

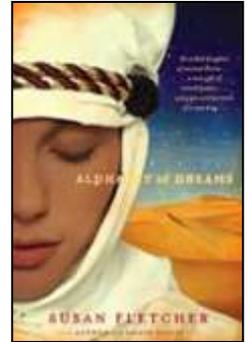
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CHAPTER-BY-CHAPTER VOCABULARY AND COMPREHENSION FOR *Alphabet of Dreams*

by Susan Fletcher

This section was created for those teachers who would like to monitor student progress closely. For each chapter of *Alphabet of Dreams*, if new vocabulary words are introduced, they are listed. Also, one or two reflection questions are provided for students to consider. Your methods of having students respond to the vocabulary introduced and the questions provided are up to you. These are some possibilities to consider:



Refer to the binder/journal method shared in this literary guide and have students create tabs for “Vocabulary” and for “Comprehension Questions.”

VOCABULARY IDEAS could include having students:

- ▶ use the vocabulary words in their own original sentences
- ▶ create “Jeopardy-like” questions for several chapters of vocabulary words. During a television “Jeopardy Game,” an answer is provided. The contestants on the show respond with a question that “defines” the answer. For use with vocabulary words, one student could share a vocabulary word and others would define the word using a question.

COMPREHENSION QUESTION ideas include:

- ▶ having students write the answers to the questions in a section of their *Alphabet of Dreams* journal/notebook.
- ▶ sharing the answers to the questions in a small literature circle and recording the group answers in some fashion.

NOTES

- ▶ () signifies the page in the paperback version of *Alphabet of Dreams* where you will find the word used in the text
- ▶ “L” signifies a geographical place, either ancient or present time, to find on a map
- ▶ All of the vocabulary words can be found by using the following online resources:
 - www.dictionary.com
 - www.ask.com
 - www.britannica.com
 - www.wikipedia.com

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Of course, you and your students can use regular, print dictionaries and encyclopedias as well.

PART I—The City of the Dead

Chapter 1—Babak’s Dream

Vocabulary: ossuaries (1) presage (2) Magus (3) thurible (3) Scythian (4)

Comprehension:

- In this first chapter, there is a quote, “Dreams can feed you, can send you on journeys to places beyond imagining.” (pg. 2) Do you agree with this? How do dreams play a part in your life?
- How do you think dreams are going to affect the lives of Babak and his sister?

Chapter 2—Hope

Vocabulary: Susa (L, 7) Palmyra (L, 7)

Comprehension:

- How do the dreams that Babak has, differ from other dreams?
- Do you believe in the power of foretelling dreams? Do you know anyone who has had this type of dream?

Chapter 3—Paltry Gift

Vocabulary: paltry (10) Rhagae (L, 10) Spentas (14) transmogrified (16)
parse (16)

Comprehension:

- How can dreaming be dangerous to anyone, and especially to Babak?

Chapter 4—The Man with Blue Tatoos

Vocabulary: profligate (19)

Comprehension:

- How would you describe the kind of dream Mitra uses to help her sleep at night? What do you do to help yourself fall asleep at night?
- Why is Mitra so desperate to stay hidden that day in the caves?

Chapter 5—Pandora’s Box

Vocabulary: slaving (28)

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Comprehension:

- Does Mitra have any choice in trusting Zoya?
- Is a Pandora's Box opened?

Chapter 6—Shaggy Beasties

Vocabulary: palsy (33)

Comprehension:

- What more do we learn about the life Mitra and Babak have before they go into hiding? Who are they hiding from?

Chapter 7—To Steal a Dream

Vocabulary: Bactria (L, 44)

Comprehension:

- If you were Mitra, would you tell Babak that you are slipping pieces of other people's garments under his pillow so he'll dream about them?

Chapter 8—Slit-Nose

Vocabulary: Margiana (L, 53) scabbard (54)

Comprehension:

- How does the money Mitra and Babak receive, change how they move through the marketplace?

Chapter 9—Pebbles and Stones

Vocabulary: querulous (62)

Comprehension:

- What compels those living in the City of the Dead to stone young children?

Chapter 10—The Eyes and Ears of the King

Vocabulary: caravansary (66) mulish (68)

Comprehension:

- Why does Mitra have a hard time trusting Zoya?

Chapter 11—Captured

Vocabulary: Caspian Gates (L, 73) brutish (74)

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Comprehension:

- Mitra is responsible for Suren's absence. How do you think she feels hearing about his possible capture?

Chapter 12—Star Dance

Vocabulary: crone (79) defiles (79) fiefdom (81)

Comprehension:

- It takes looking at the stars for Babak to remember and share his dream. Do your dreams ever get triggered by everyday things? Can you share an instance when that happened?

Chapter 13—People of the Marsh

Vocabulary: hummocky (83) slaked (85) plaited (86)

Comprehension:

- Why do you think Mitra is drugged? Is she betrayed?

Chapter 14—Hell Hag

Vocabulary: Sava (L, 92) Elburz Mountains (L, 93)

Comprehension:

- Do the tables turn for Mitra? For Babak?

Part II – The Journey

Chapter 15—The Caravan Road

Vocabulary: Zagros Mountains (L, 97) potsherd (98) laggardly (100)

Comprehension:

- "We're more alike than you think," Zoya says to Mitra. From what we know about Mitra, do you agree?

Chapter 16—He Cries for You

Vocabulary: pillion (108) gibbous moon (108) cressets (108) draughts (109)
Ahura Mazda (109) Zoroaster (109) arras (110) barsom rods (110)
kusti cords (110)

Comprehension:

- So many thoughts are going through Mitra's head as she is ushered into Melchoir's chambers. What would you be feeling if you were Mitra?

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Chapter 17—Melchior

Vocabulary: anteroom (112) divan (112) chattel (115) ablutions (117) crawl (118)

Comprehension:

- Mitra tries to be assertive for her rights. Does she have any? Are her efforts in vain?

Chapter 18—A Place of Many Secrets

Vocabulary: ewer (121) calabashes (123) sinewy (124)

Comprehension:

- How do you think “the juggler” recognizes Mitra - by how she is tying knots or by some other means?

Chapter 19—Procession of the Doomed

Vocabulary: mange (131) culled (131)

Comprehension:

- Could there be reasons the cat Shirak, the donkey Gorizpa, and the camel, come into the lives of the children?

Chapter 20—A Great Journey

Vocabulary: regalia (132) Ecbatana (L, 133) crupper (136) plaint (139)

Comprehension:

- Can you imagine setting off with a Magus on a caravan? There are so many sights, experiences and sounds to take in. What part do you think Mitra is enjoying? What part of it would you delight in?

Chapter 21—Sweet Dreams

Comprehension:

- What gives Mitra the courage to be bold, even in asking requests of the Magus?

Chapter 22—The Fortress

Vocabulary: compartment (150) Antioch (L, 153) Thrace (L, 153) Macedonia (153)

Comprehension:

- Do you think Mitra has found a kindred spirit in Pacorus?

Chapter 23—He Sleeps

Vocabulary: scree (158) limned (158) carven (162)

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Comprehension:

- Have you ever walked in your sleep or know someone who has?
- Why do you think Babak sleepwalks to the top of the fortress?

Chapter 24—The Wanderers

Vocabulary: precession (166) star of Anahita (167) edification (171)

Comprehension:

- The planets Mars and Venus are referred to as “wanderers.” Why? (Hint: see page 403).
- When Melchior mutters under his breath, “Not those,” what do you think he is thinking about?

Chapter 25—He Waits for You

Vocabulary: amphorae (172) clime (173) Ctesiphon (L, 174)

Comprehension:

- Would you trust Pirouz if you were Mitra? Why or why not?

Chapter 26— Across the Plateau

Vocabulary: wadis (181)

Comprehension:

- Mitra thinks, “It was as bad as I had feared.” (p. 185) Why doesn’t she feel this kind of fear before agreeing to escape with Pirouz?

Chapter 27—A Plan

Vocabulary: qanat (191)

Comprehension:

- Is Mitra’s plan a good one? What do you think she hopes will happen?

Chapter 28 Qanat

Vocabulary: importunings (196)

Comprehension:

- Mitra thinks, “Who was I then? A fool who dreamed old dreams of nobility and consequence but in truth would never again have either.” (p.201) What do you predict will happen to Mitra and Babak?

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Chapter 29—Koosha

Comprehension:

- Many old memories are triggered while Mitra and Babak spend time with Koosha. Are they helpful? Unhelpful?

Chapter 30—Eyes to See

Vocabulary: sheepcotes (217) lee (218)

Comprehension:

- How do you think Koosha can tell that Mitra is a girl?

Chapter 31—How Would It Be?

Vocabulary: fodder (225)

Comprehension:

- “How would it be, to cease with struggling and let go of it all,” Mitra wonders. (p.221) Are Mitra’s hopes for returning to Palmyra helping her or hindering her? If both, why?

Chapter 32—If You Were a Girl

Vocabulary: currying (228) kohl (234) henna (234) Ashi (234) Armaita (234)

Comprehension:

- Describe Giv’s treatment of Mitra? Should he be so angry?

Part III—To Follow A Star

Chapter 33—Ecbatana

Vocabulary: Saoshaynt (244) cataclysm (244)

Comprehension:

- “Sin. It still felt like sin.”(p.245) Why does Mitra put the piece of cloth beneath Babak’s tunic when she knows it clearly will disturb him?

Chapter 34—Star-Taker

Vocabulary: astral (249)

Comprehension:

- “It is also said...that Melchior hopes for the currency of dreams to buy his way back into his old position of power.” (p. 247) When Pacorus tells this to Mitra, what feelings does this generate in her?

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- What is a star-taker (astrolabe)? For more information about these, go to the following website: <http://www.astrolabes.org/electric.htm>

Chapter 35—Balthazar

Vocabulary: aquiline (257) azimuth (257)

Comprehension:

- Describe Balthazar? His knowing ways? How is he different from Gaspar and Melchior?

Chapter 36—Lose This World

Vocabulary: imperceptibly (263)

Comprehension:

- Do you think Babak has dreamt too long for others and will “lose this world?”
- Why do you think Balthazar offers to take on the responsibility of the children when he hardly knows them?

Chapter 37—Two Farewells

Vocabulary: implacable (272)

Comprehension:

- Why wouldn't Mitra agree to sell Gorizpa to the first buyer?
- “No matter how you tried,” reflects Mitra, “you couldn't keep from betraying those you cared for.” Who do you think Mitra is referring to?

Chapter 38—The Way to Babylon

Vocabulary: yazata (276) Herkales (276) King Mithradates (276) Seleucia (L, 280)
Chaldeans (280) Tigris River (L, 281)

Comprehension:

- How is traveling with this caravan different from the other times Babak and Mitra travel with the Magus?

Chapter 39—The Garrison

Vocabulary: whickering (285)

Comprehension:

- “Well. You come from spirited stock,” says Giv. (p. 287) How terrifying must that experience be, to have daggers plunged into the bundles all around Babak and Mitra? And, her secrets are known to Giv. What thoughts must be going through Mitra's mind?

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Chapter 40—The King’s Men

Vocabulary: Ishtar Gate (L, 288) ziggurat (289)

Comprehension:

- The secret is out that the children are Vardan’s, the leader of the rebellion. How do the various members of the caravan act when they hear this information? Who would you trust?
- Would you want to be near the children?

Chapter 41—Madmen and Stargazers

Comprehension:

- “But the great western desert...only madmen and stargazers would dare it.” (p.298) What do you think Giv means by this?

Chapter 42—Across the Desert

Comprehension:

- Why do you think Babak takes a turn for the worse, when he isn’t dreaming for others anymore?

Chapter 43—Blood

Vocabulary: tamarisk tree (310) convocation (312)

Comprehension:

- Even more so than before, Mitra feels alone and has so many regrets. She is strong though, and perhaps must be even stronger and more determined now. Why?

Chapter 44—Mirage

Vocabulary: tintinnabulation (321) phantasm (323) oleander (323)

Comprehension:

- What are some of the curses of traveling through the desert, especially without water? Have you ever had the experience of being without water for a long period of time?

Part IV—Judea

Chapter 45—Kings

Vocabulary: crenellated (327) entreaties (332) colonnaded (332)

Comprehension:

- This new king, the “star-omened” king, how is he to be different than other kings?

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Chapter 46—Bethlehem

Vocabulary: edifice (339) aught (342) hovel (342)

Comprehension:

- “I glared up at the bright star. Either the Magi had erred in their calculations – or the heavens had played us for fools!” (p. 341) Describe the many emotions Mitra must be feeling – about Melchior, about Herod, about being in such an impoverished place to greet a king.

Chapter 47—Mercy

Vocabulary: acrid-smelling (346) visage (348)

Comprehension:

- What is mercy? What are some of the acts of mercy that Mitra receives? Have you ever observed someone perform an act of mercy?

Chapter 48—They Bring Death

Vocabulary: purloined (353) palaver (354)

Comprehension:

- Why do Melchior’s conniving ways help this time around? Is he ever to be trusted?

Chapter 49—Three Visitors

Vocabulary: motes (358) aquiver (360) trajectories (360) lucid (362)
lexicon (366) admonition (366)

Comprehension:

- How do the goodbyes of Melchior, Pacorus and Balthazar differ from one another? What does this reveal about each person?

Chapter 50—The Babies

Vocabulary: runnels (371)

Comprehension:

- Mitra and Babak are abandoned again due to a misunderstanding. Who are the soldiers really after and why?

Chapter 51—Soldiers

Vocabulary: clangor (375) imprecations (376) curlew (377)

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Comprehension:

- In this chapter, we see the blessings and curses of Babak's dreams. How would you feel if you were Babak and many of your dreams came true – especially horrific ones?
- Why do you think the woman entrusts Mitra with her baby?

Chapter 52—This Perfect Dark

Vocabulary: juddering (384)

Comprehension:

- Mitra ponders, "What was it all for, the far, blazing omens of the night and all of this long journey?" (p.379) How would you answer this?
- Mitra also muses, "It occurred to me now that one might know a man from his dreams. That dreams, like stars, might make up an alphabet, a pattern of signs through which we might read the pulses of his heart, the temper of his soul." (p. 380) What place do dreams play in your life?
- Describe the ending? Is it a happy one? Hopeful? What questions are still unanswered at this point?

Part V—Epilogue

Chapter 53—Home

Vocabulary: sojourners (390) prescient (393) vainglorious (396) soughing (400)

Comprehension:

- We learn that many people change in the two months that progress in the novel. Who has experienced the most amazing changes?