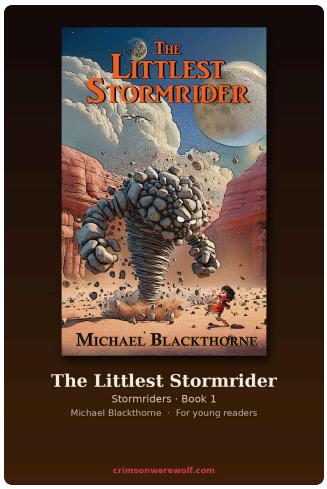


EDUCATOR & BOOK-CLUB GUIDE

The Littlest Stormrider

Stormriders, Book One · by Michael Blackthorne

Ages 10–14 (grades 5–8) · Desert fantasy adventure · 24 chapters, about 87,000 words

About the book

In the poor desert town of Cripplerock, the Stormriders of the Elemental Corps ride living storms of sand, fire, air and stone. They once protected the Three Kingdoms. Now most people look down on them.

Eight-year-old Davibo Nayuda wants nothing more than to call an Elemental of his own, like his father did before an accident took his legs. Davibo is small, too honest for his own good, and picked on by his older sister's friends. When he finally calls an Elemental, it is a tiny, spiky creature nobody can identify, and keeping it secret breaks every rule the Corps has.

What follows is a story about a boy proving that small does not mean weak, about families who hurt each other and still love each other, and about the difference between following rules and doing what is right.

Content notes for adults

> Fantasy peril throughout. A child is killed early in the story and a murder is investigated. Children are kidnapped and nearly drowned or smothered by Elementals. Adult characters die in battle. Davibo's mother has left the family, and his relationship with his sister is openly hostile. There is no sexual content and no strong language. We recommend an adult preview the book for readers under ten.

Themes to explore

Size and worth

Davibo is the smallest boy in town, and his Elemental is the smallest ever called. The book keeps asking whether being small is a weakness or a different kind of strength.

Honesty

Davibo cannot lie, even to himself. It costs him friends and gets him into trouble, but it also earns him the trust of powerful people.

Family

A father who gave his legs for the town, a sister who bullies, a mother who walked away. Readers see that families can be loving and painful at once.

Respect and prejudice

The Stormriders once saved the town and are now treated with scorn. Students can talk about how communities forget the people who protect them.

Rules and right

Davibo breaks the rules of the Corps. Was he wrong? The Mages and Stormriders argue it out, and so can your class.

Before reading

1. Have you ever wanted something that everyone said you were too young or too small to have? What happened?
2. The book is set in a desert. List everything you know about deserts: weather, animals, how people survive there.
3. Think of the four classical elements: earth, air, fire and water. If a storm could be made of one of them, what would it look like and what could it do?

Discussion questions

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

Chapters 1–6

1. Why does Davibo climb the crates before the procession? What does that tell you about him?
2. Davibo notices the moldy fabric delivered to the Elemental Corps. What does this detail show about how the town treats the Stormriders?
3. Why does Davibo hide Spikefist instead of telling his father? Would you have done the same?
4. How would you describe Lilliandra in three words? Why do you think she treats her brother the way she does?

Chapters 7–12

1. When the adults discover Spikefist, the room goes silent. Why is Davibo's father more hurt than angry?
2. At the Blooding Grounds, the Mages and Stormriders argue about what should happen to Davibo. Which side would you take, and why?
3. Shivram is gruff, strange and powerful. What is your first impression of him? Does it change by the end of Chapter Twelve?

4. Chapter Eleven ends with Davibo and his father laughing together. Why do you think the author placed a happy scene right after so much trouble?

Chapters 13–18

1. Describe Canal Street using three senses. How does the author make the marketplace feel real?
2. Helicon Zyriss seems helpful but Davibo does not trust him. What clues does Davibo notice?
3. Shivram tells Davibo to focus on one thing at a time so things don't grow overwhelming. Is that good advice? When could you use it?
4. Davibo feels Spikefist's emotions as different from his own, as if they have a different taste. How does their bond change across these chapters?

Chapters 19–24

1. Davibo is attacked by children he knows. How does he respond, and what does that say about who he is becoming?
2. Davibo is haunted by the sounds of battle. Why do you think the author shows that fighting has a cost, even for the winning side?
3. Look back at Chapter One. How has Davibo changed? What has stayed the same?
4. The book ends with questions still unanswered. What do you predict will happen in the next book, Windswept Warren?

Vocabulary

Elemental: a living being made of one natural force, such as sand, fire, air or stone

gyrate: to spin or move in a circle or spiral

magnetic: able to attract or push away iron and certain other metals

cacophony: a harsh, jumbled mix of loud sounds

procession: a group of people or animals moving forward in an orderly line, often for a ceremony

patronize: to treat someone as if they are less intelligent or important

medallion: a large medal, usually worn on a chain

eldritch: strange and unearthly, in a way that feels magical or eerie

Activities

Design an Elemental

Students invent their own Elemental: what force it is made of, how it moves, what it can and cannot do, and what it would be named. Draw it next to a Stormrider for scale.

Science link: magnets

Spikefist is a Magnetic Elemental. Explore magnetism with bar magnets, iron filings and a compass, then ask: how might a magnetic creature fight, travel or protect someone?

Map Cripplerock

Using clues from the text (the cliffs and caves, the Yellow Sea, the Blooding Grounds, Canal Street, the Unnamed Desert), draw a map of the town and its surroundings.

Debate: rules or right?

Split the class into the Mages and the Stormriders from Chapter Eight. One side argues Davibo must lose his Elemental; the other argues he should keep it. Vote at the end.

Write it from Spikefist's side

Retell one scene from the Elemental's point of view. What does Spikefist feel when Davibo is in danger?

Curriculum connections

- Theme and summary: CCSS RL.5.2, RL.6.2
- Character comparison and change: CCSS RL.5.3, RL.6.3
- Point of view: CCSS RL.5.6, RL.6.6
- Narrative writing: CCSS W.5.3, W.6.3

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