## THE SECRET KINGDOM: CHRONICLES OF THE RED KING

## By Jenny Nimmo

**LOUISIANA YOUNG READERS’ CHOICE NOMINEE 2014**

**GRADE** (**3-5**)

*Study guide submitted by Tessi Meaux*

**Title:** The Secret Kingdom: Chronicles of the Red King

**Author:** Jenny Nimmo

**Publisher:** Scholastic

**Pages:** 224 pgs

**SUMMARY**

In a different perspective from the *Charlie Bones Series,* The Secret Kingdom is a series about the Red King, whose name is Timoken. Timoken and his sister must set out in hopes to find a new home after his kingdom was attacked and parents murdered by evil spirits called Viridees. The two must set out with only the protection of a very special cloak which is actually a web of last moon spider; a gift from a very special forest jini. Unfortunately, something happens to his sister which forces Timoken to continue on without her, all the while understanding his powers as a magician and constantly escaping the Viridees. Timoken finds friends and help in very unlikely places all the while periodically communicating with the forest jini for guidance. This story is very fast paced and written as if it were many short folktales about the Red King. Every chapter is filled with adventure! This is a great new series from Nimmo and is sure to please her Charlie Bones fans as well as create some new fans.

 **AUTHOR’S BIOGRAPHY**

Jenny Nimmo, born in Windsor, Berkshire, is the author of several series including the Charlie Bones Series and the Red King Series. Nimmo has produced a Charlie Bone book every year since 2002 and continues with the story in a different series, *The Red King Series*.

Nimmo, Jenny. Jenny Nimmo’s Official Website. [*www.jennynimmo.me.uk*](http://www.jennynimmo.me.uk/).Web. 12/26/12.

**OTHER TITLES BY AUTHOR**

Format: Title, Year

This author is known for the *Charlie Bones Series (Children of the Red King)*. Some books in this series include:

*Midnight for Charlie Bones*, 2002

*Charlie Bone and the Time Twister*, 2002

*Charlie Bone and the Blue Boa*, 2004

(more titles included in this series)

**CLASSROOM CONNECTIONS**

Jenny Nimmo did an excellent job in writing such a fast paced story. The story is made up of smaller stories, or folklore tales, that can be easily followed. This book can be used in the classroom (grades 3-5) for understanding characteristics of folklore. This item can be tied into multiple areas of a curriculum to include subjects: social studies, science and English literature.

**Social Studies**

Teachers can use this book to discuss culture aspects. For example, in one part of the book, Timoken tells his Camel he must stay in the forest, away from everyone and everything, to complete the grieving phase. Only when he is finished grieving can he come out. He tells his camel this is part of his kingdom’s traditions.

For discussion, students can compare and discuss various cultural differences and similarities between Timoken and themselves. This is a good opportunity to reiterate what a culture is (they learn this as early as first grade, but reminders are always great!).

For an activity, students can break up into groups with each group assigned a different section in the book. Students will list things that Timoken does that are unique to his culture in their book section.

**Science**

Timoken is taught that he must take a drop of a special elixir to stay young until he finds his permanent home. He does this on the first night of the new moon. This is a great way to introduce moon phases to students. You can print some example moon phases or check some books out from your school or public library on the topic to have available in the classroom.

***Moon Charting Activity***

Your students can create charts to mark were Timoken and his Camel would take a drop of the special elixir. Students can track this as well. Students will each receive legal size black construction paper and white crayons or chalk to write the dates, draw the moon and fill in the circles appropriately. Find an online moon cycle source such as, <http://lunaf.com/english/live-data/moon-phase/>, where students can see a picture the moon. Follow the moon through an entire month, checking the moon phase daily or several times a week. Students will indicate when Timoken would partake in his elixir on their charts. Here is an online source that shows pictures of the moon phases in a calendar image <http://www.moonconnection.com/moon_phases_calendar.phtml>.

***Oreo Cookie Moon Phases***

**Materials**

 Mini or regular sized Oreo Cookies

 A printed picture of moon phases

You can use mini or regular sized Oreo Cookies to let students learn something cool with food. There are several ways you can use Oreos in class to teach moon phases. Go to <http://www.sciencebob.com/blog/?p=828> and print out copies of the picture (you can copy and paste it on Word). Give a sheet to each child along with 8 Mini Oreo Cookies. Be sure you demonstrate the “proper” way to twist an Oreo cookie apart to minimum icing-stickage. Ask the kids to make their cookies match the pictures. Once students show you their completed moon phases you can give them permission to eat their cookies. Another way to do this is to give each student one regular sized cookie and a folded up sheet of paper with one moon phase printed on it. When you tell them you are ready, they can unfold their paper and create their assigned moon phase with the cookie. This idea is from Science Bob’s Blog.

**English Literature**

This book can be used to understand the characteristics of a folk tale. Charts can be made to show what could be true in the story and what is characteristic of a folk tale. A folk tale is a fictional story or legend that is usually handed down from generation to generation oral retelling. There are often many versions of a folk tale. Usually a folk tale conveys a moral, lesson about life or explanation of why something is the way it is.

In the story Timoken has the ability to talk to animals, which is a characteristic of a folktale. Talking to animals is a make believe ability. Comparison charts, like Venn Diagrams, are great for understanding the difference between folktales and nonfiction or real life tales. Have your students, individually or in groups, create a Venn Diagram listing real life elements and fictional elements of this book. Here is an example from Scholastic <http://www.scholastic.com/teachers/lesson-plan/comparing-and-contrasting-fiction-and-nonfiction>.

**Art**

There is a lot of potential here! The setting takes place in Africa. (all over the continent of Africa) Students can study the different types of artwork unique to various African countries.

Art and research can be combined with this book activity. Individually or in groups assign students a country in Africa to research what types of artwork are unique to that area. Select a type of artwork from that area and create their own adapted version of the art. They can have a few weeks to create their art. Students will present their art piece to the class, explain what it is and information about this type of art’s significance.

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

1. Timoken often mentions connecting with his relative from the future at times. He is fascinated by this, but so is his relative. Why would his relative want to contact Timoken? Why do you think it is so important to understand and research your family history?

2. Timoken mentions, after the passing of his sister, that he must remain in the forest until he has finished grieving. This is something his people did when Timoken still lived in his kingdom. This is a characteristic of his culture. What is culture? Why do you think it was so special to Timoken, yet his Camel (who could communicate with Timoken as if he were human) did not understand this practice?

3. Timoken must take a drop of his special elixir in order to stay young. His instructions were to take it at the beginning of the new moon. Many things are believed to be tied to the moon. What things have you heard depend on the moon? Do you think this is true? Why or why not.

4. Timoken values his family. He and his sister travel alone while grieving for his parents. What would you do if you had to travel in far away lands without an adult, but you still had Timoken’s special powers? How would you find shelter, food and water? Would you search for a travel companion like the camel?

5. The King and Queen showed the Forest Jini kindness when others may not have. If you were a king or queen, why do you think it would be important to show strangers kindness in your kingdom? What would you have done if the Forest Jini would have flown into your castle like he did to Timoken’s parents?

**WEB SITES**

**Jinny Nimmo’s Official Site**

<http://www.jennynimmo.me.uk/>

This site provides descriptions of her book, links to other books in that series and also books that led up to the *Chronicles of the Red King* series. The site also gives updates on author appearances, new book releases and even background information on the author, herself.