

Readers Notes
**Lily Quench And The Lighthouse Of
Skellig Mor**

Natalie Jane Prior

Synopsis

In order to stop Gordon, the new Black Count, from coming back from the past with an invader's army, Lily and Queen Dragon have to close off the Eyes in Time. On an island in the Great Southern Archipelago is a fabulous magical library that contains books which Lily hopes will help her do this. As they approach the Archipelago, Lily and Queen Dragon see huge numbers of sea dragons destroying a small boat full of people. They try to rescue the drowning sailors, but all the humans—including Lily—are magically whisked out of sight.

Lily is taken to the island of Skellig Lir where she meets the ruler of the Archipelago, and his assistant, Romina—magical people with four arms, silver hair and golden skin. But when Lily asks to visit the library, she is told that unless she can answer the question asked by the librarian, she will not be allowed to enter. Lily fails to answer the question, and her pleas to enter are in vain. Meanwhile, Ariane, keeper of the lighthouse, has absconded from her post on the rocky outcrop of Skellig Mor, and a huge storm is bearing down on the island. Lily is terrified for the safety of Queen Dragon.

However, Queen Dragon is rescued by Ariane, and taken to an undersea cavern where Ariane explains that she has been chosen for the job of lighthouse keeper because she has the ability to communicate telepathically with the sea dragons. It is Ariane's job to care for them, but she is desperately lonely on the island. Ariane pleads with Queen Dragon to help her escape but Queen Dragon refuses to leave without first finding Lily.

On Skellig Lir, Lily is also anxious to find Queen Dragon, and she and Romina leave on magically constructed wings. After a bumpy flight Lily and Queen Dragon are reunited, but Ariane has absconded again. Queen Dragon departs for Ashby Water and is well into her flight before she realises that her passenger is not Lily, but Ariane, who has stolen Lily's cloak as a disguise.

Stranded on Skellig Mor, Lily finds her way down to the underground caverns beneath the lighthouse where she makes a gruesome discovery: the remains of one of the previous keepers. In his bony fingers he is still clutching the ruins of a magical book. Lily takes the book with her and eventually finds her way out of the cavern. But when she crosses back to the other side of the island she is terrified by the unexpected approach of the hungry sea dragons. Then Lily discovers that she can understand bits of their telepathic speech. She soon realises what the dragons are trying to tell her—they want permission to leave the islands, and Lily is able to grant their wish.

When Queen Dragon and Ariane return with Romina, Ariane is broken hearted to find that the sea dragons are gone, but her tears vanish when hundreds of tiny baby sea dragons miraculously hatch from the foam left at their departure.

Lily and Queen Dragon accompany their new friends back to Skellig Lir, where Lily is at last admitted to the library to discover the solution to the problem of how to close off the Eyes in Time—but not details of their locations and how many of them there are. In continuance of their quest, Lily and Queen Dragon set out again, this time headed for the wastelands of the uttermost west, the location of the Magicians' Pyramid.

Editor's Comment

Lily Quench and the Lighthouse of Skellig Mor is the fourth book in this wonderful series. When we published the first book, *Lily Quench and the Dragon of Ashby*, we hoped it would become a series, but it has become bigger than even we expected. Lily Quench is a wonderful



heroine—feisty, sensitive and brave, she’s the perfect role model for young readers. The books are classic storytelling at its very best—reminiscent of all the wonderful adventure stories I read as a child. *The Lighthouse of Skellig Mor* is probably my favourite book so far in the series. The book highlights the very special friendship between Lily and Queen Dragon, and the islands of the Great Southern Archipelago and the people who inhabit them are so magical, and described with great skill and beauty.

The series has recently been sold to the US and UK, so we’re very pleased to see Lily going global. There are another three books to come in the series.

Author’s Comment and Teaching ideas by Natalie Jane Prior

Lily Quench has evolved into quite a series! At the time of writing these notes I’m just finishing the sequel to *The Lighthouse of Skellig Mor*, and there is plenty of life left in Lily yet, with a seven book series planned. It seems ironic that when I initially came up with the idea for Lily I was thinking in terms of a picture book! The idea was floating around in my head for a long time, but at first I could not see how to write it, probably because there was actually far more material than I realised.

Over the years, a whole world has grown up around Lily. I have tried to make her, and my other characters grow and mature within the confines of that world; the minor characters are enormously important in these books, and crop up repeatedly like old friends. In *The Lighthouse of Skellig Mor*, we concentrate on Lily and her friend, Queen Dragon as they fly to an archipelago of mysterious islands at the very end of the earth. I wanted to make this a much more magical and mysterious book than some of its predecessors. My favourite bit is the magical library Lily visits in the final chapter, that has been there from the beginning of the world. It’s the sort of place I always wanted to visit myself!

You might like to talk about this library in your classroom discussions. What are the books on the shelves in the big tree? Think of titles for them, and ask the children what books there might be about themselves. Ask them who they think the Librarian is, and what her story is. And what about the books that cannot be opened until the end of the world? What’s in them?

There is plenty of scope for making maps and plans of the islands, the Drihtan’s palace and the library, and the secret tunnels under the island of Skellig Mor. Think about the skeleton Lily finds in the secret tunnel, and ask the children to write a story explaining who it is, and how it got there.

Another thing I often spend time on with children is the issue of names. No author of fiction names a character casually; names always means something and getting the right name for a character is often half the battle. A name is often the first thing we learn about a character, and it always leaves an impression. An understanding of this concept is extremely valuable and helps children with characterisation in their own stories. Ask the children what sort of person they would expect someone to be if they were called Daisy, or Otto, or Conrad (or any other names you might care to think of). It’s quite interesting to see how standardised the replies can be. After talking around this topic look at the names of the characters in the books. Why is Lily Quench called Lily Quench? Why is Queen Dragon’s name Sinhault Fierdaze? (I have to confess here, that the name Romina is an exception to the rule: I couldn’t think of a name for this character, and ended up naming her after my editor!)

I hope you enjoy reading this book as much as I have enjoyed working on the series. Look out for *The Magicians’ Pyramid* in August, 2003!

Best Wishes,

Natalie Jane Prior