



Reading Group Guide for
The Labyrinth of Doom
By Stuart Gibbs

About the Book

Prince Ruprecht is *very* upset that knights-in-training Tim and Belinda have thwarted his plans and ruined his chances with Princess Grace. And so, to get even, he has kidnapped the princess. Now it's up to Tim, Belinda, Ferkle, and Rover to fend off menacing beasts, conquer treacherous obstacles, find their way through the labyrinth, and rescue the princess before time runs out. Oh, and they also need to remember how to get back out again . . . or they'll be trapped inside the maze forever.

Discussion Questions

1. As the novel opens, Tim tells readers that “Once upon a time, it wasn’t easy to be a knight-in-training.” Considering what Tim has had to endure, including waking up to face baby dragons, do you agree his existence is more difficult than your own? Why or why not?
2. Tim shares that Sir Vyval, leader of the Brave and Honorable Knights of Merryland, believes that “a knight must be prepared to defend himself at any moment.” (Chapter one) Why does Tim seem less than enthusiastic about the possibilities? Are there ways in which this training is useful?
3. Based on what you’ve learned about them in *Once Upon a Tim* and *The Labyrinth of Doom*, what is your impression of Tim, Belinda, and Ferkle? Do you feel that these characters were what you expected? Have you noticed any changes to how you felt about them after reading the first book?
4. Tim shares that “dragons are foul-tempered and covered with scales and breathe fire, but people rarely talk about the fact that they smell like dead fish that someone kept in their armpit for a week.” (Chapter one) Did you find this surprising? If so, in what way?
5. What are some of the specific things about the way Tim and Belinda (also known as Bull) live that make you grateful for your own life?
6. In *Once Upon a Tim*, while the Royal Knights of Merryland were shopping for armor, Princess Grace was kidnapped the first time and ultimately rescued by Tim, Belinda, and Ferkle. How does this impact the older knights’ behavior toward Belinda and Tim?
7. Of the duties assigned to them by the Royal Knights (Chapter three), which do you think is the worst and why?
8. For most people in “olden times” (what we might refer to as the Middle Ages), an individual’s fate was believed to be set. How do Tim and Belinda prove that despite that, it’s possible to still find ways to change their fate or choose what happens to them in the future?
9. As Tim and Belinda prepare to enter the labyrinth, Ferkle changes his mind about participating as part of the team and states, “‘Actually . . . I’m not going in there . . . There are many ways to be a part of a team. And the part I’m planning is: I’m the brains of this operation.’” (Chapter five) In what ways does this bold statement seem comical? Ultimately, is there truth in his statement, and if so, what is it?
10. In what ways does the minotaur of this particular labyrinth ultimately surprise Tim and Belinda? Have you had a similar experience where you discovered something or someone was different from what you expected?
11. Given what you learn from *Labyrinth of Doom*, what continues to make Ruprecht and Nerlim so vile (which is definitely an IQ-booster-worthy word!)?

12. Though Tim messed up on the job by falling asleep and putting Princess Grace in danger, he is unwilling to admit his mistake. What is his motivation for not being honest? Have you ever been in a similar situation? How did you handle it? How does Tim's eventual honesty ultimately serve him well? What can be learned from his actions?

13. Of the magical hexed items (Chrubble and the Scissors of Doom, for example) or the vicious beasts they encounter, what do you find most interesting or scary and why?

14. In what ways is this story about perseverance and creative thinking for Tim, Belinda, Ferkle, and even Princess Grace?

IQ Booster Vocabulary Activities

Labyrinth of Doom and *Once Upon a Tim* are filled with “big” vocabulary words that are both fun to learn and to use and that make the story more engaging. Use the following activities to help readers practice using and learning these words so they can sound like geniuses too.

1. Vocabulary Relay

Print out IQ Booster words from *Labyrinth of Doom* on one set of cards (copy this set a few times) and definitions, context, or fill-in-the-blank sentences in which they could be used on another set (just one set).

Jumble up the words in a pile in the middle of the floor, and mix up the definitions, context, and sentences to keep with you. Break students into teams of four or five.

Call out the definition/context/sentence and give students some think time (8–10 seconds) to talk about what word it might be.

After the discussion time, call out “Word!” One member from each team runs to the center and tries to find the word in the pile. Consider having multiple sets of the words so more than one team can get it. Check to make sure they're correct, and then discuss it briefly before the next round.

2. Vocabulary Bingo

After the group has learned at least twenty-five different vocabulary words from *Labyrinth of Doom*, bingo is a fun game that students love to play that will provide a great opportunity to review. Students simply write a vocabulary word from the novel in each space of their bingo card (you'll need to create a 5x5 template, and students should vary the order in which they write their words). Use review and discussion of *Labyrinth of Doom* to provide the definition of one of the words, and then have the students look for the vocabulary word on their cards and cover it with a bingo chip or cut squares of paper, if chips are unavailable. The first player to get five in a row, four corners, or blackout (when every spot on the card is filled) wins the game.

3. Picture This: Vocabulary Word Draw

Drawing detailed pictures of a word's meaning is another powerful tool to help students learn, understand, and retain a new vocabulary word. Choose six words prior to making copies, or the student can choose the six trickiest words.

4. Act It Out: Vocabulary Word Performance

Instead of making drawings that depict a word, students use their actions to help create a meaningful connection to the word. Offer students a chance to perform as a group or one at a time in front of the class for the others to guess the vocabulary word and write it down.

Extension Activities

1. Minotaur Makeup

Throughout *Labyrinth of Doom*, readers encounter the minotaur, as well as several fantastical monsters along with some scary ones (cave sharks, anyone?) while on the journey to once again rescue Princess Grace. Chad, the friendly minotaur, shares that “Minotaurs are simply part man and part bull. It doesn’t really matter which parts are which.” (Chapter twelve)

Working independently or with a partner, ask readers to use their imaginations to create an original minotaur of their making, being sure to offer a description and features that make the creature fun or fierce. As an added activity, have them draft an original story featuring their minotaur.

2. Maze Daze Race Rescue

In *Labyrinth of Doom*, rescuing Princess Grace requires Tim and Belinda to navigate their way through the treacherous and confusing maze that ultimately leads them to both the minotaur and Princess Grace. Working in teams, use large butcher paper to design your own maze, feeling free to insert monsters of your imagination within the passageways with Princess Grace at the center. Upon completion, exchange your maze with another team and see who can race to rescue the princess first.

3. Comic Construction

Labyrinth of Doom is filled with delightful illustrations by Stacy Curtis. Using Stacy’s illustrations as inspiration, select a favorite scene from *Labyrinth of Doom* and create either a digitally or manually illustrated graphic for that scene. Use either a digital comic strip creator (<http://www.makebeliefscomix.com/Comix/>) or a printable comic book storyboard sheet (found online) to begin to design the storyboards for their selected scene.

This guide was created by Dr. Rose Brock, an associate professor in the Library Science Department in the College of Education at Sam Houston State University. Dr. Brock holds a Ph.D. in Library Science, specializing in children’s and young adult literature.

This guide has been provided by Simon & Schuster for classroom, library, and reading group use. It may be reproduced in its entirety or excerpted for these purposes. For more Simon & Schuster guides and classroom materials, please visit simonandschuster.net or thebookpantry.net.