

MICHAEL P. SPRADLIN

Action. Drama. Humor. And things BLOW UP.

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The Youngest Templar *Trail of Fate* BOOK TWO

by Michael P. Spradlin

About the book:

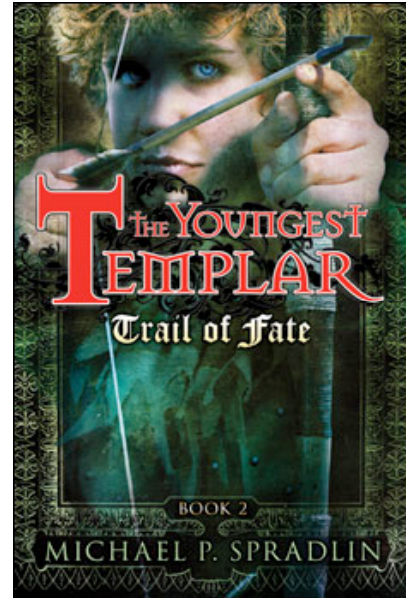
Tristan's desperate mission to protect the holy grail continues! Having escaped the Holy Land, the young squire Tristan must cross Europe on his secret mission to save the Holy Grail.

Together with his friends, the fiery archer Robard Hode and the courageous assassin Maryam, he immediately finds himself caught in

the middle of a conflict between the French king and a heretical band of Cathars. But when Tristan falls for the beautiful leader of the Cathars, his devotion to the Grail wavers, which might have disastrous consequences.

About the author:

In addition to penning the international bestselling *Youngest Templar* trilogy, Michael P. Spradlin is also the author of the *Spy Goddess* novels and several picture books. He lives for the day he can become a full-time writer. He was born in a small town in Michigan and grew up with a healthy and natural suspicion of all Hoosiers and Buckeyes. When he is not writing, he travels the world in his fully automated yacht, aboard which he enjoys cooking, water skiing and plotting Total World Domination. He's just kidding about that last part. He really doesn't enjoy water skiing.



Praise for *The Youngest Templar: Keeper of the Grail*:

"This is a winner!"- *KLIATT*, starred review

"A stirring saga" – *Booklist*

"Memorable." – *The Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books*

"Readers are likely to be swept up."- *VOYA*

"This book is better written than most Templar fiction and more historically accurate than most Templar nonfiction. I cannot recommend this book highly enough." – *TemplarHistory.com*

Author Interview:

1. ***How did you become interested in Templar history? How do you make sure your resources are good ones?***

The Templars bring much to the table when it comes to writing fiction. First, is the fact that they rose to prominence during the Third Crusade which to me is one of history's most fascinating periods. Second it the fact that they were somewhat mysterious and rose to power so quickly it makes for a fascinating setting for a story. As for sources, you have to think as a historian thinks and realize there are problems and drawbacks with virtually any source. Even first person accounts can be problematic because you're dealing with someone's point of view, their belief system and the prism through which they see the world. I always advise students to examine as much historical evidence as you can from as many sources as possible then draw and defend your own conclusions.

2. ***Can you explain your process about how you develop such a spellbinding plot?***

I think the plot finds me. Or at least it finds my characters. Most of the stories I write about come from my own fertile imagination. I tend to think about these things a lot. What would I do in this situation? Would I have the courage Washington showed in crossing the Delaware to face the Hessians on Christmas Day? Would I be as forthright as Joshua Chamberlin standing with the 20th Maine on Little Round top at Gettysbrug and save the Union Army from a crushing defeat? Could I, like Captain Big Foot Wallace of the Texas Rangers, survive for two years in a Mexican Prison? When the imagination takes over, you just write.

3. ***What is the best part of being an author?***

Without a doubt the very best part is hearing from readers, especially young people, about how one of your books has affected them positively in some way. Just this week, I received a letter from a young reader which said "The Youngest Templar: Keeper of the Grail is

the best book ever and my favorite book of all time.” You don’t get too many reactions like that to very much of what you do in life. If you can bring the love of reading to a child, there is no better feeling.

4. ***When will the next Templar book be released?***

The Youngest Templar: Trail of Fate is scheduled to be released October 29, 2009. The third book is called ***The Youngest Templar: Orphan of Destiny*** and it will be published in the fall of 2010.

Pre-reading:

Brainstorm everything you remember from the first book in the series, Keeper of the Grail. What do you think are the most important things to know for understanding book two? Predict what you think will happen in this story and why.

DISCUSSION GUIDE:

1. After reading chapter one answer the five journalist questions: who, what, when, where and why. Then, make a prediction about what you think will happen in the following chapter.
2. Who discovers Tristan on the beach? Are they friend or foe? During this time period is it easy to tell them apart? Is it now?
3. Who is Celia? Do you think she will be an important character in the story? Why or why not?
4. Who shows up to rescue Tristan? How does he diffuse the situation? Describe his companions.
5. Who are the Cathars? How have they become enemies of the church? How must they live their lives because of their beliefs? How does Tristan feel about this?
6. Who is the High Counsel to the Archbishop of Languedoc? Why is important to the story? Why does Tristan trick him?
7. Why does Tristan keep the truth of his mission secret from his friends? Do you think he is justified in maintaining this secret? Why has he had to change his original strategy for reaching England?

8. Robard decides to go on his own way. Who seems most upset by this decision? Where is Robard's destination?
9. Has Tristan made a mistake to give an oath to protect Celia and her people because he is smitten? Is he acting rationally? Why do you think this happens
10. Why is Tristan even more confused by women than most fellows his age? How does Maryam try to explain about Robard to him? How do you think his two companions feel about each other? What evidence do you have?
11. Describe the challenges and battles that Tristan and his friends face as they make their way toward Montségur. Who returns and why?
12. Explain the challenges the trio face once they reach the castle walls. What unique plan does Tristan make to get inside?
13. Once inside how do Celia and her people receive them? What complications appear outside the gate?
14. Make a list of their assets and weaknesses as they prepare for battle with Sir Hugh and the High Counsel? What clever way does Tristan hold back the army?
15. How does Spradlin show Sir Hugh to be a treacherous villain? What makes a good villain?
16. Why is Robard even angrier at Celia than just being a heretic? What is the importance of her whole history? Does it in any way remind you of Tristan's?
17. In the end, why must Tristan and his friends leave Montségur? How do they manage it? Whose skills surprise the other two once more? Why?
18. Describe their life as they travel through the forest toward the Channel. Does it sound like something exciting or excruciating to you? Why? Why does Tristan feel better after revealing the truth about his quest? Is it more difficult to keep a secret than people believe it to be?
19. What happens in Calais? Who does Sir Hugh have on his side? How does Tristan try to drive a wedge between them? Who comes to their rescue in the keep?

20. In the end, what is at stake? What do you think will happen next and why? Who do you believe has the most power? Why?

PROJECTS:

Language Arts:

Writing:

Keep a journal as if you were Tristan as you read the novel. Update it at least six times explaining your progress on the quest. Remember that Tristan has only brief periods that he could write so keep your log to a good summary and a short explanation of his fears or worries.

-or-

Write the scene immediately following the end of the novel. Use what you know about the characters, Spradlin's writing, and the story to make it seamless and believable. Compare it, of course, to the final book when it arrives.

Reading:

Create a character map for all the most important characters that appear in this story. Include the following elements and be sure to add page numbers to your information when you find it: name, description, relationship to Tristan, special skills or abilities, and in the end (where they are left as the novel closes).

Art:

Create the final scene in the novel from at least two different angles though the medium is entirely up to you (draw, paint, collage, sculpt or diorama). In a brief artist's statement explain what we are seeing.

-or-

Create a 3D display of the castle and fortress at Montségur.

History:

Research one of the following topics and create a pamphlet, poster, or PowerPoint about what you learned: France, weaponry, ships or religious persecution in the middle ages, the crusades, the Cathars, or the holy grail.

This guide was created by [Tracie Vaughn Zimmer](#), a reading specialist and children's author. Visit her website to find hundreds of guides to children's literature.