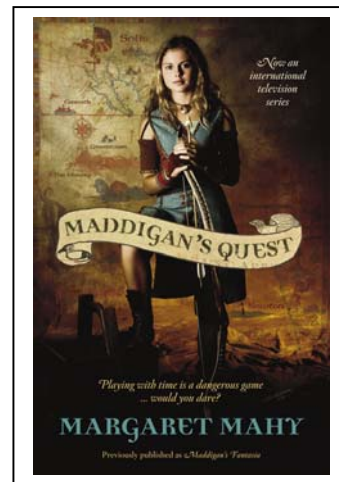


Maddigan's Quest

(originally published as "Maddigan's Fantasia")

by Margaret Mahy



Teaching Guide

Story Synopsis

Maddigan's Fantasia is the name given to a remarkable band of travelling acrobats, magicians, jugglers, clowns, trapeze artists and musicians who travel the treacherous roads. The world in which they exist is in a time 'close to our own' but it is a very different world to the one we know – a world that has been torn apart by conflict and chaos. In their travels, Maddigan's Fantasia brings joy, laughter, magic and wonder to this world that is in desperate need of healing.

The story begins with the tragic death of Ferdy Maddigan, the leader of the Fantasia, at the hands of Road Rats – a travelling band of bikers who steal and plunder any groups of people who they find travelling the roads. Garland, the 12-year-old daughter of Ferdy, witnesses his death along with Boomer, another young musician member of the Fantasia. In the true tradition of entertainers, the Fantasia re-groups and carries on their quest. As well as entertainment, their mission is to bring back a solar converter to their home city to enable it to generate the power it needs to survive.

Mysterious young strangers from another time in the future, join the Fantasia. Their mission is to try to alter events of the present so events in the future will be in turn altered for the better. As Garland tries to unlock the secrets of their origin, she becomes aware of the increasing danger from two sinister strangers who are following the Fantasia. These robotic creatures have been sent to try and snatch the young strangers back to the future by an evil leader – Nennog.

The ever-changing landscape and events that surround the Fantasia provide a stunning backdrop for the fast-paced adventures. The story challenges students to consider many different concepts, including:

- a civilisation that has lost most scientific knowledge
- the breakdown of law and order
- the possibility of time travel
- loyalty and strength through unity and common purpose
- a human need for laughter, joy, wonder and entertainment

- freedom goes hand-in-hand with personal responsibility
- events in the past will affect events in the future.

Good eventually triumphs over evil even though it appears increasingly that evil will win until nearly the last page!

Pre-Reading Motivational Activities

- Focus on the byline 'Playing with time is a dangerous game ... would you dare'. What do the students think is meant by this? How can we play with time?
- From the cover, what other clues can the students deduce about the setting of the book and the meaning of the byline?
- The book was originally published with the title *'Maddigan's Fantasia'*. Speculate on the meaning of the title – *Maddigan's Fantasia*. Tell students that the girl on the cover is called Garland. Do her clothes, along with the book's name, give us any clues to the story?
- Read to the class Garland's diary entries on pages 1 and 7. Discuss what is meant by 'Maddigan's Fantasia'. What is it and what does it do?
- Identify the terrible events that affected the world. What could they have been? Do we get any clues as to what century the world was in before the Destruction and the Chaos? Give reasons.

Post-Reading Focus Activities

- In groups, have students discuss the feasibility of time travel. If it was possible, what do they think would be the advantages and disadvantages?
- Develop the idea that actions we take now will affect the future. Can they think of any examples if this? eg - decisions we make now about generating power - decisions we make now about our environment
- Identify ways that humans store and pass on knowledge to future generations such as books, internet, CD-ROM, Video etc. How important do the students think this is?
- Have students imagine the consequences for the world if all this knowledge was destroyed? How do they think the world would change?
- Discuss the behaviour of the children in the city of Newtown. What caused this to happen? Who do they think was most at fault? Would they behave like this?
- Have students share the forms of entertainment they like most. Why do they like them? Why do they think the Fantasia was so popular wherever they went?
- Discuss and list reasons why laughter is important in everyday life.
- Divide the class into groups of Fantasias. Their task is to devise, present and tour a show that will bring joy, laughter and entertain other classes in the school.