

What does the audience learn about survival from reading *The Land of Stories*?

Chris Colfer's novel, *The Land of Stories*, provides an exploration of the concept of survival in a number of ways. The audience learns that strong relationships with family and friends and having a strong support network is essential in order to successfully survive in adverse circumstances. Colfer has communicated this lesson to the reader through his use of characterisation and how he builds relationships between characters. The utilisation of the fantasy genre has enabled him to explore this concept in a removed context to help the reader learn the overall lessons the narrative has to offer. Colfer has also interweaved moments of his own life into the book and the characters, these autobiographical elements provide evidence that the lessons taught in the fictional world do indeed have real world relevance.

Relationships between characters is key to the survival of the Bailey twins in 'The Land of Stories'. Specifically, the sibling connection between Alex and Conner supports their survival, as well as the positive relationships they form with other characters, such as Froggy. The powerful metaphysical connection that the twins have is what tips Conner off about Alex falling through the portal to the Fairy-Tale world. Without this sibling connection, Conner would not have followed Alex and they would not have the support of one another to help overcome the obstacles presented on their journey. Without Froggy's friendship, Alex and Conner would have been hopelessly lost the minute they arrived. He is important to their success in fulfilling their quest as he prepares them for what they could encounter. Connotations associated with survival include courage, strength of character and the power of relationships. It is the powerful mental connection between the twins that initially allows Conner to demonstrate a great deal of courage by placing himself into a precarious situation. Colfer has also successfully shown the responder the importance of having a caring and friendly disposition; this is what adds to the strength of Froggy's character. This friendship is what is elementary to the twins surviving in the Fairy-tale world.

The novel's fantasy genre allows the responder to learn the basic necessities of survival through the use of setting and characterisation. Fantasy characters are essential to the twins' survival and their ultimate return home in the story's resolution when the Fairy Godmother, who is revealed to be the twins' actual grandmother, creates a new magic portal for them to transport through. If the story was not set in a fantasy world with characters conventional to the genre, the twins would have been unable to get home after the failure of their Wishing Spell plan. A close connection to the magical Fairy Godmother meant the twins were able to survive their predicaments. Colfer has made a very wise decision to set this story in a fantasy world because it uses a context that is removed from that of the responder's to teach them about the importance of family support and connections. Although, in reality, one is unlikely to fall through a portal to another dimension, a lesson is taught about the real-world need for significant familial relationships and how these are pivotal to surviving adverse circumstances.

Colfer has also incorporated autobiographical elements into *The Land of Stories* as way of making links for the reader between fantasy fiction and reality and to provide real world evidence that the necessary components for the survival of characters in the book are also true in real life. He has spoken in many interviews about the fact that he was bullied and teased as a child. He often states that his family and small social groups were what helped him through. An insight into Colfer's childhood allows strong links to be made between him feeling like an outsider and how Alex feels in the story. This is particularly evident in chapter one when a lonely atmosphere is created through the way Alex is described in juxtaposition to other students in the classroom. She is the odd one out, she is alert and pays attention. Colfer was also often the odd one out at school. With the Fairy-Tale world as a symbol for the ways in which Colfer tried to avoid the demons he had to battle, "The Land of Stories" very effectively communicates the need for escapism as a strategy for survival. The Bailey twins' quite literally take time out from their world in order to learn the value of their relationships. Colfer teaches readers the importance of having a confidant to escape to in order to survive stressful situations.

It is pivotal that everyone has close relationships and strong support network around them in order for them survive all that life can offer. This is the lesson that Colfer teaches through the relationships the characters form in the novel and how these prepare them for, and ensure their safety during, their quest to get home. The fantasy genre allows the Fairy Godmother to become an important relative of the twins, and an essential component to them getting home, further proving the need for strong and positive family connections. Finally, the incorporation of autobiographical elements to the story means that Colfer communicates these messages, though in a fictional world, with a solid grounding in reality and the responder's context. By employing these strategies and techniques, *The Land of Stories* capably teaches the responder what is essential to survival.

Commented [AT1]: General statement in response to the question.

Commented [AT2]: Thesis statement – my main point and argument for which I will supply evidence

Commented [AT3]: Main points for my argument (Body Paragraphs)

-relationships between characters
-fantasy genre
-autobiographical elements

Commented [AT4]: Topic sentence – main point

Commented [AT5]: Examples

Commented [AT6]: Analysis

Commented [AT7]: Link to thesis (relationships)

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Commented [AT10]: Topic sentence (fantasy genre)

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Commented [AT12]: Analysis

Commented [AT13]: Link to question and thesis (fantasy genre shows the importance of family relationships)

Commented [AT14]: Topic sentence (autobiographical elements)

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Commented [AT16]: TECHNIQUE

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Commented [AT19]: Link to question and thesis (confidant is a person you have a close relationship with)

Commented [AT20]: Restate thesis statement (in a different way)

Commented [AT21]: Summarise main argument points

Commented [AT22]: Finish with a general statement in reference to the novel, the concept of survival, and the question.