



THE LAST
TIMEKEEPERS

AND THE
OF *Arch*
Atlantis

Sharon Ledwith

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The Last Timekeepers and the Arch of Atlantis
by
Sharon Ledwith

Reading Group Guide

This reading group guide includes an introduction, discussion questions, ideas for enhancing your book club, and an interview with author Sharon Ledwith. The suggested questions are intended to help your reading group find new and interesting angles and topics for discussion. I hope these ideas will enrich your conversation and increase your enjoyment of the book.

Introduction

Amanda Sault silently studied the words she just scrawled: *May 1st, 1214—Games and songs and revelry, act as the cloak of devilry. So that an English legend may give to the poor, we must travel to Nottingham to even the score.*

She frowned. She was the Scribe. Amanda knew that meant she was supposed to understand what this riddle meant. But she didn't have a clue. All she knew was that she, her four annoying classmates, and two offbeat adults were standing in what was left of the lost continent of Atlantis and they were supposed to be the Timekeepers, the legendary time travelers handpicked by destiny to keep Earth's history safe from evil. But no one had told them how they were supposed to do it.

Their problem: no matter what happened—good or bad—they weren't supposed to mess with the past. Period. Dot. End of story. Amanda felt hot liquid build in her throat. Her thumb traced the words of the arcane riddle. Their first Timekeeper mission. Amanda knew this wasn't the end of the story.

This was just the beginning.

Questions for Discussion

1. Amanda hates the word "responsible." Do people use words you dislike to describe you? Why do you dislike a particular description? Do some words mean different things to different people?
2. Amanda thinks students in all schools have the same code: Never rat on another classmate. She refuses to tell who started the food fight. Do you agree with the code? What would you do if you were in Amanda's place? Is there ever a time you should tell what someone did?

3. Several times in the book, the students make assumptions about others, such as the rumor that Ms. Spencer practices witchcraft. Do you think making assumptions is something everyone does? Has anyone made assumptions about you? Why do you think they made that particular assumption? How did it make you feel?
4. Amanda and the other Timekeepers have to work as a team to finish their task. Have you ever worked with a team? How did you get everyone to work together? What specific talent or quality do you need to lead a team of people who have to work together even though they may not like each other?
5. Amanda uses poetry and a journal to express her feelings about her mother's drinking instead of saying them out loud. Is this a good idea? What are other unspoken ways to express feelings? Do you have feelings you think you need to hide? How do you express them?
6. Ms. Spencer can do a lot of things very well, including archery. Amanda thinks Ms. Spencer immerses herself in what interests her, and that's how she got to be so good at various skills. Do you have a specific interest that you spend a lot of time learning? What skills have you learned that you would be able to use in a past time in history?
7. The kids in the book often call each other by nicknames. Do you have a nickname? Do you like it? Have you given other people nicknames? Do you think nicknames can be a good thing, or do they sometimes make people feel bad about themselves?
8. Ravi wears a prosthesis that he can control with his thoughts when he's on a Timekeeper mission. He thinks being able to use his hand that way is like having a superpower. What superpower would you like to have? Why? How would you use your superpower?
9. The Timekeepers need special necklaces in order to understand different languages. Do you speak more than one language? What is your second language, and why do you think it's important? What would you do if you had to travel somewhere and you couldn't understand what people were saying? How would you communicate?
10. When the Timekeepers walk around Nottingham telling people about Robin Hood and his deeds, the stories get changed by the people who hear them. Have you ever been told a story you knew was wrong? Why do you think stories get changed? Does it matter that other people add things to stories that might not be true?

Enhancing Your Book Club

1. Plan a party for book club members with a theme from times past, like the May Day celebration in the book. Imagine what clothes you would need to wear. How would you make the party look, smell and sound authentic? What food would you serve? What games would you organize for people to play?

2. Ask each book club member to find or write several riddles for the other members to solve, like the ones Amanda has to solve in order to complete Timekeeper missions. The riddles can be part of a series of questions, such as clues leading to a prize or treasure.
3. Make a stack of paper, consisting of one sheet for each book club member, and give each club member a pen. Sit in a circle, and ask the first person to write a sentence on the top sheet of paper, then pass the stack of paper to the person on their right, who looks at the sentence and puts it on the bottom of the stack. On the new, blank piece of paper, the second person draws a picture of the sentence, and passes the stack to the third person. The third person looks at the picture, puts the paper on the bottom of the stack, writes a sentence about the picture, and passes the stack on. Do this until the first person has the original sentence back. Read the end result out loud. Discuss how and why the original sentence got changed.
4. Choose a single character from a legend or myth, and ask each book club member to write five words related to that character on a card. Exchange cards. Ask each person to use the words on the card they receive to make up a ballad, like the ones Alan a'Dale, the jongleur in the book, created. Tell or sing the stories out loud, as if you are an entertainer. Discuss the differences and similarities of the ballads. How many different ways was the same character described?

A Conversation with Sharon Ledwith

1. Tell us the story behind *The Last Timekeepers and the Arch of Atlantis*. What inspired you to write it? How does the book relate to your life?

Well, the idea came to me in a dream I had around 1998. In this dream, I saw seven arches, and there were seven people (five kids, two adults) with crystals in their hands, walking up to these arches. It definitely had an Indiana Jones feel to it (cue the movie soundtrack). But to be honest, ideas come to me naturally, whether they're in my dreams or I'm sitting watching a television show, doing housework or walking the dog. I love all things time travel and mysterious, so I naturally fell into those genres. I also love myths and legends—where did they come from, are they real, is there a smidgen of truth to them? I'd like to think so. Atlantis is one of my favorite myths to play with, and the arches I saw in my dream looked as if they could have come from there. Since I dream journal all the time, I took this as a sign that this “story” must be told.

2. What was your favorite chapter to write and why?

The chapters with the dungeon scene, hands down! That particular scene actually spans two chapters—Chapter 11 (The Hunchback of Nottingham), and Chapter 12 (The Wandering Jongleur). In both those chapters readers are introduced to Miriam Fitzooth (a.k.a. Maid Marion)—a strong, take-no-prisoners kind of gal, and Alan a'Dale—a happy-go-lucky minstrel who develops a crush on Amanda.

3. Did writing this book teach you anything and what was it?

Oh, yeah! Whenever you're writing a book that takes place during a certain time period in history, make sure you research well. Thankfully, history and historical events have documented parameters a writer can adhere to, so it's not like building a fantasy world from scratch (like Oz or Middle Earth). When writing a time travel novel, you have to meld fact with fiction just enough to pull the reader into the author's world, and give them the feeling of experiencing the past along with his or her characters.

4. Amanda Sault, the book's lead character, is a Native American. Do you have an interest in Native American history?

Before I began writing this book, I had taken a week long Native Awareness course being taught on the Canadian Air Force Base we lived near. The course was such an eye opener for me, especially how Native Americans were treated and assimilated in the past. At the end of the course we were invited to have a sweat lodge experience where you pray for others and cleanse yourself from the past. I struck up an amazing friendship with Bill Sault, one of the elders, and named Amanda after him as a tribute.

5. Amanda is also a published poet. Did you write poetry as a child? Did you have any poetry published?

Unfortunately, I was never interested in writing poetry as a girl. I was a tomboy all the way! Looking back, I really wish I had gotten into poetry because it's a great outlet for kids (and adults) to "unstuff" themselves, and get the gunk out of their systems.

6. The first assignment of the Last Timekeepers is to preserve the legend of Robin Hood. Why did you choose that particular story?

I've always been drawn to the legend of Robin Hood. And I know I'm not alone. Who was this intriguing Bowman? Was he just a thief, or was he a hero who robbed from the rich and gave to the poor? During one of my researching sessions, I found some information about an old manuscript that was discovered buried in a church or abbey which contained the first line of a poem written about Robin Hood, so I used that in my book. I also imagined what Robin would be like as an adolescent, and how my characters would interact with his merry band of teens. Honestly, the end result was that the good old days were never this much fun!

7. The Last Timekeepers each receive necklaces made of orichalcum. How did you learn of this metal? Do you own anything made of orichalcum?

The golden-hued material called orichalcum was first described by Greek scholar Plato as a metal that "sparkled like fire." Its composition is somewhat of a mystery. Plato describes orichalcum as something that in his time was only known by name, but was

once a metal more precious than any except gold. Another word for orichalcum is mountain copper. It is possible that some orichalcum may have survived throughout the centuries, but from what I've researched you could only obtain this mysterious metal in Atlantis. Too bad. I would have loved some orichalcum bling!

8. Did you have to do much research for *The Arch of Atlantis*, or did you make everything up?

Oh, my head still hurts from all the research I had to do! First, as everyone knows, there's no scientific evidence that Atlantis existed. So I had to do a lot of digging into the legend of Atlantis, reading many books—especially Edgar Cayce's psychic readings—and surfing the Internet, until I had a fixed idea on how to present this in story form, and into a series of books. There's also no hard evidence or facts that Robin Hood was a real person either. It was the perfect mix for an awesome story! I did make some things up of course, but I kept in tune with the characters' names, places, and events that we've come to know through the many books and movies about the legendary bowman known as Robin Hood.

9. *The Arch of Atlantis* ends with the mystery of what happened to Melody's husband and child unanswered. Why did you end it there?

Well, since I'm writing a series, I have to leave some cliffhangers for the upcoming books I'm writing! I've planned for ten books, plus a prequel for a total of eleven books in the entire series. Each book will be written in a different character's point of view, so the reader will get a chance to know the five main characters intimately. Lilith, the mysterious Atlantean Magus, will be featured as the point-of-view character in the prequel, *Legend of the Timekeepers*.

10. What can we expect next from you? Are you working on anything new right now?

I've just finished the prequel to The Last Timekeepers series entitled *Legend of the Timekeepers* which will be out in 2013. I also have a completed manuscript of the second book in the series entitled *The Last Timekeepers and the Dark Secret* which must be revised and rewritten in Jordan Jensen's point of view. I've also signed with a literary agency to take on another young adult series I've created called Mysterious Tales from Fairy Falls, based on teens with psychic abilities. So, from where I sit, it looks like I'll be one busy author!

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