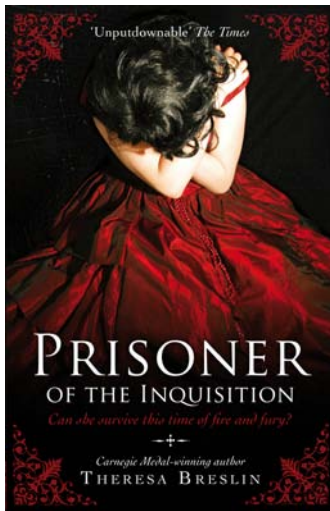


TALKING POINTS

CILIP Carnegie Medal Shortlist 2011



The CILIP Carnegie
& Kate Greenaway
Children's Book
Awards



PRISONER OF THE INQUISITION

by Theresa Breslin

1

The book begins with a brief introduction that sets the novel in its historical perspective. Why does the author do this?

Why is the climate of fear instilled by the Holy Inquisition relevant to this story?

How different was life in 15th century Europe to life in 21st century Europe?

2

What kind of person is Zarita in the summer of 1490 when the book begins? Do you like her as a person? What are her strengths and what are her failings? Is she the sort of girl you'd have as a friend?

By the end of the book, how has Zarita changed as a person? Do you think she's changed for the better?

Is she very different from the girl who shrieked at a beggar in chapter one?

3

One of the main themes of the book is the contrast between the rich and the poor in late 15th century Spain. How hard is life for the poor?

Is the contrast between rich and poor more marked then than it is now? How do the rich behave towards the poor, and vice versa?

Where do your sympathies lie?

4

Saulo's fortunes are reversed throughout the course of the book. Although he loses both his parents, he becomes rich on his travels.

How does he make his money? Is he lucky or is his newfound wealth planned? How does life change for Saulo once he becomes wealthy?

Why is money so important at this time? Why is it such an important consideration for Christopher Columbus, for example?



5

How just and fair is the Inquisition in its dealings?

What kind of a character is Father Besian? What do you think of the methods they use to interrogate their victims? Why is their treatment of Bartolomé particularly shocking to us as readers?

6

'...I'd begun to fall in love with the sea as her moods and caprices conspired to entrance me.'

What is it about the sea that appeals to Saulo? What effect does it have on him, and his outlook on life in general?

Who or what are the other major influences on Saulo that bring about the changes in him as he transforms from boy to man, and from pauper to professional mariner?

7

How does Zarita's father, Don Vicente, react to the news that Bartolomé is to be interrogated by the Inquisition?

How does this compare with his handling of the beggar who was accused of assaulting his daughter? Does he behave in a just and rational way? Is this what you would expect of a magistrate?

8

'Such dreadful outcomes from one deed!' (page 246)

By the end of the book, does Zarita have a true sense of remorse for what she has done? And what of Saulo, has he finally achieved the act of revenge he so desperately sought?

What is it that unites Saulo and Zarita? What are the 'dreadful outcomes' they share in common, and which now bind them together so closely?

9

Why does Beatriz swap places with Zarita in prison?
Why does she not recant as the crowd implores?

Is her sacrifice an act of bravery, or one of love? Is Zarita worthy of this sacrifice?

10

The book's prologue reappears at the end of the novel as chapter 64.
Why is this section repeated?

Do you react differently to this short chapter when it appears at the novel's finale?
As a reader, how have your perceptions of this execution changed through the course of the novel?

Or is it still every bit as horrific as it was when you first read the account of a woman being burned at the stake? Why is the description so powerful and shocking?

When you read chapter 64, did you remember that you had already read this chapter?

