

## ***The Travelling Restaurant* by Barbara Else**

### **Teaching Notes**



### **Synopsis**

The kingdom of Fontania is ruled by a 'provisional' queen, Lady Gall, who keeps her subjects in a state of fear with her troops. Magic has been banned and Science has replaced it. Jasper and his family flee Lady Gall, and he begins a long voyage aboard the ship *Travelling Restaurant*. The Captain and Polly are friendly but there are many others who seem untrustworthy. Their adventures involve kidnapping, storms, pirate attack, a whirlpool, and a royal wedding. Jasper discovers the true identities of his friends and family and learns where the Magic has been hiding.

## Author



Barbara Else is the author of six adult novels, and is one of New Zealand's most respected writers. She is a Member of the New Zealand Order of Merit for services to literature, and has worked as a university tutor, editor and freelance writer. *The Travelling Restaurant* is her third children's novel. Barbara lives in Wellington, New Zealand.

## Themes

The main theme of Jasper's adventure is learning to trust people and yourself. His confidence in family is knocked from the start when he feels abandoned. Many adults he meets are either treacherous or lie openly. Jasper realizes that he must first trust his own instincts and this helps him to find the source of the Magic, to help his friends, and to accept himself. He also learns that although people are flawed they are not always evil in their intentions. Another theme is authoritarian government and rule by fear.

## Activities

1. Before reading, discuss the title, the cover illustration, and the genre.
2. How does Lady Gall keep control of her kingdom? Why do people fear her? Why has she banned Magic from the kingdom? Why don't military dictators and governments like this make people happy? Think of some real life examples.
3. Which characters cannot be trusted at first? How does Jasper know who to trust? Should we trust everyone we meet? How does a person prove they are trustworthy?

4. Our society is mostly run on a scientific base (technology, logic, research etc). Make a chart showing the main differences between Magic and Science. Imagine if people in your country believed in magic. Make up some laws that could control the use and abuse of magic power. Read *The Man Who Was Magic* by Paul Gallico about another kingdom that has banned Magic.
5. Jasper loves maps. Trace the map of Fontania and draw the route of his adventures. Create a map that extends it, showing a different part of this fantasy world. Invent your own place names, geography and place names. Write a short story about your land.
6. The dagger (page 34) is the most important and mysterious object in the book. Draw a detailed picture of the dagger.
7. From chapter 15 onwards we begin to learn the true relationships between the characters. Draw a family tree for the people in the story. Research and draw your own family tree.
8. The ship *Travelling Restaurant* is colourful and unique. Paint a picture of it in one of these action scenes: in battle; bouncing over the rapids; or going down the whirlpool. Or make a model of the ship.
9. There are many vivid similes in the book: a beard like a brush; a face like a billiard ball; fog like a moth's wing; families are like an octopus; and a baby like a parcel in its father's arms. Write some similes to describe some of the characters in the book. Draw a portrait of Lady Gall.
10. Food has an important role in the story. How does it save our heroes? Choose a favourite meal or recipe from the story and make it.
11. Write a sequel to this story about Jasper and Magic.
12. Read other books which involve adventures in a magic kingdom such as the Narnia series by C. S. Lewis, *The Phantom Tollbooth* by Norton Juster, or *The Keys to the Kingdom* series by Garth Nix.