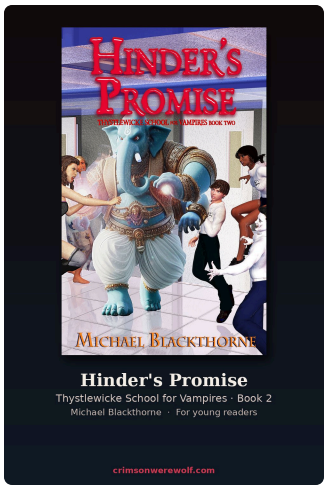


EDUCATOR & BOOK-CLUB GUIDE

Hinder's Promise

Thystlewicke, Book Two · by Michael Blackthorne

Ages 10–14 (grades 5–8) · Magical boarding-school fantasy · 30 chapters, about 70,000 words

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About the book

Edmond Spencer is still the only "normal" boy at Thystlewicke School for Vampires, and now everyone knows something worse: his father is a vampire-hunter. Old friends keep their distance, and the Vampire Council has questions only Edmond can answer.

When a magical accident traps his friend Neela in a shadow dimension, Edmond has a deadline to get her back. His allies are an odd crew: Hinder, a gentle elephant-headed immortal; Meddie the gorgon and her sister Shyrene; a nervous golden hind named Camilla; and Crichton, the vampire who is either his best friend or his biggest headache.

To save Neela, Edmond will have to break into the dungeon beneath the school and stand up in a courtroom full of vampires and immortals, armed with nothing but the truth and a talking PDA.

Content notes for adults

> Spooky fantasy peril. A vampire attacks Edmond and other characters, and there is a tense trial with threats of death. Characters faint, are injured, and one is briefly trapped between worlds. Edmond is sick to his stomach in one scene. Creatures from Greek myth appear, including a gorgon whose gaze is dangerous. There is no graphic violence and no strong language. Readers will get the most from it after Thystlewicke School for Vampires.

Themes to explore

Judged for your family
Classmates turn on Edmond because of what his father does. Is it fair to judge someone by their parents?

Keeping promises
Promises and oaths run through the book, from Crichton's vampiric oath to the promise Camilla makes to Hinder to protect Edmond. What is a promise worth, and what does it cost to keep one?

Loyalty and friendship
Edmond risks everything for Neela, and his friends risk everything for him. Students can discuss where loyalty becomes recklessness.

Justice and fair trials
Edmond has to prove his case in a courtroom where the other side makes the rules. What makes a trial fair?

Prisoners and freedom
The school keeps immortals locked away beneath it. Students can debate when, if ever, it is right to imprison someone for what they might do.

Before reading

1. If you read Thystlewicke School for Vampires, what do you remember about Edmond, Crichton and Neela? What do you think has changed since?
2. Have you ever been treated differently because of something a family member did? How did it feel?
3. The book features creatures from Greek myth, like a gorgon and the golden hind. What do you already know about them?

Discussion questions

Each set covers events from those chapters, so assign them after students finish each section.

Chapters 1–8

1. Why do the other students avoid Edmond at the start of the book? Is their reaction understandable?
2. Hinder speaks in short, simple sentences but seems wise. What do you learn about him from the way he talks?
3. Edmond asks Crichton for a vampiric oath instead of a promise. Why does he want something stronger?
4. What happens to Neela, and why does Edmond feel responsible?

Chapters 9–16

1. Meddie the gorgon is gruff and frightening. Find a moment that shows she cares more than she lets on.
2. Camilla the golden hind is nervous but stays close to Edmond. Why do you think she does?
3. Crichton tells the headmaster he wants to "interview" him. How does Crichton use charm to get what he wants? Is it honest?
4. Edmond decides he will not save Neela if it means causing someone's death. Do you agree with his line?

Chapters 17–23

1. What do Edmond and Crichton find in the dungeon? How does it change Edmond's view of the school?
2. Edmond uses magic in front of the vampires to protect himself. What does that choice cost him?
3. Why is Edmond the one who has to act as prosecutor? Is that fair to an eleven-year-old?
4. How does Artie, the talking PDA, help or hurt Edmond's case?

Chapters 24–30

1. How does Edmond win over the courtroom? What does he do that the adults could not?
2. Pela warns Edmond that next time he will not make it out of the dungeon. What do you think she means for the future?
3. Edmond decides to return some of the things he borrowed. Why does that matter to him now?
4. How has Edmond changed since the first book? How has his friendship with Crichton changed?

Vocabulary

gorgon: in Greek myth, a woman with snakes for hair whose gaze can turn people to stone

immortal: a being that does not die of old age

prosecutor: the person who presents the case against someone accused in a trial

dimension: a separate space or world

hind: a female deer; the golden hind is a magical deer from Greek myth

oath: a solemn, binding promise

treaty: a formal agreement between two groups

jury: a group of people who decide the outcome of a trial

Activities

Mock trial

Hold a classroom trial based on Selch's case. Assign a prosecutor, defense, witnesses and a jury, and let the jury decide using only the evidence presented.

Myth versus book

Research the original myths of Medusa and the Cerynitian (golden) hind. Compare them with Meddie and Camilla. What did the author keep, and what did he change?

Write a promise

Hinder makes Edmond a promise. Students write a promise one character makes to another, and a short scene where keeping it is hard.

Design a containment cell

The school keeps dangerous immortals locked away. Students design a cell for one creature, then write an argument for or against keeping it there.

Character map

Map the vampires, immortals and normals in the book, with lines showing who trusts whom at the start and at the end.

Curriculum connections

- Theme and summary: CCSS RL.5.2, RL.6.2
- Character comparison and change: CCSS RL.5.3, RL.6.3
- Comparing stories in the same genre: CCSS RL.5.9
- Opinion and argument writing: CCSS W.5.1, W.6.1

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