



Time of the Eagle by Sherryl Jordan

A classroom English unit from  HarperCollinsPublishers

Time of the Eagle is a powerful, sensitive, gripping and mystical novel from the pen of New Zealand writer Sherryl Jordan. Written in the first person, it covers the amazing personal journey that Avala must take to achieve her destiny, the learnings she must absorb and the unselfish sacrifices she makes along the way to free her people from an enforced nomadic lifestyle and almost certain oblivion. Positive human themes of loyalty, friendship, cooperation, unselfish love, honesty, interdependence and personal potential are fully explored and are skilfully contrasted with the baser human weaknesses of pride, cruelty, stubbornness, ignorance and dishonesty — all interwoven in an exciting and mystical theme. The plot is fast-paced and readers will be gripped by the building excitement as the inevitable showdown between good and evil approaches. Published by Simon and Schuster and distributed in New Zealand by HarperCollins, *Time of the Eagle* will provide a stimulating and thought-provoking read for students of both genders. Most suitable for intermediate age and upwards.

Story synopsis

Avala, a 16-year-old girl, belongs to the proud but small Shinali nation. They have been forced from their city and their lands by Jaganath, the cruel and sadistic Emperor of the Navoran Empire. They are forced into a nomadic existence to avoid being hunted down and killed by the Navoran army. Avala is of mixed Navoran and Shinali blood. Her Navoran father, Gabriel, is revered as a great healer and deliverer of freedom who sacrificed his life to Jaganath in exchange for the release of the captured Shinali nation.

On her coming to womanhood, Avala is made very aware that, as Gabriel's daughter, she has a destiny to fulfil — the bringing about of the Time of the Eagle. This time, prophesied by Gabriel, is when the neighbouring nations of the Hena and Igaal, along with the Shinali nation, will put aside their differences and rise up together to overthrow Jaganath and unite all the nations (including Navorans) in a lasting peace.

Her quest begins with an Igaal tribe and in spite of tending for their sick and wounded with her special healing powers she meets hostility and is treated as a slave. Having won the respect of Ish-tok, the youngest son of Mudiwar, he helps her escape to find her beloved Shinali tribe. They have moved on. Lost and on the verge of death in the snowy mountains, she is rescued by the scholars, healers and artists of Ravinath — Navorans with special powers who escaped from Jaganath to a secret mountain city. Nurtured and tutored by these special people, Avala develops her amazing natural healing and visionary powers. After a year she returns to the Igaal and convinces Mudiwar and all Igaali tribes to join the Time of the Eagle. The Hena tribes and Shinali tribes unite with the Igaal, and along with large bands of Navoran deserters, they combine to form an army of 20,000 who pledge to overthrow Jaganath. Avala formulates a plan to cause the least bloodshed and the Time of the Eagle is at hand. The city of Navoran is liberated and Avala bravely confronts Jaganath and his magic powers. Using only the strength of her mind, she captures Jaganath who is tried and put to death. For all the nations and the scholars of Ravinath, the prophecy of her father is fulfilled.

Pre-reading and motivational activities

- Introduce students to the idea of a sequel — a book continues a story from a previous book. Tell students that the previous book (*Secret Sacrament*) focused on Gabriel, the father of Avala, the main character in *Time of the Eagle*. Read the back cover notes to the students. What clues do they give as to what happened to Gabriel and the Shinali people in the previous book?
- What do students understand of the concepts of destiny and fulfilling a prophecy? Have them speculate on what might happen at the *Time of the Eagle*.

During and post-reading activities

- Discuss the negative attitudes that some of the young Shinali show towards Avala. Are they justified in feeling this way?
- Can the students explain the dilemma that Avala faces between her future wishes and the destiny she faced? Find instances in the story where she confronts these dilemmas. What choices does she make?
- Have students list the professions: cultural, medical and artistic pursuits of the scholars of Ravinath. What might have been the consequences for Avala and the Time of the Eagle if she had not been tutored by these wise and gentle people? Speculate on the loss to all the nations if the scholars of Ravinath had been killed by Jaganath.
- List examples of major learnings that Avala discovered/was taught at Ravinath and how they helped prepare her for and during the Time of the Eagle.
- Discuss and identify the ways that artists, musicians, poets, astronomers etc. make major contributions to societies. Invite a local artist, writer, poet, actor, astronomer etc. to talk to the class about their work. Have students find out what motivates them, the skills they need, how they acquired these skills, and the satisfaction(s) they gain from their work.
- In groups, have students discuss and list the positive human values that Avala displays during her difficult journey to fulfil the prophecy. Locate incidents in the story to back these up.
- Discuss the problems that the new united nations would have to overcome to make the Time of the Eagle achieve lasting peace in the land. Can students suggest any measures that could be taken to prevent people like Jaganath ever rising to power again?

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