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The Tae'anaryn

by Dr Joe Ireland

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Recommended Age: primary school to young adult

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Introduction

The Tae'anaryn is a thrilling fantasy adventure set in a magical land full of wonder and mystery. Join the story as a young Tae'anaryn girl struggles to fit into a world intolerant of difference.

This book touches on real issues that young readers face every day and demonstrates different ways of viewing and dealing with those issues from the safe distance of a fantasy setting. The book is also philosophical, yet also accessible, to young readers. It helps challenge their thinking and perceptions, making them aware of their own opinions and expanding their access to the world just as any good book will.

Story Summary

Kialessa is different. She has horns. She has a tail. She doesn't burn. With all this difference how will she find a way to fit in a world that doesn't seem to want her? On the other hand, perhaps being different is just what the world desperately needs.

Because of the way she looks she has terrible time fitting in, even when she's granted an exclusive scholarship to study at the King's College. But Kialessa discovers a mysterious plot to destroy the king of Lenmer'el, and that includes everything and everyone she cares about. What should she do? What would you do?

Key Learning Areas

Bullying

Existentialism

Resilience

Values Addressed/Themes

Bullying: Doing the 'five' (speak nicely, speak firmly, ignore, walk away, report). How to turn being bullied into a positive experience.

Being: Dealing with the existential questions, finding purpose in life. Students gain experience in how to tackle the classic question, 'what is the meaning of my life?'

Bad hair days: Students are motivated and encouraged to develop resilience in life, with practical advice and proven suggestions for dealing with 'bad hair days' (Including positive thinking, accessing help, seeing opportunities, being the change).

Related Text/Resources

Bullying:

<http://bullyingnoway.gov.au/>

<http://education.qld.gov.au/student-services/behaviour/qaav/quick-tips.html>

Being (existentialism):

<http://www.wired.com/geekdad/2008/08/how-to-answer-y/>

Sacred scripture from across the world:

<http://www.philosophylam.org/index.html>

Bad hair days (resilience):

Qld government supports a multicultural resilience program at <http://www.health.qld.gov.au/pahospital/qtmhc/projects.asp>

A touring school program dealing with resilience, <http://www.goodgrief.org.au/>, including Stormbirds - a program for developing resilience after natural disasters.

A lot can be learnt from <http://eprints.qut.edu.au/1281/1/IJMHP.pdf>

About the Author



Hi, I'm Dr Joe: philosopher, educator, storyteller.

I am a science education specialist, based in Brisbane, Australia, which means I go about trying to get children (and teachers) to understand how to create knowledge through science. I have a lifelong passion for philosophy (particularly epistemology) science (as a social phenomenon) and fantasy, having written award winning fantasy for the Living Greyhawk campaign setting. I enjoy spending time with my wife and family, attending church and challenging people in what they think and in what they think about what they think. I also play flute.

The Tae'anaryn is a thinking book – designed to challenge readers young and old to consider the world they live in.

Fantasy novels are a great way to teach, allowing us to

explore worlds beyond our reach, to meet people beyond imagining and to take a piece of that experience with us when we return to everyday life. That is what I hope this book will do for you. I hope it will take you on a journey to meet ideas and individuals you might never have the opportunity to meet in any other way. Learn more, discuss, disagree, converse. I hope you enjoy The Tae'anaryn.

Discussion Questions

Being

'The Tae'anaryn' is about dealing with challenges, fitting in with new people and finding your purpose in life. I hope it's a book that will challenge your thinking and have you asking questions!

This book asks a question, 'Is there a higher purpose to my life, and how will I know it?' This is known as an existential question: a question about existence and its purpose. Some philosophers feel there are no answers to this question, only the answer you give it yourself. Do you think there is a purpose to your life?

What was Kialessa's answer to this question? How did Kialessa go about answering this question? Who helped her answer her question?

The existential question is 'what is the meaning of life?', but this book only asks 'is there a purpose to my personal life'. Do you think your life itself has a purpose? How will you go about finding an answer to this question? What will you do if you don't find an answer?

What makes a life good? How will you know when you have lived a good life?

Bullying

This book deals with bullying.

Kialessa was trying to 'do the five'. Can you tell when she:

1. Spoke friendly
2. Spoke firmly
3. Ignored
4. Walked away
5. Reported

Was there a time when she didn't deal with bullying appropriately?

How did she deal with having no friends at all at first?

How did she decide to deal with the 'annoying boy'?

What two reasons did Piex and Darrix give for bullying? Are these ever reasons some people might bully you?

How did she deal with Allastassia? How would you?

Is there a difference between bullying and teasing? Is teasing among friends all right? How do you let your friends know when their teasing is going a bit too far?

Bad Hair Days

A 'bad hair day' is when things just don't go your way – lots of bad things happen and it's hard to keep a smile on your face. Some days you might be trying to deal with a disaster like fire or flood, and some days are just not your day. This book presents many suggestions on how to turn the bad days around.

What did the athletics teacher suggest? What does it mean that everything in life can be an 'opportunity'? Do you agree?

Kialessa faced many obstacles learning at the college. For one, she couldn't even read, and the college was not even equipped for dealing with someone with her challenges. What did she do to

confront and overcome this problem? How did she find the help she needed even though she wasn't very good at something most of us take for granted?

Did Kialessa use her body in ways that others might have found troublesome (i.e. her tail). Did she find ways to turn enemies into friends?

Kialessa *looks* different. Most people wouldn't let her touch them, some people would scream at the very sight of her. She said it was like being a 'disease' to them. How did she deal with it? Having friends and deciding she is a good person intended for great good – no matter what others think of her, is the main way she handles this difficult situation. What would you do?

Some scholars call the ability to recover after hardship or disaster 'resilience', and it is a special talent children are often particularly good at. What other ways can you think of dealing with disasters apart from keeping a positive outlook, accessing appropriate help, recognising and sharing our feelings, and knowing who you are?

Chapter One: The Tae'anaryn

What bad thing happened to Kialessa at the inn? What would you do if this happened to you?

Even though a terrible thing happened, it made Kialessa begin to wonder about an important thing. What question did Kialessa ask?

The Threat

In this chapter Kialessa finds herself in terrible danger. What did she do? What would you do?

Who helped her and how did they know?

The King's Guard

In this chapter Kialessa gets a wonderful opportunity – to leave her family and live at an exclusive boarding college. What convinces her to go?

What would it take for you to chase your goals? Would you be prepared to go to boarding college or to leave your country to chase your goals? What are you prepared to give up to achieve your goals?

The King's College

The college was different from the life Kialessa had known, but she insisted on having the experiences she believed she needed to grow. Do you think she needed to see the king? What would you have insisted on?

Right from the start, people (especially adults) had trouble with the way Kialessa looked. Have you ever been treated badly because of the way you looked or what you believed?

How do you think you should treat people in authority, who probably should know better, who treat you with unkindness or rudeness?

The King

What message did the king give Kialessa?

What influence can it have on life if someone believes they are a good person, intended to do great things?

The Wish

Should Kialessa have been out that late at night?

Did she do the right thing once she knew there was an intruder about?

One lesson Kialessa felt she learnt was that: 'Good things come to those who wait, but nothing comes to those who don't wish'. What role do you think wishing and hoping play in helping us achieve our goals?

The Wizard's Apprentice

Is it all right to steal from people just to help a friend? Did Kialessa steal?

Did Kialessa do a good thing?

The Prayerful Warrior

Would you stand up for a stranger at school who was being bullied? What would it take for you to find the courage?

Do you pray? Does it sometimes surprise you who of your friends pray every day? How do you pray? Are there different ways to pray?

The Chase

Kialessa's success in archery follows her belief that she can succeed. She pictures herself succeeding in the situations she wants before even trying. How important is picturing yourself succeeding? Does it help you succeed?

Would you chase an intruder through the forest? How much danger was Kialessa really in?

The Enchantress

Kialessa had a great success in this chapter, beating the college record. The tutor told Kialessa to 'see everything in life as an opportunity'. Is it? Can we find opportunities even during disasters?

Can the way we look, sound or our physical disabilities be what make us special or unique? Can they be opportunities?

What do you think of Allastassia's apology? Was it enough?

Do you think it's a good idea when apologising to someone to try to understand how you made them feel or is it enough to just say sorry?

The Half Troll

Posk is a mentally disabled student. Did he need special consideration to help him learn?

In what ways was he like everyone else?

Do you think Kialessa should be in charge of Posk?

The Senior Students

In this chapter, the five friends find themselves in an extremely dangerous situation with a real threat to their lives. What should you do during a real bank robbery?

Do you think Kialessa and her friends were rewarded fairly?

Why do you think the mayor was trying to keep their success quiet? What would you have done if you were the mayor?

The Dream Walker

Kiel, it turns out, has a special talent. Being able to control your dreams is called 'lucid dreaming'.

Have you ever had a dream where you realised you were dreaming and could control the dream?

Is it sometimes more effective, when chasing away bad dreams, to think of good things rather than try not to think of bad things?

Who do you think is trying to harm the King of Lenmer'el and why?

The Fire

How did Kialessa know when to save the king? Have you ever had a good idea, or felt good about something, and it later turned out to be really important?

How did Kialessa find the courage to face such a terrible enemy?

The Battle

Who was the cruel man? What was he trying to do and why?

Will he be back?

The Feast

In the end, Kialessa was richly rewarded by the king. Why didn't she use the king's reward to live in the castle and become better than most other citizens? What would you have done?

In the end, Kialessa felt she'd found an answer to the question of how she was to find her higher purpose in life. What was it?

Would her answer be enough for you? What do you think your purpose in life is? How can you go about finding it?