

TIME TURNS ON SPOOKY HILL

David Metzenthen

Illustrated by Philip Webb

Teachers' Notes by Kevin Steinberger

Time Turns on Spooky Hill is a time-slip fantasy loosely grounded in real political activism of the colonial goldfields. Through its young protagonists, readers are subtly and entertainingly put in the position of considering the big moral dilemma of time travel: should time travellers intervene in unconscionable past events and beneficially alter the course of history or dispassionately observe and let pass such behaviour?

Lingering after closing time in Gold Seekers Gully theme park, brothers Mitch and Cal are drawn to a commotion. Cal is full of bravado, Mitch is cautious. Folk in period costume seem to be practising a new drama but it appears to be ... well, very authentic. What should the boys do?

Discussion

- Why might Chapter One be best described as a prologue or even as an epilogue?
- What are the simultaneous natural events that subtly mark the transition from present time to past, and back to the present?
- At which point do the boys realize they are actually in the past?
- The boys intervened to save Nathan Bryant. Why could they not help the police capture the real culprit, Dan Healy?
- How does the author effectively use language to differentiate between past and present?
- Why did the boys have to leave the lanterns behind?

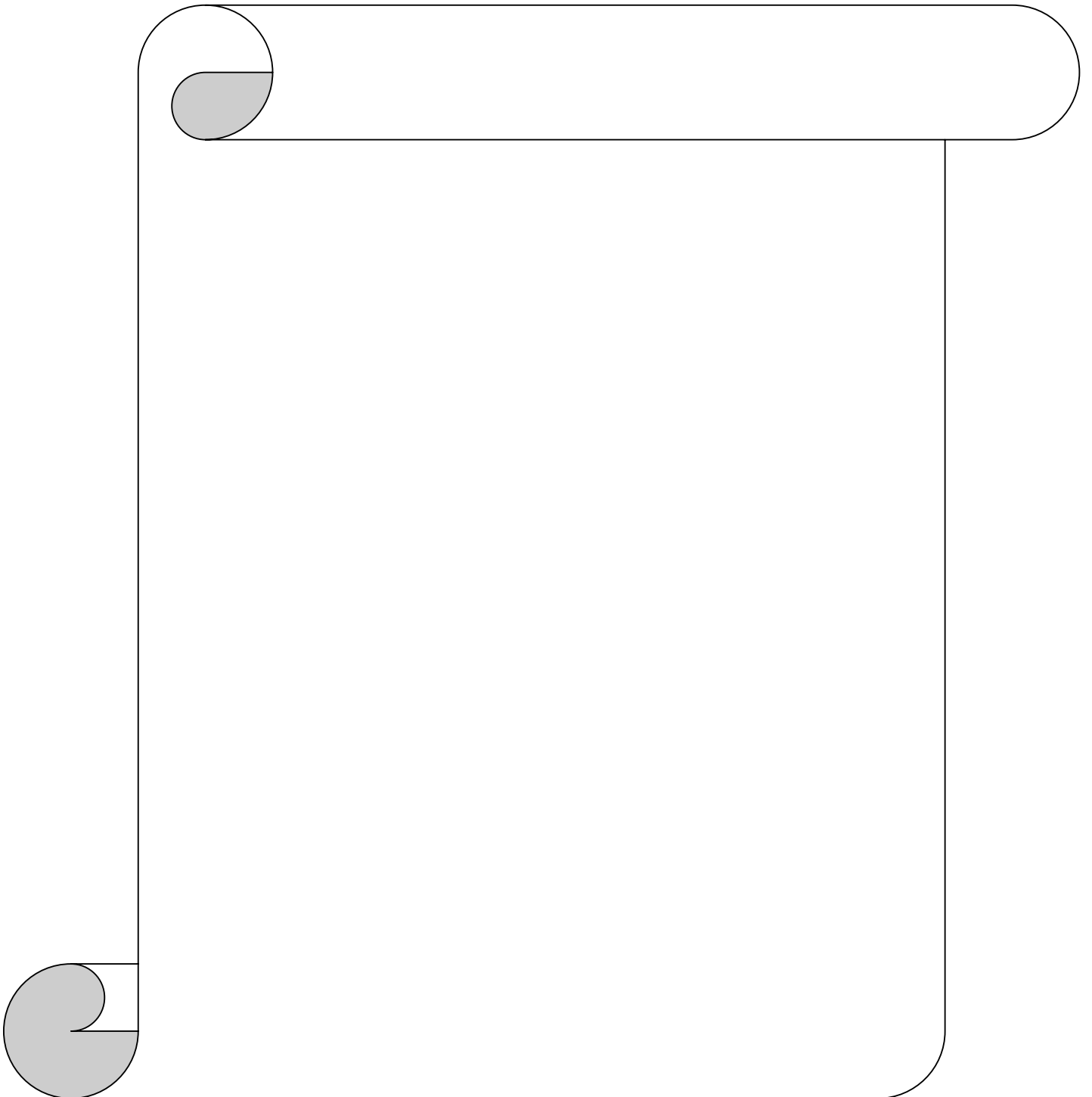
Extension Activities

- The novel opens with the author discussing the various kinds of theme parks. He goes on to mention *theme parks with the X factor – where something extraordinary happens*. Describe, if you can, an *X factor* experience at a theme park you have visited; it does not have to be a time-slip happening.
- Sketch the main street of Gold Seekers Gully from the text description given in Chapter Two.
- Mitch observed that the way the people spoke had a '*certain historical ... ring to it.*' List examples of obvious contemporary speech.
- With the aid of library research or a visit to a local folk museum construct a model lantern of the gold rush era.
- Writers often use a degree of stereotyping to clearly differentiate characters, their behaviour and the values they represent. Contrast the appearance and behaviour of the innocent Nathan Bryant and the guilty thief, Dan Healy.
- Create a brochure or facsimile website to promote the Gold Seekers Gully theme park. For inspiration, visit the website of Australia's most famous historic theme park, Sovereign Hill at www.sovereignhill.com.au
- From Nathan Bryant's own words and Mitch's conversation with Caitlin in the theme park restaurant Mitch learns that Nathan Bryant went on to successfully agitate for miners' rights in the Battle of Bryants Gully. Bryant seems to be based on the famous historical goldfields activist, Peter Lalor. Research the life of Peter Lalor and The Battle of Bakery Hill at the Eureka Stockade.
- Write your own piece of historical fiction – an imaginative story based on real historic characters and events. For example, you might be caught up in a famous natural disaster, or you stowed away on a famous historic voyage or expedition.
- Conduct a forum to consider how things may have turned out had the boys intervened? Pluses and negatives.
- Make a list of different methods used to facilitate fiction time slips.

TIME TURNS ON SPOOKY HILL ACTIVITY 1 WANTED!

Design a wanted poster for information on the whereabouts of Nathan Bryant. It may be a text only poster or it may include a head and shoulders portrait. Skim through the text of the novel for clues about his physical appearance and the crime/s he is assumed to have committed.

Actual reward posters from the goldrush era are often reproduced in non-fiction books on the subject. Check the Dewey 994 section of your school library collection.



TIME TURNS ON SPOOKY HILL ACTIVITY 2 WHO SAID THAT?

The manner in which characters speak says a lot about their nature. Authors use this variation in speech type to differentiate among the characters and show what kind of person each character is. Find typical examples of speech to illustrate the differences among the characters of **Time Turns on Spooky Hill**.

CHARACTERS OF THE PAST

Character	Personal Qualities	Speech
Mr O'Dwyer	<i>Rough, loud, selfish, impatient, unfair, a stirrer.</i>	<i>"Five dirty coppers for two bleedin' crims! That'll do me." (p.64)</i>
Nathan Bryant		
Lucy Slavin		
The Sergeant		

CHARACTERS OF THE PRESENT

Character	Personal Qualities	Speech
Mitchell		
Cal		
Caitlin		

TIME TURNS ON SPOOKY HILL ACTIVITY 3 TIME ZONES

Time-slip stories usually depict two worlds of two separate times: the past and the present or the present and the future. What makes them interesting is that there is usually some overlap between the two times in the setting, characters and action as the plot moves backwards and forwards through time.

Skim through the novel and, in the Venn diagram below, sort the characters and details of the setting into the past, the present and the place where the two time zones overlap.

