

Literature Notes

The Thief Lord

by Cornelia Funke

From *Rooted in Language*



Rooted in Language

Growing Readers & Writers

The Thief Lord

Literature Notes

The Thief Lord by Cornelia Funke is a young adult book about two brothers who run away to Venice and find themselves in the company of a group of orphans and the charismatic Thief Lord. Add a multisensory element through the use of simple drawings (stick figures are great) to illustrate the story's progression along the path. Add your own ideas to ours, and join our ongoing discussions on our Facebook group, The Rooted Community!

For more of our ideas and to share some of yours, visit us at [RootedinLanguage.com](https://www.rootedinlanguage.com)

or on



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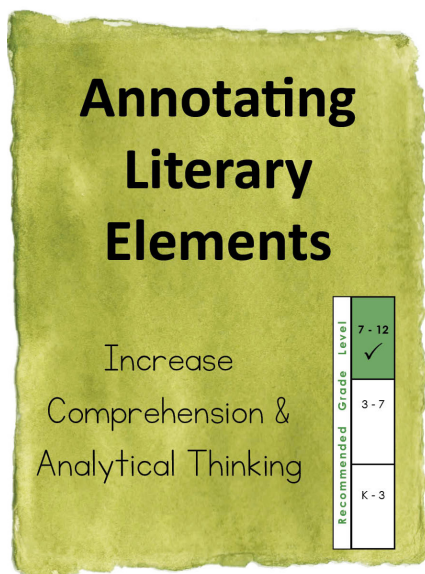
For the most effective application of this resource, click to watch our related deep dive video, [The Thief Lord](#), located on the Rooted in Language YouTube channel, or scan the QR code. The video is divided into four parts with timestamps marking each segment.



Any story can be analyzed from any perspective or with any style. This Literature Notes packet approaches *The Thief Lord* primarily from the perspective of character. The packet provides insight into the story through the introduction, interaction, growth, and relationship of characters.

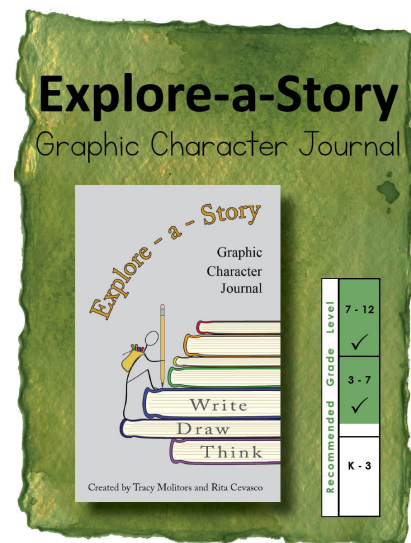
For other ways to analyze stories, look for *Annotating Literary Elements*, and *Explore-a-Story*, available in the [Rooted Shop](#), and the [Deep Dive: Crispin the Cross of Lead](#) free download with video.

Available in the shop:



Annotating Literary Elements ~ for more on the plot arc and literary elements referenced throughout this series

Explore-a-Story ~ for deep character analysis with writing



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Part 1: The Introduction

Chapters 1 - 15

“The Introduction” refers to the first quarter of the book, where we meet the cast of characters. The Thief Lord has a large cast, so it is important to distinguish between different characters. Each one has unique behaviors, opinions, attitudes, and personalities. Each character is complex and realistic, and they are all tangled in a complex web of relationships.

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Chapter 1:

It was autumn in Venice when Victor first heard of Prosper and Bo. The canals, gleaming in the sun, dappled the ancient brickwork with gold. But the wind was blowing ice-cold air from the sea, reminding the Venetians that winter was approaching. Even the air in the alleyways tasted of snow, and only the wings of the carved angels and dragons high up on the rooftops felt any real warmth from the pale sun (7).

Things to notice:

The opening paragraph of a book typically provides a lot of key information. We are introduced to three characters (Victor, Prosper, Bo), the city (Venice), and the time of year/weather (autumn turning cold).

The key elements mentioned in the opening paragraph are often key elements for the entire story. These are flags—things to keep your eye on throughout the whole book.

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Creating a Character Web

A Character Web is a useful tool no matter how many characters are in a book, but it is especially helpful when there are several to track. A Character Web can be organized in any way, but it should contain:

- A box or section for each character
- Space to describe that character's personality, skills, interests, or important details
- Room to draw connections between characters

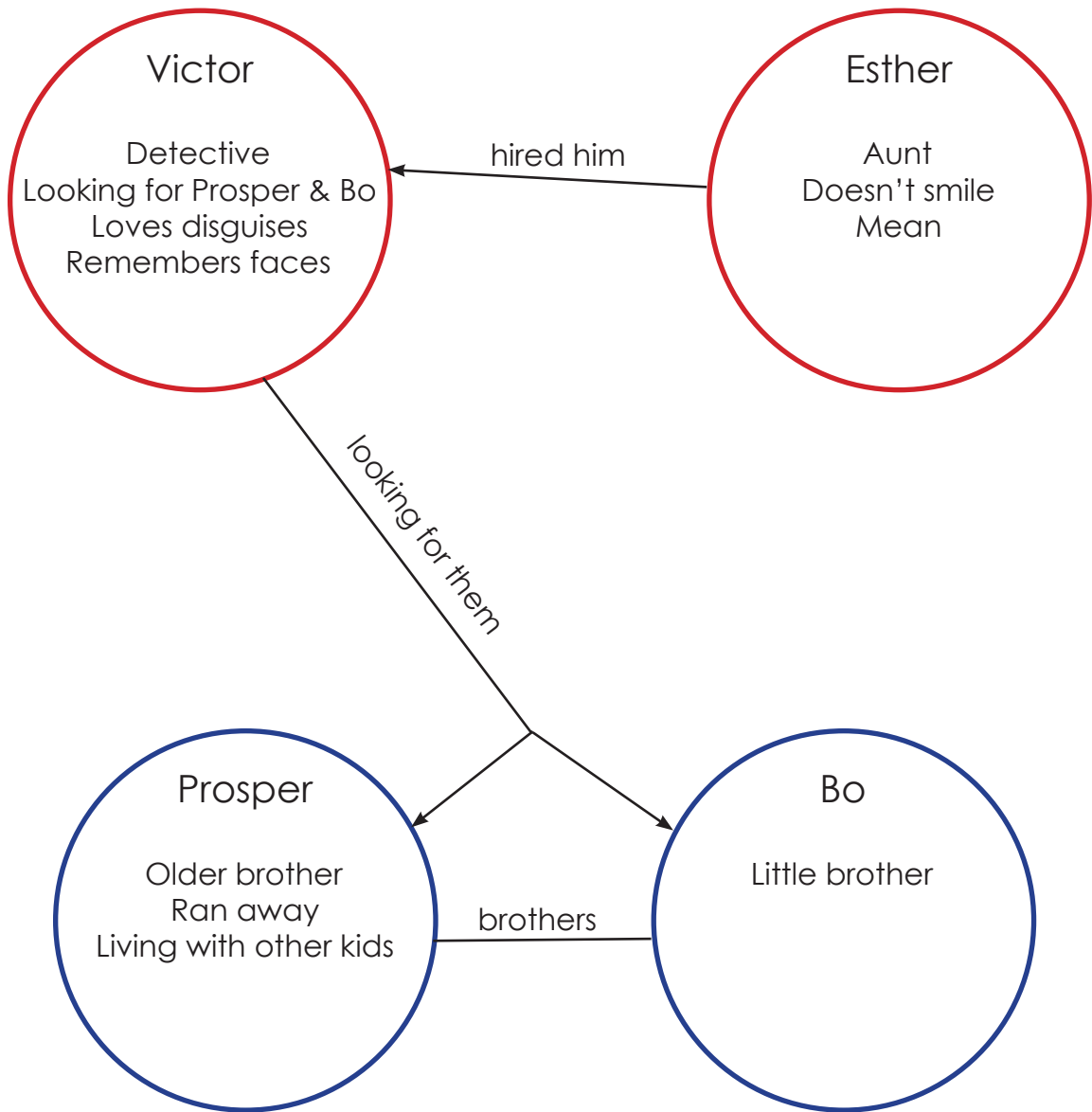
Students might find it helpful to color-code the Character Web. One of the clearest distinctions is to put adults in one color and children in another color. The lines between characters can also have colors, which could indicate the nature of their relationship. Family could be one color, friends another, enemies another.

Keep in mind, the Character Web will change as more characters are introduced and we learn more about each one. It is a growing and changing document, so it might be messy—which is totally fine.

The student will understand the story more clearly if they design and fill out the Character Web. Students can add a multisensory element with pictures or drawings to make the Web more exciting!

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Character Web Example:



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Chapter 1 - Meeting Victor:

Whistling a tune, Victor turned away from the window and walked over to his large mirror. Just the weather for trying out his new disguise, he thought, as the sun warmed the back of his sturdy neck. He had bought this new treasure only the previous day: an enormous mustache, so dark and bushy that it would have made any self-respecting walrus extremely jealous. He stuck it carefully under his nose and stood on his toes to make himself taller. He turned to the left, to the right, and became so engrossed in his reflection that he only heard the footsteps on the stair when they stopped outside his door. (8)

Things to notice:

There is something comical about Victor, but also something genuine. He refers to a fake mustache as a treasure and directly compares it to a walrus mustache. But he also takes great care putting on the mustache and spends time studying his reflection. He seems cheerful but takes his job seriously.

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Chapter 1 - Meeting the Hartliebs:

Without saying a word, the woman reached into her bag. She had ash-blonde hair and a pointed nose. Her mouth didn't look as if smiling was its favorite activity. The man was a giant, at least two full heads taller than Victor. His nose was peeling from sunburn and his eyes were small and dull. Doesn't look like he can take a joke either, Victor thought, as he committed the two faces to memory. He could never remember a phone number, but he never forgot a face. (9)

Things to notice:

Esther and Max are each described in a couple sentences. The first description of Esther is that she does not like to smile, which can lead the reader to conclude she is unhappy, serious, and does not play or have fun. Similarly, Max's eyes are "small and dull"—the couple goes together well.

We also get Victor's opinion of the Hartliebs. We can decide if we agree or disagree with Victor, based on the author's description.

We also learn that Victor is good with faces—a skill to note in his box on the character web.

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Chapter 2 & 3 - Meeting Prosper & Bo:

Since they had begun to fend for themselves, Prosper had learned how to steal. Only food at first, but then money too. He hated it. He always got scared and his fingers started to tremble every time. Bo, however, thought it was an exciting game. Prosper had forbidden his brother to steal anything and he told him off very harshly every time he caught him. He certainly didn't want to give Esther a chance to say that he had turned his little brother into a thief. (19)

"Scipio can get into any house," Bo said, skipping along next to Riccio. Two hops on his right leg, two on the left; Bo never just walked—he ran or he bounced. "He raided the Doge's Palace and wasn't caught. He *is* the Thief Lord." (25)

"Prop can haggle like no one else," Bo suddenly said. "When we used to sell things at the flea market, he always put on this stony face and . . ."

"Shut up, Bo!" Prosper interrupted his little brother. His ears had turned bright red. "Selling old toys is a little different from all this . . ." He nervously took the medallion out of Bo's hand. (35)

Things to notice:

Prosper and Bo are both introduced over the course of a couple chapters. Prosper is a more complex character, so there are many sides to his personality. Throughout the first few chapters, we learn a lot of different things about him.

We also learn Bo's opinion of Scipio before we meet Scipio. When a character expresses an opinion, it tells us about the character they are talking about, but also about the character who is talking. We get to decide if we agree or disagree with Bo's opinions of Scipio and Prosper.

Add Prosper and Bo and their personality traits to the Character Web.

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Chapter 4 - Meeting Scipio:

Scipio shrugged. He ran his slender fingers through his long raven black hair, which he usually wore in a ponytail. “You should know by now that I can get into any place I want to.”

Scipio, the Thief Lord.

He liked to act grown-up, although he was not much older than Prosper, and a good bit smaller than Mosca—even in his high-heeled boots. These were much too big for him, but he always kept them well polished—they were black leather, as black as the strange long coat that reached down to his knees. He never went anywhere without them.

“Wake the others,” Scipio commanded in his bossy, condescending voice, which Hornet hated so much. Prosper ignored him. (32)

Things to notice:

Scipio is charismatic and he stands apart from the other children. He chooses to dress differently, specifically in ways that make him look taller and more unique.

We also see that he likes to be in charge, but Prosper ignores his orders. There is a difference between how Scipio views himself and how others view him—this is an important detail to notice for any character. Noticing differences in perspective is a key element to understanding complex character.

Add Scipio and his personality traits to the Character Web.

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Chapter 5 - Meeting Barbarossa:

“I hope you brought some decent goods this time,” the man murmured disdainfully, but the boys noticed how he stared at the bag in Prosper’s hands, like a hungry cat eyeing up a fat, juicy mouse. (40)

“Give me your offer,” came Prosper’s answer. He tried to look as if he knew exactly what Scipio’s loot was worth.

“My offer . . .” Barbarossa paused. He put his fingertips together and closed his eyes. “Well, I admit, there are a couple of quite decent items here this time. So I’ll offer you,” he opened his eyes again, “one hundred thousand lire. And I’m still doing you a favor.”

Riccio held his breath. He imagined all the cakes he could buy for one hundred thousand lire. Mountains of cakes.

But Prosper shook his head. He looked at Barbarossa straight in the eye and said, “No. Five hundred thousand. Or the deal is off.” (42)

Things to notice:

Barbarossa has a business relationship with the Thief Lord and the children, but he has never actually met the Thief Lord. Barbarossa is used to taking advantage of people and getting what he wants. He is greedy and selfish.

We also learn more about Prosper and his haggling skills. He does not let Barbarossa take advantage of them. He is calm and collected, which surprises Barbarossa and works in the children’s favor.

Add Barbarossa and his personality traits to the Character Web.

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Chapter 6:

“Do you sometimes wish you were grown-up?” [Prosper] asked as they crossed a bridge and looked down at its hazy reflection on the water.

Riccio shook his head with astonishment. “No. Why? It’s great being young. You don’t stand out so much and your stomach fills up more quickly. You know what Scipio always says?” He jumped from the bridge onto the street. “Children are caterpillars and adults are butterflies. No butterfly ever remembers what it felt like being a caterpillar.” (53)

Things to notice:

Prosper feels small and ineffective as a child, but Riccio feels free and happy. Riccio gives Scipio’s opinion, which is metaphorical. It also gives further information about Scipio and how he feels about being a child.

This is one of the first times the idea of childhood vs adulthood is brought up explicitly in the book. It is an important idea that comes up throughout the story. Different characters feel differently about being a child/adult. It is a good thing to include on the Character Map.

General chapter observations:

Prosper has two secrets. He does not want to tell Scipio about the job from Barbarossa, and he does not want the group to know about being chased by Victor.

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Chapter 8:

“Scipio just said himself, he should take a break for a while. After all, they’re probably still looking for the man who broke into the Palazzo Contarini. Another break-in would be madness right now. Just stupid!” She turned to Scipio. “If Barbarossa knew that the Thief Lord hasn’t got a single hair on his chin and doesn’t reach up to his shoulder even in a pair of high-heeled boots, he would have never asked him anyway . . .”

“Oh yeah?” Scipio straightened himself up as if that would prove Hornet wrong. “Did you know that Alexander the Great was smaller than me? He had to push a table in front of the Persian throne so he could climb on to it. I’ve made my decision. Tell Barbarossa that the Thief Lord will take the job.” (60)

Things to notice:

Scipio is debating about taking the job. Hornet points out several good reasons to refuse the job, but after she points out Scipio’s age and height, he is more inclined to accept the job. Scipio compares himself to Alexander the Great and decides to accept Barbarossa’s job.

We learn that Scipio is proud and has a few hot buttons. Hornet is the only person who pushes them and stands up to Scipio’s leadership. This also shows us a lot about Hornet’s personality and behavior.

Add Hornet and her personality traits to the Character Web.

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Chapter 9:

Prosper nodded. “So you don’t think . . .” he asked hesitantly, “that we should leave, Bo and I?”

“Pigeon poop!” Hornet shook her head impatiently. “Why should you? The police have been looking for Riccio forever, and have we thrown him out? No. And what about Scipio? Doesn’t he put us in danger, with his evermore crazy raids?” (67)

Things to notice:

Prosper loves Venice and is happy that they found a relatively safe place. He does not want to put that at risk. He is willing to put himself and Bo in danger, running away again, in order to protect the others.

Hornet thinks that is ridiculous and works to make Prosper feel welcome and safe. Just as Prosper is willing to leave in order to protect the group, Hornet is willing to take the risk to protect Prosper and Bo.

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Chapter 10

Things to notice:

We learn a little about the mysterious person who wants to hire the Thief Lord: the Conte. Just like the Thief Lord, the Conte only gives his title, not his name. He is unknown and working through back channels, using Barbarossa as a connection.

We learn more about Barbarossa and his relationship with the kids.

There is an additional problem—the Conte wants to meet with the Thief Lord in person. That means that some of the mystery around the Thief Lord could be shattered. The kids are taking further risks by accepting the Conte's job.

You can add the Conte to the Character Web, but he is not a main character.

Chapter 11

Things to notice:

Victor is one of the first characters we meet. In chapter 1, he seems like a reasonable and nice person. As the chapters unfold, he remains the same person, but we see him from the perspective of the gang. Victor is not a bad guy, but he still stands in the way of the heroes.

This makes it difficult to like Victor. But he is also comical and clumsy (chapter 7) and has ongoing commentary as he waits in the Piazza San Marco (chapter 11), adding to his quiriness. All of this makes it difficult to dislike Victor, despite the gang's feelings toward him.

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Chapter 12:

“One shouldn’t wear a mask in a church, any more than a hat.” The uneven voice sounded like a very old man.

“One also shouldn’t talk about a theft in a confessional,” Scipio answered, “and that’s what we’re here for, isn’t it?”

Prosper thought he could hear a small laugh. “So you really are the Thief Lord,” the stranger said quietly. “Well, keep your mask on if you don’t want to show your face, but I can still see that you’re very young.”

Scipio knelt bolt upright. “Indeed. And you are very old, judging by your voice. Does age matter in this transaction?” (78)

Things to notice:

Scipio is a quick thinker and is confident in unusual situations. He matches the Conte’s wit and responses, earning his respect.

Prosper and Mosca both see Scipio as adult-like in this moment, which enforces his position as their leader.

General chapter observations:

Bo, Riccio, and Hornet are left outside of the meeting. Riccio and Bo are upset, but Hornet is angry. She confronts Scipio about it before the meeting and calls him out for leaving the trio outside. She continues to be the least supportive of Scipio’s leadership and decisions.

Bits and Pieces of writing:

This chapter has many differing, strong opinions. Students can better understand character opinions by writing a small scene from a certain perspective. Try writing about this chapter like a diary entry. Use different perspectives: Scipio, Prosper, the Conte, and Hornet.

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Chapter 13

Things to notice:

Victor interacts with Bo for the first time. While Victor is not a bad guy, his goal is in direct opposition to Prosper and Bo's goal and this chapter gives Victor a huge advantage.

Victor presents himself as trustworthy, innocent, and harmless. Bo also views him that way, but we know that he is working for Esther. This is a perfect example of dramatic irony—when the reader knows something that the characters do not. In this case, we know why Victor is talking to Bo, but Bo is ignorant.

Chapter 14

Things to notice:

The gang realizes that Victor is on to them. They devise a way to get back to the Star-Palace without being caught.

We also see that Bo does not always listen to Prosper, but he does listen to Scipio. Bo sees Scipio as a hero, but does not see his brother that way. This could lead to potential conflict between Prosper and Scipio.

Chapter 15

Things to notice:

The gang figures out a way to escape from Victor. He is led on a chase and ends up losing track of the kids, getting attacked by passersby, and almost arrested. Victor's life has become much more complicated because of how clever and resourceful Scipio is.

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Part 2: The Revelation

Chapters 16 - 29

“The Revelation” refers to the middle portion of the story in which the reader learns new truths and the characters learn things about each other. This leads to internal and external conflict. The relationships between the characters also grow more complicated.

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Chapter 16:

Scipio listened to him impassively, his face hidden by the mask. Riccio had finished and was looking at him apprehensively, but Scipio was quiet, thinking. Then he shrugged and said, “Fine.”

Riccio was so stunned that he just looked at Scipio open-mouthed.

“Yes, why not?” Scipio continued. “Let’s do this burglary together. Of course, only those who really want to.” He looked at Prosper, who remained silent. (106-107)

Things to notice:

Riccio is determined to go with Scipio on this burglary job and Scipio agrees. This is the first time he has ever included anyone else in the actual robbery—not just the preparation. It is shocking to Riccio, who does not know how to react.

Scipio is aware that Prosper does not agree with stealing and does not support this idea. Scipio is giving him an option to stay out of the burglary job, even if he does not outright say it.

Bits and Pieces of writing:

There must be a reason behind Scipio’s sudden change of heart. Changes in a character’s behavior are good moments for discussion or small bits of writing: Why does Scipio let them in on this job? What is different about this one?

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Chapter 17:

Victor turned around and looked into a pair of frightened black eyes. “She’s really not well,” Dottor Massimo’s son murmured. He quickly lowered his head, but Victor had already recognized him. His hair was tied back in a tight little ponytail and his eyes didn’t look quite as arrogant as they had before, but there could be no doubt: This was the boy who had so innocently asked Victor the time, just before he and his friends had tricked him. (114)

Things to notice:

Dramatic Irony: when the reader knows something that a character does not.

In this chapter, we learn, through Victor’s perspective, who Scipio really is. However, none of the gang is aware of this truth. Victor becomes the lens through which the reader better understands the story. Because we know about Scipio, but others do not, this is a perfect example of Dramatic Irony.

We also see that Scipio behaves differently when in his father’s presence than when he is the Thief Lord. This is a great example of duality, one of the major themes of the book.

Add Dottore Massimo and his personality to the character web. Pay particular attention to his relationship with Scipio.

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Chapter 18:

Things to notice:

Scipio immediately returns to the Star-Palace but does not reveal his true identity to the gang. Instead, he insists that they are in danger and need to leave right away. Scipio is aware that Victor knows his true identity.

Should Scipio reveal himself to the gang?

Will Victor share Scipio's secret?

Chapter 19:

Things to notice:

The gang devises a plan to capture Victor as he investigates the Star-Palace. They are tricky and Victor is tied up and gagged before he is able to say anything about Scipio.

Bits and Pieces of writing:

The gang has made a key decision, but there may be consequences that they do not foresee. What would you do if you were a part of the gang—would you help keep Victor tied up or would you argue to let him go?

Create a chart or sticky notes of the pros and cons of capturing Victor.

Pros	Cons
He can't call Esther.	They can't keep Victor forever.
They can still live in the Star-Palace.	Capturing him is wrong.
They are safe.	Someone might come looking for Victor.
Scipio's secret is safe...maybe.	Victor might share Scipio's secret.

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Chapter 20:

Things to notice:

Prosper decides to talk with Victor, and Victor is relieved to see him. Throughout the conversation, they both begin to understand each other a little more. Prosper has a very mature perspective about the situation and is struggling with all the information he has, as well as what to do with Victor.

Add any new information or ideas to the pros and cons chart.

Add any new personality traits or relationships between characters to the Character Web.

Chapter 21:

Things to notice:

The gang is arguing over what is to be done with Victor. They recognize the difficulty of the situation they are in, but do not have a clear way out of it. There seems to be no easy, clear, or right answer.

Bits and Pieces of writing:

The situation with Victor brings up the theme of morality—there are some options that are clearly wrong or illegal, but fewer options that are clearly right. The pros and cons list is a great base to write an argument from one side or the other, answering the question, “What should the gang do with Victor?”

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Chapter 22:

Ten minutes later the phone rang again, just as Prosper discovered a transparent cover with a photograph of him and his brother. Mesmerized, he stared at the picture.

Hornet looked up from her book. “What is it?”

“Just a photo. Of Bo and me. My mom took it on my eleventh birthday.”

The phone rang once more and then fell silent again. “What did the snoop write down about you?” Hornet asked.

Prosper put the picture in his jacket and pushed Victor’s notes across to her. “I can’t make it out.”

“Let’s see.” Hornet put her book aside and leaned over the desk. “Well, he doesn’t seem to like your aunt either. I think it says ‘weasel-face’ and he’s called your uncle ‘the wardrobe’. *Not interested in the older one,*” she read, “*probably because he doesn’t look like a teddy bear anymore.*” Hornet smiled at Prosper. “No, you definitely don’t. He’s really not that stupid, our snoop.” (145)

Things to notice:

Prosper and Hornet investigate Victor’s office in an effort to learn more about him and what he knows about the brothers. In the process, Prosper is caught off guard by a picture of himself and Bo. It is a memory of their lives before everything became difficult, uncertain, and confusing.

We see Victor’s opinions of the Hartliebs and how they align with Prosper’s opinions. Victor and Prosper have more in common than either one originally thought.

Add any additional personality traits or relationships between characters to the Character Web.

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Chapter 23:

“I stole something off him,” Riccio muttered. “OK, I tried to steal something, and he caught me. So I threatened him with my friends and he let me go on the condition that I took him to meet my gang.”

“Back then we were living in the basement of an old house,” Mosca explained. “Riccio, Hornet, and me. It was over in Castello. You can always find a place there. No one wants to live there anymore. It was awful: wet and cold and we were always ill and we never had enough to eat.”

“You may as well say it straight: We were in deep trouble,” Riccio interrupted him impatiently. “‘You can’t live in a rat hole like this,’ is what Scipio told us. And so he brought us here, to the Star-Palace. He picked the lock of the emergency exit and told us to barricade the front entrance. And since then we’ve been doing quite well. Until you turned up.”

“OK, I get it. Victor the spoilsport.” Victor looked at Prosper. “And when Hornet picked up you and Bo,” he said to him, “the Thief Lord just fed the two of you as well.”

“Scip brought us coats and blankets. And he even gave me these.” Bo sat down next to Victor and held up one of his kittens. Lost in thought, Victor began to tickle it behind the ears until it started to purr and lick his fingers with its rough tongue.

“Why did you say Scipio was a liar?” Hornet asked.

“Forget what I said.” Victor patted Bo’s black hair.

Annotation demonstration:

Watch the accompanying [Deep Dive: The Thief Lord](#) video for an example of annotation using this passage.

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Chapter 24:

Ten minutes can be a long time when you're waiting with a beating heart for something you don't understand, something you don't really want to know. Bo didn't seem particularly bothered by the whole thing. He was quite happy to touch the lions' heads by the fountain and to dip his hands into the cold water. But Prosper felt terrible. He felt betrayed. Deceived. What was Scipio doing in this house? Who was he really?

When Scipio finally appeared at the top of the stairs, Prosper stared at him as if he'd seen a ghost. Scipio stared back. His face was pale and strangely unfamiliar. Then as he started down the stairs with slow and heavy steps, Bo ran toward him.

"Hey, Scip!" he called, stopping at the bottom of the flight. But Scipio didn't answer. He hesitated and looked at Prosper, who glared back at him until Scipio lowered his head. As he lifted it again to say something, a man appeared at the balustrade. He was tall and thin and had the same dark eyes as Scipio.

"What are you still doing here?" he said with a bored voice. "Don't you have a lesson today?" He glanced briefly at Prosper and Bo.

"In an hour," Scipio replied without looking up at his father. His voice sounded completely different, as if he weren't sure he'd find the right words. He even seemed smaller to Prosper, but that may have been because of the huge house or because he wasn't wearing his high-heeled boots. He was dressed like one of the rich kids Prosper had sometimes seen in expensive restaurants, sitting stiffly and eating with a knife and fork without spilling anything. (158)

Annotation demonstration:

Watch the accompanying [Deep Dive: The Thief Lord](#) video for an example of annotation using this passage.

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Chapter 25:

Things to notice:

Victor escapes from his make-shift prison, but he leaves a note of assurance for the gang. This note tells us a lot about the kind of person Victor is; he did not just leave without a word, he did not call the police, and he is not going to do anything about the Star-Palace. He is only interested in being safe at home again.

Add any additional personality traits or relationships between characters to the Character Web.

Chapter 26:

Things to notice:

This is the first time any of them have actually broken into a house, despite all their posturing and bragging and claims. This is totally new territory, especially for Scipio. The break-in is not necessarily successful, even though they find the wing. It is a little chaotic and disorganized, and they are ultimately caught.

Ida Spavento holds them at gun-point, but eventually decides she will let them stay and she will tell them the story of the wing.

Add Ida Spavento and her personality traits to the Character Web.

Bits and Pieces of writing:

Scipio shows up at the break-in, even though the gang knows his true identity now. There is a lot of tension between everyone. This is a good scene to write from multiple perspectives, like diary entries for different characters, all about the same scene. Scipio, Riccio, and Prosper all have different priorities, plans, and concerns, but are all in the same space together.

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Chapter 27:

Suddenly Scipio said, "I'm not going back." He sounded choked up. "I will never ever go back home. That's it. I don't need them. If that merry-go-round really does exist, then I'll be on it faster than the Conte, and I'll only get off when I'm at least a good head taller than him and with a beard on my chin. If you don't want to take the deal, then I'll do it alone. I'm going to find that merry-go-round so nobody can treat me like a stupid pet animal ever again." (181)

Things to notice:

Scipio is obsessed with the merry-go-round and is determined to ride it. He is willing to work by himself to achieve this goal because he hates being a child. The power and independence that Scipio sees adults have, coupled with how he is treated by his father, means Scipio has no interest in being a child anymore. He finally has a quick solution to his problem.

Bits and Pieces of writing:

This is a great discussion point and hinges on our perception of adulthood vs childhood. Scipio wants to ride the merry-go-round. Would you? If you had the opportunity to become an adult, would you do so?

The secondary question that accompanies riding the merry-go-round is if it truly exists. This is a magical element to the book that Ida explains is just an old legend. It is a great question to discuss and write about: Do you think the merry-go-round really exists? Is it real and does it actually work?

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Chapter 28:

Things to notice:

Scipio finally has a conversation with the gang and fully confesses to how and what he has been stealing. He tries to explain what he did for the gang and why he did it. But they see everything he has done as a betrayal and they refuse to look at what he has done to help them. He was their hero and he let them down in the most deep, intense, and personal way possible.

Prosper stands up for Scipio, to a certain extent. He understands a little more than the others and sees that Scipio is truly afraid of his father and his home. But Prosper also knows that Scipio has to go home, for everyone's safety.

Chapter 29:

Things to notice:

Prosper, Hornet, and Bo go to Barbarossa's shop to retrieve the letter about their arranged meeting place. Barbarossa is sneaky and a liar—he has opened the envelope in an effort to butt into their arrangement. He is also incredibly nosy about the item they stole for the Conte and does not want them to leave without telling him.

Winter officially arrives in Venice. The children are fascinated and mesmerized by the snow, but Barbarossa sees the coming winter only as a negative thing. This difference in attitude is a good detail to note on the Character Web.

The Thief Lord
by Cornelia Funke

Part 3: The Uncertainty

Chapters 30 - 42

“The Uncertainty” refers to the third section of the book, when the plot continues to grow more complex and more mysteries unfold. Relationships also grow more complicated as we begin to better understand the intricacies and subtleties of each character. This portion of the story inspires more questions than it answers, driving toward the conclusion.

The Thief Lord

by Cornelia Funke

Chapter 30:

“I’ve had copies made of the photograph you sent us,” she continued. “It arrived shortly after we spoke to your secretary and I had posters made from it. We’re offering quite a substantial reward. I know you have already tried to dissuade us from using these means to search for the boys, and I do admit that a reward draws out the riffraff. But I will have those posters put up by every canal, every bar, every cafe, and every museum. I will find Bo, before he dies of pneumonia or consumption in this infernal city. He has to be protected from his selfish brother.” (197)

Things to notice:

Esther has decided to take things into her own hands, disagreeing with Victor’s attempts to convince her that the boys have left Venice. We get to see her harsh opinions of everything related to Venice and her intensity about retrieving Bo.

She calls Prosper “selfish” and says Bo must be protected from him, while we, as the readers, know that Prosper has been working very hard to protect Bo. The clash of Prosper’s perspective about Esther and her perspective about Prosper displays their ongoing battle and the irony of their situation.

This also increases the difficulty for Prosper and Bo to stay hidden. The stakes have been raised—they are more likely to be spotted, and therefore, Bo is more likely to be taken from Prosper.

The Thief Lord by Cornelia Funke

Chapter 31:

Things to notice:

Most of the gang is out on the water with Ida, waiting to make the exchange with the Conte. The situation continues to grow more dangerous and tense; not only are the kids involved in something that is more complicated and dangerous than what they are used to, but they also have internal and external conflict about Scipio.

The Thief Lord by Cornelia Funke

Chapter 32:

“Yes, that’s the one!” Ida whispered. “Isola Segreta, the Secret Isle. There are some really spooky stories about this place. The Valaresso, one of the oldest families of Venice, used to have an estate here, but that was a long time ago. I thought the family had moved away years ago and that the island was deserted. It seems I was wrong.”

“Isola Segreta?” Mosca stared at the distant lights. “That’s the island where nobody ever goes.”

“That’s right. It’s not easy to find a boatman who will bring you there,” Ida answered, not taking the binoculars from her eyes. “The island’s supposed to be bewitched. Terrible things happen there. It’s said nobody who’s ever visited the Isola Segreta has lived to tell about it. So that’s where the merry-go-round of the Merciful Sisters has ended up, is it?” (209)

Things to notice:

We learn about the history of Isola Segreta—one of the mysterious islands of Venice that is shrouded in folk lore and ghost stories. The mysterious element of the island, combined with the mysterious magic of the merry-go-round seems fitting. However, the truth or fiction of one story does call into question the truth or fiction of the other: if the merry-go-round is magical, then perhaps the island is truly cursed. Or, the island is not actually cursed (it’s just an old story), therefore the merry-go-round cannot actually be magical either.

The combination of these two stories is a good discussion point, as well as discussing if the characters themselves actually believe the stories.

The Thief Lord by Cornelia Funke

Chapter 33:

Things to notice:

After the mystery and danger surrounding the trip out to Isola Segreta, the gang expects to return home to something normal and familiar. Instead, they are met with a cryptic note from Hornet. Hornet and Bo are not at the Star-Palace, nor are they at the secondary meeting place. While everyone is worried, Prosper is experiencing the most uncertainty and difficulty in the face of his missing brother.

Chapter 34:

Things to notice:

Scipio returns home to find Hornet being taken away by the police. He has an internal debate about how to respond to seeing Hornet—whether he should acknowledge their friendship or act as if she is unfamiliar. We get to see more of Scipio and his father’s relationship, specifically how Dottore Massimo treats Scipio. Scipio is largely ignored and his desires and interests are dismissed as absurd, childish fantasy. Scipio is powerless to change his relationship with his father.

Chapter 35:

Things to notice:

Prosper turns to Victor for help. The gang realizes that they cannot do much against the police and the system in place to handle orphans and runaways; they must find an adult who can help them. Prosper has removed himself from the group, believing that Bo is gone for good. He has failed at keeping his brother safe and is at a loss for what to do next.

This is another great example of the difference between being an adult versus being a child. The gang decides that not only Victor can help them, but also Ida Spavento. The gang’s perspective about adults has started to shift.

The Thief Lord
by Cornelia Funke

Chapter 36:

Ida smiled. “I even have some false beards!” she said. “A whole collection.”

“Really?” Victor looked at Riccio. “Mine were stolen recently, but luckily I recovered them today.”

Riccio blushed and turned to the window.

Victor followed Ida to a small room on the ground floor that contained nothing but two enormous walk-in wardrobes. While he chose a suit, he thought to himself: Quite astounding that she should also have a collection of false beards. (234)

Things to notice:

Victor and Ida have more in common than either one was expecting. Their similar interest in keeping the gang safe has brought them together, which has given them the chance to get to know each other better. Their quirks and unusual interests separate them from the other adults in the story and make them more fitting as allies for the gang.

The Thief Lord by Cornelia Funke

Chapter 37:

Hornet stood up and crossed to the window, so she could look down into the courtyard. A couple of pigeons were pecking between the stones. They could fly away anytime, just like that. Then Hornet saw two adults walk through the gate: a woman with a black hat and a bearded man. The sister with the loud voice was leading them toward the main building. Had they come here to adopt a child? They probably wanted a small one, a baby if possible. The little ones had a good chance of finding new parents. The others would have to wait, year by year, days, weeks, months, until they were grown-up. It took so long to grow up.

Hornet pressed her cheek against the cold glass. Although the sisters had kept asking her, she hadn't told them her real name. She definitely didn't want to stay here, but she also didn't want to go home. If, like Riccio, you didn't have parents, it was easy to imagine how wonderful they might have been. But what if you had parents and they weren't wonderful at all? No, she wouldn't tell them her name. Ever. (236)

Things to notice:

There is more to Hornet than it first appears. She apparently has a family, but has chosen to run away and live on the street instead. She is more like Scipio than the other children—a child who has chosen a new life in an attempt to get away from an unfortunate home. Unlike Scipio, she completely separated herself from that old life, having decided that a difficult and dangerous life on the street was better than life with her family.

Like Scipio, she also wishes to be grown-up. However, she expresses this wish differently and has a slightly different perspective about it.

The Thief Lord by Cornelia Funke

Chapter 38:

Things to notice:

Prosper decided that he would wait by the Hotel Sandwirth until he could figure out a way to get Bo back. Riccio comes to retrieve him because the others are worried about him and do not want him to be alone. Prosper is resistant at first, but eventually agrees to return to Ida's after hearing that Hornet has returned safely. The relationships between everyone in the gang are strong, and each person cares about the others, though they do not always say so.

Hornet sent Riccio to find Prosper because she knows there is nothing Prosper can do right now; she also knows that won't stop Prosper from trying. She is attempting to help him find a balance between what he wants and what is achievable.

Chapter 39:

Things to notice:

The gang is enjoying the comfort and safety of living with Ida. They are experiencing, for the first time in the story, the benefits of being taken care of. Prosper feels desperate and alone, but Scipio shows up with a plan. While Scipio's plan does not involve Bo, it does give Prosper something else to think about and a possible solution to his problem.

Scipio and Prosper have a deep friendship that has been tested. Each one is going through something difficult, and they both feel alone. However, they are able to connect with each other and use each other as support to move forward.

The Thief Lord by Cornelia Funke

Chapter 40:

Things to notice:

Prosper and Scipio arrive on Isola Sgreta but are quickly discovered by a young girl, who leads them into the stables for the night. She appears to be in charge, but is a new character and an unknown. Prosper keeps Scipio from doing anything rash and only thinks about Bo at the very end of the chapter.

The mystery surrounding the Conte, as well as Isola Segreta, grows larger.

Chapter 41 & 42:

Things to notice:

Esther has had enough of Bo. Bo has refused to act like the perfect angel he looks like. Instead, he throws a fit over being separated from Prosper and disobeys Esther's instructions. Victor has to go find Bo after he runs away, since Esther wants nothing to do with him anymore. Victor finds him in the Star-Palace and takes him back to Ida's house.

Bo has been returned safely, but Prosper is now missing. No one in the gang knows that Prosper has gone with Scipio to Isola Segreta, and Prosper does not know that Bo has come back again.

The Thief Lord by Cornelia Funke

Creating Character Charts

One of the ongoing themes throughout the story deals with duality. Each character may show multiple sides or feelings about something. Create a chart to track the concept that people may have more complexity and subtlety than what is initially presented.

Use the pre-filled chart on the following pages to help guide your discussion and writing, but the student should fill out their own, blank chart with their thoughts and ideas. Make your own chart or print as many copies of p. 43 as you need.

Page 44 has a blank chart with an additional space for quotes. This is a different take on the same chart, with the option to include quotes that support the description or actions of the character.

For more explanation and demonstration of how to use these charts, watch the accompanying [Deep Dive: The Thief Lord](#) video.

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by Cornelia Funke

Winter	Playful Beautiful Mesmerizing Fun	Cold Unexpected Treacherous Dangerous
--------	--	--

Snow can be really fun when you play in it, but it can also be dangerous if you get stuck in it.

Scipio	Liar Powerful In charge Confident	Small Ineffective Has a family Bullied/bossed around
--------	--	---

Scipio is big and powerful when he is with his friends, but he is small and weak at home.

Scipio has more than one side. He has been lying about his different sides. His friends learn about his other side and are sad, angry, and disappointed about it.

Prosper	Hates stealing Protects Bo Escape Esther	Has to stay alive Not Bo's parent Needs protection & safety
---------	--	---

Prosper does not support a lifestyle of thievery but recognizes he must do certain things in order to survive.

He also wants to give Bo a good home that is safe and secure, but he will not give Bo to Esther.

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Victor	Detective Hard worker Doing his job	Feels for Prosper & Bo Friendly & generous Protects the gang
--------	---	--

Victor is a private investigator, earns a good living catching thieves, but doesn't turn in the gang.
He catches thieves as a job but also is making friends with thieves.

Barbarossa	Shop owner Wants to be successful Sells for best deal	In league with "criminals" Exercises power over others
------------	---	---

Barbarossa is the shop owner and wants to make money. He dyes his beard and is not very nice.
He basically robs the kids. He is vain and doesn't want people to know what he really looks like.

Ida Spavento	Every day person Victim of a crime Pulls a gun on burglars	Pities orphans Helps the gang Knows the story of the wing
--------------	--	---

She was bored and wanted an adventure. She likes and cares about kids, especially orphans, and cares less about adults.

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Dottore Massimo	Business man Focused on other adults	Does not care for his son Ignores Scipio Does not care about children
The dottore respects other adults but has not time or respect for kids.		

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Part 4: The Turn

Chapters 43 - 53

“The Turn” typically refers to the last line(s) or stanza of a poem. It is the moment when something is revealed or something new is expressed, which can change the meaning or impact of the poem. The last quarter of *The Thief Lord* introduces a magical element to the story and gives the characters an opportunity to change their lives.

The Thief Lord
by Cornelia Funke

Chapter 43:

“No, he isn’t,” Morosina answered for her brother. “But you,” she looked at Scipio appraisingly, “you’re from a noble family, aren’t you? I can tell from the way you talk, even the way you walk. Do you have a girl to pick up your dirty pants when you throw them on the floor? Someone to polish your boots and make your bed? Someone barely older than you? You can’t possibly have any reason for wanting to ride the merry-go-round, so what are you doing here? If it’s the money you want, we haven’t got it.”

Scipio hung his head. He traced the patterns on the floor with the tip of his boot.

“You’re right, there is someone who picks up my things,” he said without lifting his head. “And I do have my clothes laid out for me in the morning. But I hate it. My parents treat me like I’m too stupid to put my own pants on. *Scipio, wash your hands after you’ve touched the cat. Scipio, don’t step into puddles. For goodness sake, Scipio, do you have to be quite so clumsy all the time? Scipio, just shut up, you don’t know anything about it, you little flea, you useless weed.*”

Scipio now looked Morosina in the eye. “We read the story of Peter Pan at school. D’you know what? He’s a stupid boy, and you and your brother are just like him. Turning yourselves into children so that adults can push you around and laugh at you again! Yes, I do want to take a ride. That’s why I came to this island. But I want to ride it in the other direction. I want to be grown-up. Grown-up! Grown-up!” (272)

Annotation demonstration:

Watch the accompanying [Deep Dive: The Thief Lord](#) video for an example of annotation using this passage.

The Thief Lord by Cornelia Funke

Chapter 44 & 45:

Things to notice:

Prosper and Scipio finally get to see the merry-go-round. It is as beautiful and mystical as they thought. They also learn that the boy and girl living on the island were the Conte and his sister, who have ridden it to become young again and will let Scipio ride it to grow older.

Scipio has the opportunity for his dream to come true and does not really hesitate when given the chance. Prosper also has the opportunity to ride the merry-go-round and become older so that he can take care of Bo. However, Prosper decides not to get on.

What causes Prosper to hesitate? If he knows that he can affect change as an adult, why does he not choose to ride?

After Scipio becomes an adult, they discover that Barbarossa has snuck onto the island in pursuit of the Conte's treasure. Scipio uses his similar appearance to his father to convince Barbarossa to ride the merry-go-round. Barbarossa gets on but ends up breaking the lion's wing.

Is the merry-go-round able to be fixed? If the merry-go-round is broken, what will Scipio, Renzo, Morosina, and Barbarossa do?

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by Cornelia Funke

Chapter 46:

It was early afternoon when they all returned to Venice. But the sky was covered by such dark clouds that Prosper thought that dusk must have already fallen.

He had completely lost all sense of time. The night before—when he and Scipio had headed off for the Isola Segreta—seemed like months ago, and now he felt like a traveler, returning from a journey through strange and distant lands. It began to rain as Scipio steered his father's boat onto the Grand Canal. The wind drove cold raindrops into their faces like hardened tears. (294)

Things to notice:

Weather is used throughout the story to help illustrate how the characters are feeling. Even though they are returning home and Bo has been brought back safely, not everything is cheerful and exciting. The change that Scipio has gone through is permanent and they must return to everyone with this new knowledge.

The weather helps clue us into the internal struggle and emotional difficulty that Prosper is dealing with. Much of what he understands about the world has been challenged, and he has to reconcile that information.

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Chapter 47:

Things to notice:

The whole gang is back together again, but Scipio is now unfamiliar to most of them, as is the young Barbarossa. We learn that Bo did not want Prosper to ride the merry-go-round, which helps inform why Prosper did not choose to ride it.

Chapter 48:

Things to notice:

The relationship between Barbarossa and the gang has completely shifted now that he is much younger and less threatening than he was before. The control that he exercised over them was not because of respect or position, but because he was more wealthy, bigger, and meaner. His power came from his position simply as an adult who could take advantage of those less powerful or more naive. Now that he has become a child, his true personality and the way he interacts with others are revealed.

Chapter 49:

Things to notice:

Scipio strikes out on his own for the first time, truly independent and in a position to take care of himself. Prosper is worried about him, but also recognizes the value and safety of their current situation. Ida has offered them a home, which is nicer than any place they have been before. Hornet and Prosper recognize this, while Riccio sees it somewhat differently.

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Chapter 50 & 51:

Things to notice:

The group devises a plan that might benefit everyone—including Barbarossa and Esther. Despite both Esther and Barbarossa continuously causing difficulties for the gang, the gang still attempts to give them a future.

Is it right for Barbarossa to go with Esther? Will they have a happy life together?

Chapter 52 & 53:

Things to notice:

Barbarossa ends up leaving with Esther, while the gang decides to stay with Ida.

Scipio must make his own way in the world. After discussing things with Victor, he decides that becoming a detective might be the best thing to do. After living his childhood in the shadow of his father, making a new persona as the Thief Lord, he actually has the opportunity to decide what to do with his life and how it will turn out for him. He does not have to live according to anyone else, which he realizes is difficult and nerve-wracking.

The final chapter is an epilogue, which is a good opportunity to talk about that vocabulary word. At the end of the book, we can decide if each character's ending feels satisfying—does it fit what we know about the character, and does it make sense?

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Creating Character Charts

At the end of the book, we have an opportunity to look back at all of the characters. We can see if they grew or changed, or if they stayed the same. We can decide if we relate to any of them, or which ones are our favorites.

The following Character Change chart can be used to track if and how characters have changed from the beginning to the end of the story. Change can be physical, but it can also be mental or emotional. Some character changes are easier to see than others.

Use the pre-filled chart on the following pages to help guide your discussion and writing, but the student should fill out their own, blank chart with their thoughts and ideas. Make your own chart or print as many copies of p. 55 as you need.

For more explanation and demonstration of how to use the following charts, watch the accompanying [Deep Dive: The Thief Lord](#) video.

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Determining Character Type

Once you have completed a character chart for each major character and as many minor characters as you wish, use your summary to place each character in the proper quadrant in the Character Type Chart on p. 56.

Study each character's description to determine if they are:

Round: A character who has depth and internal conflict. They may make mistakes and act differently in different situations. They feel like a real person.

vs.

Flat: A character who is one-dimensional. What you see is what you get. Flat characters are often stereotypes. They might act as a “foil” for a more defined character in the story.

After deciding if a character is round or flat, study each character from beginning to end to determine if they are:

Dynamic: A character who has undergone emotional or internal growth because of what they have experienced in the story. The character has changed from the beginning of the story to the end of the story.

vs.

Static: A character who stays the same throughout the story. The events of the story do not change their perspective or their sense of who they are or want to be.

Once you have determined if a character is Round vs. Flat and whether they are Dynamic vs. Static, you can place the character in the proper quadrant on the chart.

For more explanation and demonstration of how to use the following charts, watch the accompanying [Deep Dive: The Thief Lord](#) video.

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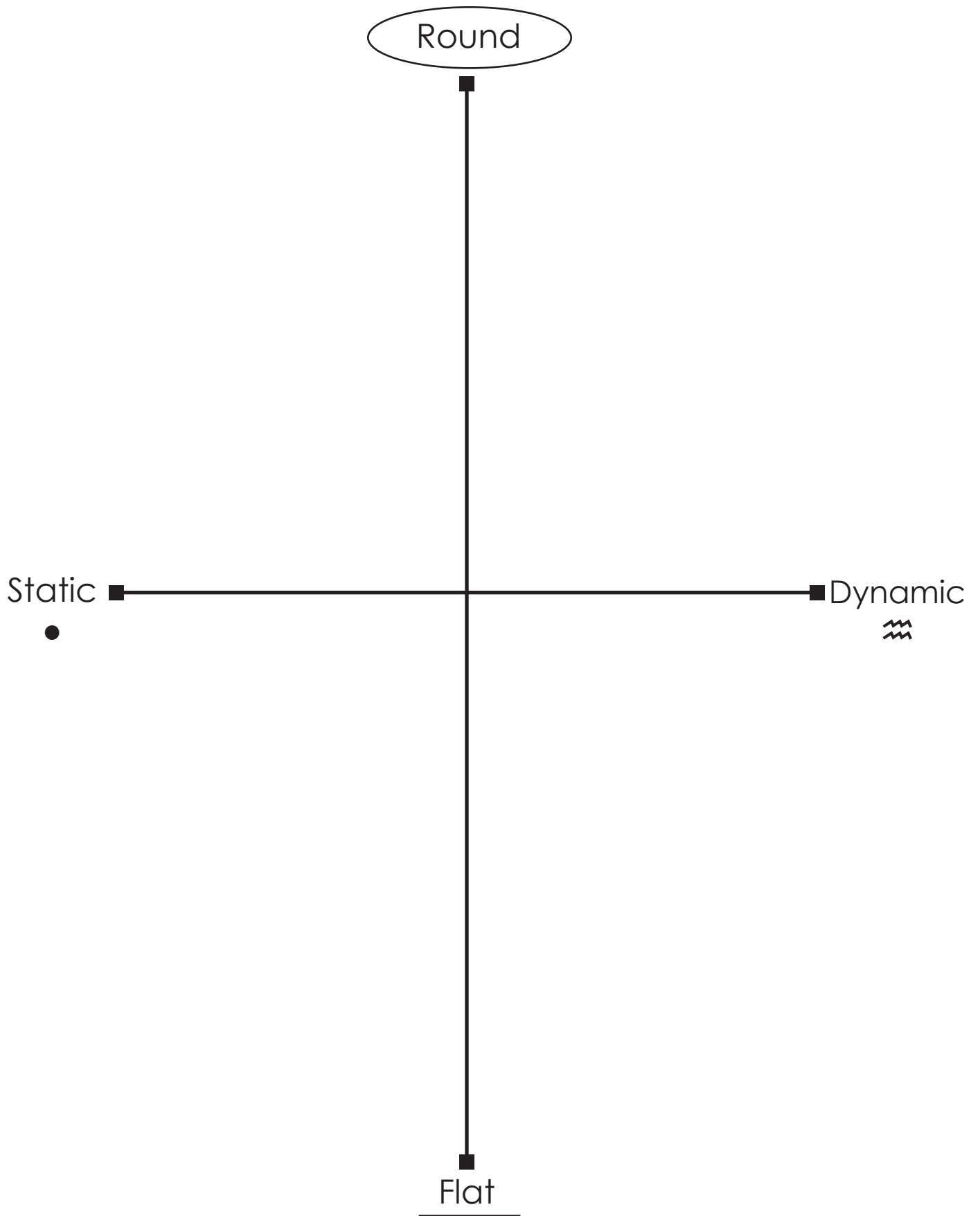
	Beginning	End
Scipio	Selfish Arrogant Needs to be in charge child - physically & emotionally	Selfless Mature adult - physically & emotionally
Prosper	Caretaker Cautious Mature	Can be taken care of More mature? Understands consequences
Victor	Investigator Just doing his job	Chooses the kids over the adults
Ida	Wants an adventure Helpful to children	Opens her home to children Helps them out
Barbarossa	Greedy Selfish Takes advantage of people	Greedy Selfish Takes advantage of people

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	Beginning	End
Bo	Child Wants to play Doesn't want to live with Esther Wants to be with Scipio/steal things	Wants a safe home Wants to be with Prosper
Hornet	Caretaker Watchful Cares for group	Caretaker Watchful Cares for group
Mosca	Loves boats works with the team wants to survive/have a home	Loves boats works with the team wants to survive/have a home
Riccio	Loves to steal Wants a home Thinks he is independent	Loves to steal Wants a home Thinks he is independent
Dottore	Selfish Does not care for children Powerful	Selfish Does not care for children Powerful

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Character Type Chart



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