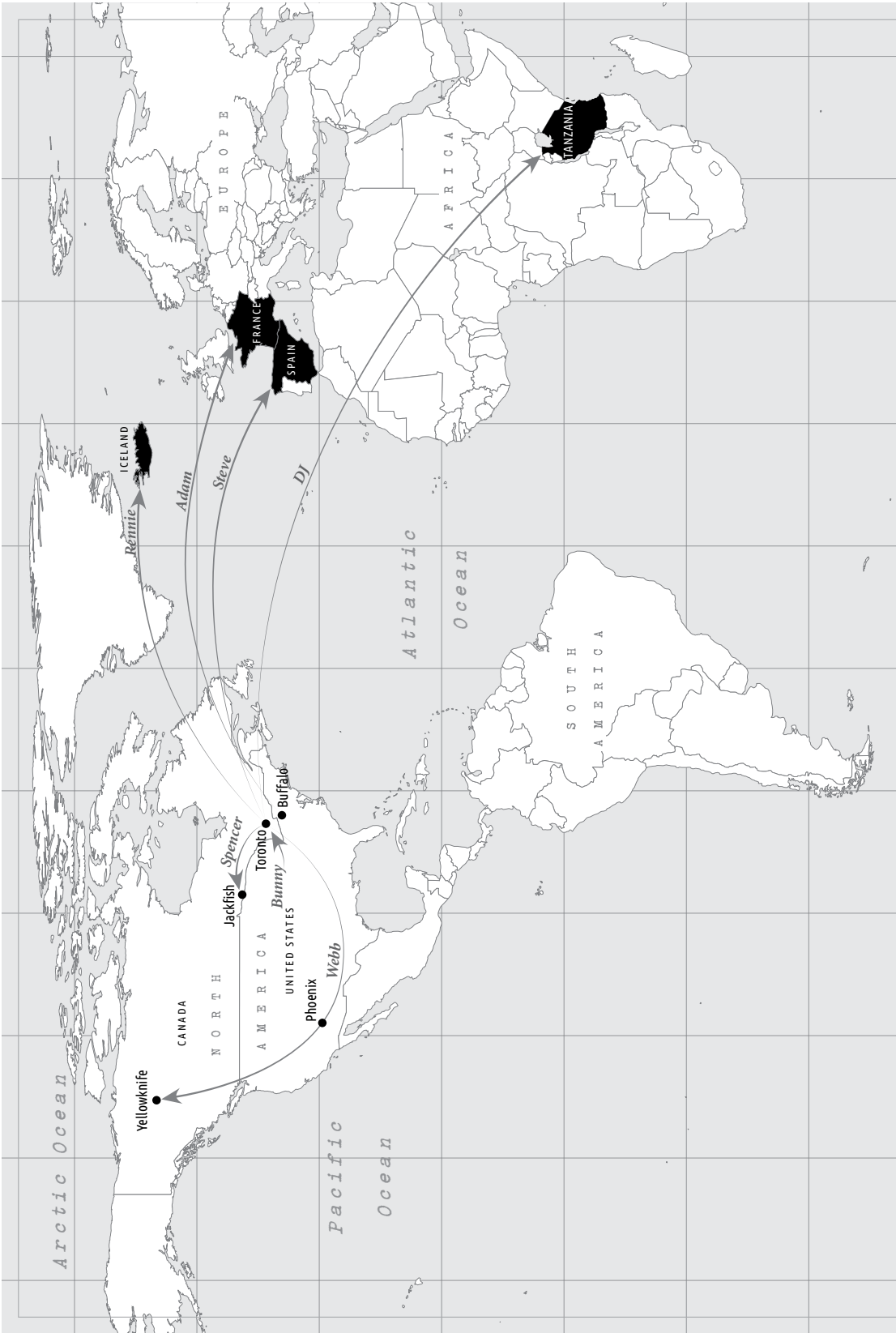


## Chapter 3: Family Diagram

# Seven (the series)



Chapter 4: Map



Seven (the series)

## Chapter 5: Prereading Ideas (General)

1. If you have done some traveling, what parts of it did you like? Were there things that made you nervous? Excited? Frightened? What is the best/worst thing about traveling?
2. Is there a difference between being a traveler and being a tourist?
3. What character traits make up a good traveler?
4. What can you learn from traveling?
5. Where in the world do you dream of going?
6. How does where you live influence who you are?

## Chapter 6: Postreading Ideas (General)

What does it say about the boys that their grandfather thought they were capable of fulfilling their missions alone? How would you feel if you were asked to travel alone to a strange place? How do the boys make connections with other people on their travels?

1. Would the boys have felt differently about their missions if they hadn't all had modern technology to keep them connected? How so?
2. Did their travels bring the boys closer together? If so, why? How?
3. Do most families have secrets?
4. Do you have to travel a long way to experience a different world? Explain.
5. Is it important to talk to elderly relatives about what their lives were like when they were young? Why or why not?
6. Is it a good idea (or fair) to get other people to carry out your "bucket list" after your death?

Seven (the series)

## Chapter 7: Book Discussion Questions (General)

1. What would the book you chose be like if the main character failed to complete his mission? Write an alternate ending to your book; include what happens, how it makes the character feel (Shame? Relief? Guilt? Sorrow?) and what he learns from his failure.
2. All the main characters in the series are male. Rewrite one scene from your book from a girl's point of view. Consider how point of view changes a story.  
*Between Heaven & Earth*—Sarah  
*Lost Cause*—Laia  
*Jump Cut*—AmberLea  
*Ink Me*—Jaden  
*Close to the Heel*—Brynja  
*Devil's Pass*—Stephanie  
*Last Message*—Vanessa
3. Imagine not having a cell phone, iPad, computer, etc. Then consider how your character's experience might have changed without the ability to communicate with friends and family. Choose a scene in which your character uses technology and reimagine the scene without it. What would the character have gained/lost?
4. Consider what your character finds out about himself on his travels and what he finds out about his grandfather. How is one connected to the other?

### Book Discussion Questions (Specific)

#### *Between Heaven and Earth*

1. DJ and Steve are twins, but they don't seem very close. How does that change over the course of the book?
2. DJ is used to being a leader, but on Kilimanjaro he must be a follower. How does this affect him?
3. It's never safe to make assumptions about people. What incorrect assumptions does DJ make and how does he learn from them?
4. What cultural differences does DJ have to adapt to in Tanzania? How do his attitudes change?

#### *Lost Cause*

1. Why did Steve's grandfather not like to talk about his experiences in the Spanish Civil War?
2. Steve realizes that he has been naïve to believe that "something as complicated as war could be as simple as black and white." Does war ever solve the differences between people? Is it ever a good way of settling disputes?

3. How does Steve's experience in Spain help DJ complete his task?
4. History comes to life in Spain for Steve, but all places have a history. Research a bit of the history of the place where you live.
5. Talk to any relatives/friends that have experienced war firsthand. What common elements come up in the stories they tell?

### ***Jump Cut***

1. Parts of *Jump Cut* are written as a screenplay. Why do you think the author chose to do this?
2. What aspect of movie-making does Spencer not understand at the beginning of the book? What is his grandfather trying to teach him?
3. Spencer is none too pleased by his task, but he ends up in some pretty hair-raising situations. The author chooses to use humor when he writes about mobsters, gangs and bikers. Is it effective? Look closely at a scene that made you laugh and try to figure out what makes it funny. Is it the dialogue? The choice of vocabulary? The setting? The pace?
4. Does using humor mean a book isn't serious?
5. Gloria Lorraine is a very old woman. What wisdom does she impart to Spencer? Are all old people wise, just because they've been alive a long time?

### ***Ink Me***

1. Bunny describes himself as stupid. Other people think he's stupid too. Is he? What evidence is there in the book that he's not?
2. What does Bunny learn about himself by carrying out his grandfather's wishes?
3. The book is written in a very peculiar style. Why do you think the author chose to write it this way? Is it easy to understand? Take a short passage from one of the other books in the series and try to write it in Bunny-speak.
4. Bunny gets involved in some pretty shady activities. Why is he so slow to realize that his 15th Street posse are dangerous?
5. How soon did you realize Jaden was a girl? Why do you think the author made that part of the story? Do all the other gang members know she's a girl? What roles do girls usually have in gangs?
6. Does Bunny's punishment fit his crime?

### ***Close to the Heel***

1. All the grandsons' missions seem to deal with some unfinished business in their grandfather's life, and aim to teach them something he thinks they need to know. How do you think he decided on Rennie's mission, since he barely knew him?
2. Rennie has a problematic relationship with his father. How and why does that change?



3. *Close to the Heel* starts with a dramatic scene and then moves back in time. Is this effective or annoying? Why?
4. If you were Icelandic, what last name would you use? Give your whole family Icelandic names. Do you think this is a good way to remember where you come from and who you are?
5. Solving a murder in a hostile, strange environment is very challenging. What qualities does Rennie have that help him survive in Iceland?

### ***Devil's Pass***

1. The first chapter of *Devil's Pass* is a snapshot of Webb, the main character. Reread the chapter and note everything that you learn about Webb.
2. Choose two important characteristics and describe how they are important to the story.
3. The story moves back and forth in time and place. Why do you think the author chose to tell the story this way? Does it work? Why/why not?
4. Is Webb fearless, foolish or both?
5. What is it that David McLean wants Webb to understand about himself? Why is it so important?
6. Could Webb's extended family have been more help to him? What would you do if you thought someone in your family was being abused?

### ***Last Message***

1. Adam is the only American grandson. How does this make him different from his cousins—in his own eyes and in theirs? How does it affect his travels?
2. What is Adam's greatest fear? And what does going to France have to do with it?
3. Is Adam unfaithful to his girlfriend? How do you define *fidelity*?
4. David McLean is put on a pedestal by his family. Was this a good thing—for him or for them?
5. What do you think the final quote from *The Little Prince* means? Why is it particularly important for Adam to understand?

## Chapter 8: Small Group Work (General)

I. Form groups with others who have read the same book and consider the following questions:

1. What is the main theme of the book?
2. In what way is geography important to the book?
3. What is the main character's greatest strength? Weakness?
4. How much of a role does the grandfather play in the character's life before the mission? During? After?
5. How important is family to the main character? Does that change during the course of the book?
6. What kinds of things does the main character come to understand about himself by carrying out his grandfather's wishes?

II. Form groups of seven, where each person has read a different book in the series. Consider the following questions:

1. What are the common themes in each novel? Common elements?
2. Compare the adventures of each of the characters. What events link the books?
3. What are the connections between all of the grandsons? How are they similar/different?
4. Using details found in each of the novels, create a timeline of the grandfather's life. Does this help you to better understand him as a character? What have you learned about him?
5. Six of the books are written in first person; one (*Devil's Pass*) is not. Why do you think Sigmund Brouwer chose to write in third person? What are the advantages/disadvantages of writing a book in first person?
6. All the books feature jigsaw pieces on the covers. Why do you think that is?
7. Compare the tasks assigned to each of the grandsons. Which one would you choose?

## Chapter 9: Creative Project Ideas

1. Write a blog entry as one of the protagonists from Seven. Consider doing an entry from the perspective of the character before and after his journey. How is the character feeling? What is he looking forward to or anxious about? What was the most rewarding part of the journey? How did the adventure differ from his initial expectations?
2. Create a YouTube video as one of the grandsons. In 60 seconds or less, explain where you are going and what your task is. Imagine you are trying to make the video go viral—what would make the most compelling 60-second clip? How will you encourage people to share your video?

—OR—

In pairs, choose one person to be the interviewer and one to be a character from Seven. Record a short interview about the character's adventure, imagining you are going to post it on YouTube. Remember to create compelling questions to encourage a large following of viewers. What makes a good interview? What entices people to "share" a YouTube video?

3. What if the characters from Seven were active on Twitter? How would they describe their adventures? Identify the 5 most important events in the Seven novel of your choice. Using 140 characters or less, write 5 tweets that encapsulate those moments. Remember to make the tweets edgy and exciting for your followers. What makes an eye-catching tweet? How can word-choice make the subject matter more interesting for your readers?

# Chapter 10: Classroom Teaching Ideas

Here are some general classroom teaching ideas that could be used with any book from Seven (the series).

## *Reading Workshop—Individual Silent Reading*

To encourage students to read every day, allow a set period of time in each class for silent reading. Daily reading will increase a student's fluency, enhance their vocabulary, improve their writing skills and raise their test scores. One way to evaluate their reading is to use the following guide to establish a grade. Students will be graded on the number of pages they read, and their pages can be recorded on a reading log that is maintained throughout the year.

Pages	Grade
50 or less . . . . .	65
51 – 74 . . . . .	70
75 – 99 . . . . .	75
100 – 124 . . . . .	80
125 – 149 . . . . .	85
150 – 174 . . . . .	90
175 – 199 . . . . .	95
200 – 225 . . . . .	100

In order to determine if a student has read the book, ask them a few of the following questions.

1. How does the title relate to the story?
2. What does the cover image have to do with the plot of the story?
3. Can you identify and describe any characters displayed on the cover?
4. Who is the antagonist? How does he/she work against the protagonist?
5. What is the result of the conflict between the protagonist and the antagonist?
6. What happens to the antagonist at the end of the story?
7. What is the main problem/conflict the characters deal with?
8. What steps do the characters take to resolve the conflict?
9. Describe the main character.
10. What lesson does the main character learn?

## *Literature Circles*

Literature circles are small student-led book discussion groups comprised of four or five students who are reading the same book.

Literature circles can be used in one of two ways: (1) each group reads a different book, or (2) the entire class reads the same book but breaks into smaller literature circle groups for book discussions. This student-centered instructional technique enables each student to respond to literature in the discussion format regardless of his or her reading level. The students initiate and lead the discussions in their small groups, and the teacher simply acts as observer, facilitator and, as needed, mediator. Assessment in literature circles can be both formal and informal and can include student input.

Generally, literature circles should meet once or twice a week for approximately 20 minutes. Students should come prepared, having read the assigned pages and completed some type of written response. No official leader or roles are assigned; all students know that they are expected to participate and respond to the comments, questions and ideas of the other members of the group in genuine give-and-take conversations.

### ***Assigning Students to Book Discussion Groups***

The most successful assignment of students to literature circles occurs when students are placed in groups based on their interest in a particular book. If the teacher has a collection of various titles, the teacher may want to “book talk” the titles, then have students vote for their preferred reading selection. The teacher then assigns students to book discussion groups based on book preferences, as much as possible, and availability of books. When students are able to read a genre or topic that piques their interest, their book discussion group will be much more lively and authentic.

To give each student a “sneak preview” option of a variety of Seven (the series) books, give each student a different Seven title and set a timer for five minutes. Ask students to look at the cover and read the first few pages of the book for five minutes. When the time period is up, ask students to pass their book to another student and set the timer for an additional five minutes. Repeat this process at least four times, and then allow students to select the book that captures their attention.

### ***Student Ownership of Book Discussion Groups***

Once students have been assigned to book discussion groups, students need to know that the success of the literature circle discussion group is their responsibility. Allowing students to set ground rules for the discussion, such as expectations for participation and respect for group members, as well as establishing a reading schedule (within reasonable limits) will be the first step in giving students ownership of the discussion. For example, students may decide that, if a member of their group has not done the reading, they cannot participate in the discussion that day. The teacher can assist in this decision-making process by clarifying expectations, such as whether or not class time will be allotted for reading of the novel and, if so, how much time will be allowed. The teacher will also need to indicate a completion date and group project due date, if applicable. The groups should use this information to set reasonable reading schedules. This will help keep the readers at more or less the same place in the book and facilitate discussion.

### ***Modeling Responses to Literature***

When introducing the concept of literature circles, the teacher should explain to students that the group discussions are conversations about their reading and that all students are expected to contribute to the discussions. Teachers can facilitate these book discussions before students are ever placed in literature circle discussion groups by encouraging the type of open-ended responses that are the essence of literature circle discussions. One way to do this is for the teacher to introduce the open-ended type of student response in a class discussion. The teacher may model responses or solicit responses from the students either as the class reads the novel or after individual reading of sections of the book. During the novel discussion, the teacher may ask questions that help the students to focus on:

- Themes: loss/abandonment, family relationships, self-discovery, friendship
- Characters: honesty, open-mindedness, courage
- Writing Style: story within a story, literary allusions, imagery

During classroom discussions, the teacher can encourage responses that focus on the “big ideas” (theme, characterization, etc.); textual passages (foreshadowing, imagery, etc.); connections (to students’ personal lives, other texts or the real world); and style (diction, vocabulary). This classification process allows students to see the wide variety of acceptable responses and the open-ended nature of the discussions. With such experience, they are more fully prepared to come to literature circle discussions able to discuss both the story and more advanced literary topics, including author’s technique, literary devices, figurative language, diction and other topics.

### ***Written Preparation for Literature Circle Discussions***

Literature circles are most effective when students do some written preparation prior to attending the literature circle discussion group. This written preparation insures that when the students do meet with their groups, each student has at least one or two “conversation starters” in case the free-flowing conversation about the book stalls or breaks down. For younger elementary students, this written preparation may be in the form of a drawing of a scene from the book or a journal entry recording their thoughts at an event in the story. For older students, written preparation maybe in the form of a response to a question focusing on a literary element, a character journal or a dialectical journal that reflects on both the textual elements of the story as well as the student’s individual response to the story. All students bring their written preparation to the book discussions and USE THEM AS NEEDED. They are “conversation starters” and students should not take turns reading them aloud.



***Dialectical Journals***

Dialectical journals offer the distinct advantage of recording the student's thought processes at a specific point in the novel and preserving those thoughts for the book discussion groups that will ensue. Dialectical journals invite a dialogue between the reader and the text. These double-entry journals record two types of information: on the left side of the journal, students write a reference to the text, a quotation or passage, or a summary of an event; and on the right side, a personal response to the text referenced. Again, teachers should encourage responses such as connections to self, the outside world or another text; predictions; questions; visualizations (in words or drawings); clarifications of the text; conclusions or inferences; or statements that are indicators of the student's comprehension. Students should be encouraged to make an entry in their dialectical journals as they read or to put a Post-it note in the book where they have a response and return to the Post-it note when they have finished reading and are ready to write in their dialectical journal.

***Group Sharing***

Teachers and students can enjoy and benefit from an end-of-the-book project that focuses on higher-order thinking skills. Groups can choose one or more of these options or suggest another idea for their group sharing project:

- Make a collage which might be found hanging in the bedroom of one of the characters, and write a brief explanation of each item selected.
- Write diary entries that one of the characters might have written during the course of the story.
- Write a poem or song that expresses one or more of the characters' feelings.
- Create a piece of artwork that interprets one of the themes of the book.
- Write and perform a skit based on the book.
- Write letters that two of the characters might have written to one another about what was happening in their lives.
- Create a board game based on the book.
- Write and record a news broadcast about the events in the book.
- Write and illustrate a picture book based on the characters and events.
- Cast the characters in a movie based on the book and develop an advertising campaign for the movie.
- Draw a timeline of the book, complete with illustrations and commentaries.
- Create a cause-and-effect continuum of how and why the main character changes as a result of the events and situations that occur.

After the projects are completed, each group will share their final product with the class.

### ***Book Reviews and Other Culminating Activities***

Ask students to write a review of the book they have read. Encourage them to consider character development, language, plot and theme. A useful format for a book review is:

1. Brief synopsis of plot and introduction to the main characters
2. Comments on the book's theme
3. Something positive about the book
4. A constructive criticism
5. Your overall impression of the book
6. Advice for who might enjoy the book

Students may wish to send their reviews to the author or the publisher.

Divide students into groups of three or four. Have one of the students volunteer to be talk show host. Ask the other students to assume the identity, dress and persona of one of the characters from one of the Seven books. Ask the students to develop a theme for their talk show and a series of questions for the character interviews. Have each group present their interviews to the class.

Many of the central stories in the Seven (the series) books involve situations that could be considered newsworthy. As a class, prepare a news program consisting of a series of news reports—one for each novel read. Students can portray news anchors, reporters, other victims, participants, family members and bystanders in the news stories. Have students write, practice and tape their news stories. Invite other classes to view the newscast.

### **Assessment**

#### ***Informal Assessment***

Teachers can derive multiple informal assessments from literature circle discussion groups. The written preparation students bring to the discussion group can be assessed informally by monitoring which students complete their written preparation. The literature circle discussions can also be assessed informally by observation. A simple checklist or rubric works well here. Did all students participate? Did one or more students monopolize the conversation? Were students respectful of each other during the discussion? Were students respectful of other discussion groups in the room?

A simple “3+1 Big Ideas” sheet can be filled out by each group at the end of their discussion where the group lists three big ideas or topics of conversation for that day plus one statement that clarifies how well the group worked together that day.

A whole class debriefing after literature circles discussions also can be used to informally assess each group's discussion for the day.

***Formal Assessment***

Again, possibilities are many. Students can be asked to write an after-the-discussion journal entry that records the groups' discussion and dynamics for the day. Or students can be asked to take an idea from one of their journal entries and develop the idea with support from the novel. The group-sharing projects also serve as formal assessment. Students should have input on how their final product should be evaluated, and this should be determined prior to the completion of the assignment. The quality of the product as well as the presentation of the product should be taken into consideration.

## Chapter 11: Readers Theater with Seven (the series)

Readers Theater is a dramatic presentation of a written work in a script form. Readers read from a “script,” and reading parts are divided among the readers. No memorization, costumes, blocking or special lighting is needed. Presentations can easily be done in any classroom. Scripts are held by the readers. Lines are not memorized. The focus is on reading the text with expressive voices and gestures, making comprehension of the text meaningful and fun for the students.

Ideas for using any of the Seven titles in a Readers Theater presentation.

- Have students pick and develop one scene from each of the Seven (the series) books and perform them one after another or on successive days;
- Have students write a scene from the book they read and then have another group of students who read a different title perform it;
- Have the whole class work on an imagined scene from before or after the books (eg., a meeting between JD and Bunny where their grandfather is present; one or more of the boys in discussion with their parents; an adventure that occurs after the series concludes; or anything!)

### “Nearing the Summit”

The following scene is adapted from Chapter 22 of *Between Heaven and Earth*, by Eric Walters (Orca Book Publishers, 2012).

Cast of Characters (in order of appearance):

**Doris:** An elder lady climbing Mt. Kilimanjaro for the first time

**DJ:** An athletic teenage boy given the task of carrying his grandfather’s ashes to the top of the mountain

**Sarah:** A young woman from Tanzania who is responsible for guiding the other two to the top

### Scene Summary

After an arduous journey, DJ, Doris and Sarah near the summit of Mt. Kilimanjaro. The path is narrow and steep, with many hairpin turns across the face of the slope. Sarah is in the lead and is in charge of discovering the best footholds as the group climbs. All three are sore, exhausted and struggling to push forward.

**Doris:** Would it be all right if we stopped again? [*slumps backward; then falls*]

**DJ:** [*rushing to her side*] Are you all right?

**Doris:** Just lost my balance a little. Luckily, I’m so short, the ground wasn’t far away. [*smiles weakly*]

Seven (the series)

## Seven (the series)

- DJ:** Water, take some water. *[pulls out Thermos]*
- Doris:** That's your water. You'll need all of it to get to the top.
- DJ:** *[shakes head]* It's *our* water and we'll need it to get *all* of us to the top. *[undoes top of Thermos and hands it to Doris]* Doris, I wouldn't be here without you. I wouldn't have made it this far. We're doing this together.
- Doris:** I just don't think I can.
- DJ:** I don't know if I can either, but either we head up together or we head back down together.
- Doris:** You can't do that! What about your grandfather?
- DJ:** My grandpa wouldn't have left you behind.
- Doris:** I'm just slowing you down.
- DJ:** We'll go at whatever pace we need to go. We're a team. We aren't slowing each other down; we're moving each other forward. Together. When you're ready, we'll start to move again.
- Doris:** *[smiling]* I'm ready.
- DJ:** Well, I'm not. I need some water...and so do you.
- Doris:** *[takes a big swig from the bottle; hands it to DJ]* How's your head?
- DJ:** It could be worse. *[drinks from bottle again]*
- Sarah:** We must go.
- DJ:** *[offers Doris a hand, and they nearly tumble over]*
- Sarah:** *[moving ahead of the other two; then looks back]* Turn off your lights.
- DJ:** What?
- Sarah:** Your lights. Turn them off. *[They do]*
- Doris:** The moon is so bright.
- Sarah:** Not just the moon. The sun is starting to glow over the horizon.
- DJ:** What time is it?
- Sarah:** Almost five, I believe.
- DJ:** *[looks at watch]*
- Doris:** We've been climbing for almost five hours. Well...climbing and resting.
- Sarah:** You cannot do the first without the second. To climb straight would be almost impossible.
- DJ:** Completely impossible, at least for us. You'd have to be Chagga to do that.
- Sarah:** Most Chagga could not. We are doing well.
- DJ:** How much longer do we have to keep doing well?
- Sarah:** Look up. You see where the top disappears, just beyond those climbers?
- DJ:** *[looks up]* That's the top?
- Sarah:** Not the top. Stella's Point. Beyond that, no more than an hour. We must move again. The hill will not come to us.
- DJ:** *[nodding, he pushes himself up but then falls over; he tries again but collapses]*
- Sarah:** Just stay down.
- DJ:** I have to get—
- Sarah:** Just for a few seconds. Just rest lying down.
- Doris:** *[nodding]* Do what she says. There's no energy left for arguing.

**Sarah:** *[reaches under DJ, snapping the clips on his pack and pulling it off him]*  
**DJ:** *[gasping]* What are you doing?  
**Sarah:** Lightening your load. Now let us help you roll over. *[Doris and Sarah take DJ's hands and spin him around into a sitting position]*  
**Sarah:** Now take some water.  
**Doris:** *[hands DJ the water bottle]*  
**DJ:** *[takes a long sip of water]* I'm ready. *[stands up, shakily]* Let me put on my pack and—  
**Sarah:** I am carrying your pack.  
**DJ:** I can take it.  
**Sarah:** You must listen to your guide. I will give it back to you at Stella's Point.  
**Doris:** No arguing. Didn't you offer to take my bag when I wasn't able?  
**DJ:** Of course. *[pauses]* I just thought that...that—  
**Doris:** That you'd be the one carrying somebody else's extra bag? Perhaps that of an old woman?  
**DJ:** *[correcting her]* Perhaps an *older* woman.  
**Doris:** You've been carrying a lot of weight around on those shoulders. It's a sign of strength to know when you need help. We're all here to help each other.  
**DJ:** *[brushing away a tear]* I don't know what to say.  
**Doris:** You don't have to say anything. We're a team, remember? Just climb. All the way to the top.  
**DJ:** *[in agreement]* All the way to the top.

## Tips for Developing a Readers Theater Script

### Formatting

- List the title, author and publisher of the book at the top of the page. Underneath, give the script a descriptive title that tells us something about the scene we are about to read.
- Include the page numbers in the book that the script is adapted from underneath the script title.
- Make the script easier to read by separating the character names and their lines using the tab function. The characters' names and their lines should look like two separate columns.

### Characters

- Create a list of characters that are in the scene. If there are minor characters that only have one line, evaluate whether they need to be in the scene. Is the character's presence important? Could another character speak his/her line? Does that line need to be in the scene anyway?
  - ♦ Include short character descriptions in your list. These can include age, relationship to other characters and details that are relevant to the scene.



- Knowing when to add a narrator or “version” of an existing character (for example, Scott 1 and Scott 2) is very important. Here are some questions to ask yourself when trying to assign characters.
  - ♦ Is the story told in the first person or in the third person? Narrators work best if the story is told in the third person. If a story is told in the first person, splitting the main character into two “versions,” one that speaks dialogue and one that provides the narration, is useful.
  - ♦ Are there any characters discussed in the narrative that do not have any actual dialogue? If so, these characters may come to life on stage better if they are given a chance to speak. This may not be possible in all situations, depending on the author’s style of description.

### *Adaptation*

- What is the focus of the scene? An easy way to figure this out is to identify the conflict in the scene and how it is resolved. This will also give you a clear idea of where the scene should start and end.
- Use the text! Since this is an adaptation, you should not have to write anything new but feel free to delete any text that seems irrelevant.
- Sometimes narrative in a story can be overwhelming, especially when read aloud. Make sure to include enough to allow the audience to understand the scene, but it is important not to let the focus of the scene get lost in descriptive narration.
- If there are natural gestures in the story, include them in parentheses as stage directions. For example, if the line reads “Bob waved at me” you can include this wave as a stage direction by writing “Bob waved at me (*Bob waves*).”

### **Reader Theater Script Adaptation Worksheet**

Use this worksheet to help develop an adaptation of any book.

Book Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Author: \_\_\_\_\_

Published by: \_\_\_\_\_

Adapted from pages: \_\_\_\_\_

### ***Characters & Character Descriptions:***

Make a list of characters who will be in your scene. If you are including an “internal” character, like a first person narrator, you can label them with numbers, e.g. Marcus 1 and Marcus 2, to separate them from that character’s external voice. Usual convention is that Character 1 is always the internal voice.

**Readers Theater—Scene suggestions; from the book and imagined**

***Between Heaven and Earth:***

From the book:

1. Pages 71–79: DJ's just had his bag stolen
2. Pages 94–100: DJ and Sarah go to retrieve DJ's belongings in the back alleys of Moshi.
3. Pages 219–231: DJ, Sarah and Doris reach the summit.

Imaginary:

1. DJ ditches Doris, succumbs to altitude sickness and is carried down the mountain on a stretcher.
2. When he gets back home, DJ organizes a wilderness hiking trip with all the cousins.

***Lost Cause***

From the book:

1. Pages 87–94: Steve and Laia talk
2. Pages 131–135: Steve and Laia meet an old woman who was alive during the war.
3. Pages 155–159: David McLean describes the horror of war and the rescue of a child.

Imaginary:

1. It turns out that Laia and Steve actually are related. Write a scene describing how they find out and how they react.
2. Steve tries to help Bunny understand chemistry.

***Jump Cut***

From the book:

1. Pages 43–49: Spencer, AmberLea and Gloria find a man in the trunk.
2. Pages 59–67: Spencer and his new friends cross the border back into Canada and go to a Tim Hortons, where Spencer learns the meaning of “clean shirts.”
3. Pages 75–82: The cousins' tasks explained.
4. Pages 159–170: Gloria tells her story for the camera.

Imaginary:

1. Spencer's movie gets posted on YouTube and goes viral.
2. Big Al and Spencer's dad start a bakery together.

***Ink Me***

From the book:

1. Pages 22–32: Bunny gets a tattoo.

2. Pages 38–42: Bunny explains the 15 tattoo.
3. Pages 97–102: A drive around with the gang.
4. Pages 169–176: Bunny figures out that Jaden is a girl

Imaginary:

1. Bunny becomes a celebrity when his journal is leaked to the press. He gets a book deal and hires Spencer to make a movie based on his book.
2. Jaden meets Webb and they form a musical duo.

### ***Close to the Heel***

From the book:

1. Pages 1–7: Wilderness camp.
2. Pages 38–43: Rennie's dad allows him to go to Iceland.
3. Pages 129–144: At the waterfall with Brynja.

Imaginary:

1. Rennie meets his cousins before he leaves on his trip.
2. Rennie decides to stay in Iceland and work as a wilderness guide.

### ***Devil's Pass***

From the book:

1. Pages 14–22: Confrontation at the airport.
2. Pages 47–54: After the fight.
3. Pages 141–149: Webb and George talk about the grandfather.
4. Pages 166–175: Encounter with a grizzly.

Imaginary:

1. Webb records an album in Nashville and gets work as a session musician.
2. Webb meets his cousin Bunny by chance in Toronto and goes with him to get his tattoo.

### ***Last Message***

From the book:

1. Pages 80–84: Adam meets the Noels.
2. Pages 143–148: Conversation between Rose and Adam.
3. Pages 181–198: In the Chauvet Cave.
4. Pages 200–205: The Canucks save Adam from the authorities at the cave.

Imaginary:

1. Shirley finds out that Adam has a thing for Vanessa and dumps him.
2. The Canadians turn Adam in to the French police.