

## A Teacher's Guide to

### *Kat, Incurrible*

by Stephanie Burgis

#### **About the Book**

In this magical tale set in Regency Era England, Kat's mother is a Guardian, one of the most powerful magic workers in the nation, and when Kat, the youngest of three sisters, discovers that she has inherited her mother's powers, she is unwilling to accept help from her mother's former tutor, Mr. Gregson. Angeline, the middle sister, inherited her mother's ability to conduct witchcraft, and between the two sisters, the family is almost brought to ruin. Add the evil Sir Neville who wants to marry the oldest sister, Elissa, for the families' magic powers, the besotted Mr. Carlyle who wants to marry Angeline, and the incorrigible Kat who says and does the wrong thing every time she has the chance, and disaster is just around the corner. Will Guardian magic save the day?

#### **About the Author**

An ardent book lover, a published writer, and the mother of a young son, Stephanie Burgis is living her dream. Though she published her first short story when she was fifteen, she has also worked as an assistant in a senatorial office, served as a web editor for an English opera house, and taught English in a Viennese high school. Ms. Burgis grew up in Lansing, Michigan; studied in Vienna, Austria, for a year; and currently lives in the United Kingdom with her husband and son.

#### **Discussion Questions**

1. How do the sisters' personalities differ from one another? What dominant characteristics does each sister possess? How do the sisters help one another based on their strengths and weaknesses?
2. Why does the Stephenson family have such a close bond, even with Charles, who almost ruins the family with his gambling? What role does their father play in the family?
3. Kat and Angeline are both concerned that Elissa will find out they are dabbling in magic. Why is Elissa adamantly against magic? What role does their mother play in Elissa's attitude?
4. Why is Stepmama so insistent that the girls behave appropriately? What is she ashamed of, and what does this say about her priorities? Why is she willing to marry them off to someone for money instead of love? How does Stepmama's outlook change by the end of the book?
5. What is the difference between being a Guardian and being a Witch? Why is being a Guardian considered more powerful? Why do Guardians consider witchcraft beneath them?
6. On Kat's first visit to the Golden Hall, why is she defensive and unwilling to accept her inheritance as a Guardian? Why does she eventually change her mind and accept Mr. Gregson's offer as a tutor?

7. Kat does everything she can to abandon the golden mirror; why does it always come back to her? Why does Kat want to return the mirror?
8. Kat's first evening at Grantham Abbey proves to be entertaining and informative. What does she do that causes embarrassment to her family and to her? What does she learn that will later prove helpful?
9. Why does Mr. Gregson's appearance at Grantham Abbey unsettle Kat? Why is she so untrusting of him? How does he finally prove to her that he is worthy of her trust? How does Lady Fotherington treat Kat, and why?
10. What does Kat learn about her mother from Mr. Gregson? Why doesn't she share the information with Angeline and Elissa?
11. What is the truth behind Sir Neville's attitude toward his brother, Mr. Collingwood? What does Mr. Collingwood know about his brother's affairs that Sir Neville would prefer to keep secret? How is the truth finally exposed?
12. Why does Mr. Collingwood pretend to be a highwayman? What is Kat's motivation for helping Mr. Collingwood escape from the party? How does her help turn into a hindrance?
13. What does Kat learn about her powers that bring her peace? How does she use these powers to win her sisters their true loves and save her family from ruin?
14. Is Kat really incorrigible? Why or why not?
15. Kat is from 19<sup>th</sup> Century England. How is she distinct from a modern heroine? How does author Stephanie Burgis use the Regency Era setting as a backdrop to her unique story? How does she combine elements of history and fantasy?

### **Writing and Research Activities**

1. Ask students to investigate the setting and social framework of a Gothic novel. On page 44, Angeline comments to Kat that Elissa has a fancy to become a Gothic heroine. Elissa reads Gothic novels constantly and tries to live her life according to the tenets of a Gothic society. Her unrequited love for Mr. Collingwood and his for her could be the plot of a Gothic novel. If, indeed, Elissa and Mr. Collingwood marry in the Gothic tradition, what would their wedding look like and how would they live their lives together as newlyweds? Choose a scene with Elissa from *Kat, Incorrigible* and create a visual display that illustrates this episode as if it were from a Gothic novel.
2. Have students create a collage of voices that speak to the incorrigible Kat. Have each student select one of the other characters (not including Kat): Angeline, Elissa, her father, Stepmama, Lady Fotherington, Mr. Gregson, Sir Neville, Mr. Carlyle, or Mr. Collingwood. Have each student write three to five sentences from their character's point of view addressing their thoughts to Kat directly; they should express their feelings toward Kat and discuss the relationship between them. Then have all students do an oral reading of the collage of voices. Students can post their written voices as well.

3. Kat frequently makes reference to Elissa's and Stepmama's lectures on a variety of subjects pertaining to propriety and the behavior expected of a proper young lady. Ask students to make a list of rules for the behavior of proper young ladies and gentlemen on which they, their parents, or their grandparents have been lectured. Have students write and compile these lectures, using humor, to make a class booklet. Have the class design a cover, create a title, and display the book in the classroom.
4. Ask students to select their favorite scene from the book and to create a "found poem," which is written by taking words and phrases from the pages of text and rearranging them as poetry. Students should title their poems and share them with the class.

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