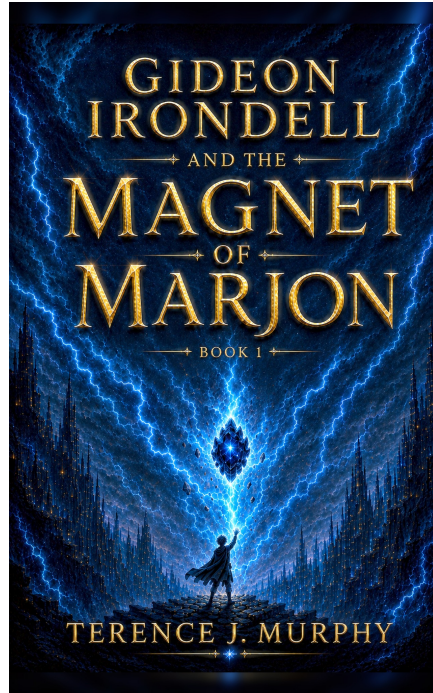




EDUCATOR GUIDE

Gideon Irondell and the Magnet of Marjon
Terence J. Murphy

For classrooms, libraries, homeschool groups, and book clubs
Recommended: ages 10+ | grades 5-9

This guide is designed to support discussion, close reading, creative thinking, science connections, and social-emotional learning. Activities may be used with the full novel or selected independently.

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1. Book at a Glance

Overview

In a world reshaped by a magnetic catastrophe, five surface-born tribes each carry one extraordinary ability. Gideon Irondell, a fourteen-year-old Uunder raised in the Barrens, survives by stealing food and staying unnoticed. When several impossible powers begin awakening inside him, he becomes the center of a conflict involving the ruler Kull Kalijan, the Aurorium Council, and the mysterious Magnet of Marjon.

Suggested audience

- Grades 5-9 and confident younger readers.
- Readers who enjoy friendship, strategy, mentorship, hidden powers, moral choices, and serious fantasy adventure.
- Useful for literature circles, independent reading, fantasy units, worldbuilding studies, and interdisciplinary science connections.

Central themes

Identity and belonging	Power and responsibility
Friendship and trust	Control versus cooperation
Prejudice and inherited conflict	Courage under pressure
Leadership and sacrifice	Knowledge, secrecy, and truth

Content guidance

The novel includes fantasy violence, peril, hunger, oppression, grief, the death of a mentor, threats to children, and emotionally intense confrontations. Violence is not graphic. Romance is not a focus in Book One. Educators should use their own knowledge of individual readers and local selection policies.

2. Before Reading

Anticipation questions

1. What makes a person powerful: ability, knowledge, courage, influence, or something else?
2. Can a law be legal and still be unjust?
3. When does secrecy protect people, and when does it harm them?
4. Would you rather possess one ability you completely understand or five abilities you cannot control?
5. What responsibilities come with discovering that others expect you to change the world?

Quickwrite prompt

Write for five minutes: Describe a moment when someone was underestimated. What did others fail to notice?

Key world terms

The Excursion	A magnetic catastrophe that transformed the world.
Zetash	Surface descendants divided into five power-bearing tribes.
Uunders	Descendants of those who survived underground.
The Barrens	The harsh western territory where the Uunders were driven.
Karthune	The Zetash capital and seat of the Aurorium.
Fault Lines	Unstable magnetic fractures dividing the continent.
Quint	A person capable of carrying all five abilities.
Magnet of Marjon	A mysterious object connected to alignment and the Fault Lines.

3. Discussion Questions

Chapters 1-6: Survival and the Barrens

1. Why does Gideon steal? How does the reason change the way readers judge his actions?
2. What does Vetra mean when she says, “Careful is not a promise. It’s a practice”?
3. How do Thea, Bram, and Toma each contribute something different to the group?
4. What details show that Kull rules through systems as much as through fear?
5. How does the hidden room beneath the city change the meaning of the Uunders’ past?

Chapters 7-12: Search, Identity, and Departure

1. Why do Atticus and his team struggle to identify Gideon?
2. What does the Barrens teach its children about being noticed?
3. How does Gideon react to learning his true name and family history?
4. Which adult earns Gideon’s trust first, and why?
5. What is gained and lost when Gideon leaves the Barrens?

Chapters 13-20: Training and Belonging

1. Which trainer understands Gideon best? Defend your answer with evidence.
2. How does failure affect Gideon during training?
3. Why is friendship important to Gideon’s control of his powers?
4. How do Karthune and the Barrens each define safety?
5. At what point does Gideon begin to think of himself differently?

Chapters 21-30: Choice, Power, and Alignment

1. How does the attack in Karthune change the stakes for Gideon and his friends?
2. What does Merrick’s death reveal about the cost of the conflict?
3. Why does Gideon reject some uses of mind-bending even when they could help him win?
4. How are Gideon and Kull alike? What makes them fundamentally different?
5. What does the final confrontation suggest about control versus alignment?

4. Character and Theme Study

Character evidence chart

Character	What the character wants	Key fear or conflict	Evidence of change
Gideon			
Thea			
Bram			
Toma			
Vetra			
Atticus			
Kull			

Theme claims

Complete the claim, then support it with two moments from the novel:
The novel suggests that power becomes dangerous when...

Complete the claim, then support it with two moments from the novel:
The friendship among Gideon, Thea, Bram, and Toma matters because...

Complete the claim, then support it with two moments from the novel:
Kull believes control creates stability, while Gideon gradually learns...

Complete the claim, then support it with two moments from the novel:
The division between Zetash and Uunders continues because...

5. Classroom Activities

A. Five Tribes Debate

Assign students one of the five tribes. Each group argues which ability would contribute most to rebuilding a damaged society. Require one benefit, one danger, and one ethical rule.

B. Design a Ring Rush Course

Students create a five-gate course. Each gate must test a different skill: planning, precision, teamwork, restraint, or adaptation. Add written rules and explain how the course rewards strategy rather than raw power.

C. Karthune vs. the Barrens

Create a two-column comparison of environment, government, resources, education, safety, and opportunity. Then write a paragraph explaining how setting shapes character behavior.

D. Trial of Kull Kalijan

Conduct a mock hearing. Students serve as prosecution, defense, witnesses, and judges. The question is not whether Kull causes harm, but whether his belief that control creates stability can ever justify his methods.

E. Build a Sixth Tribe

Students invent a sixth ability, symbol, limitation, cultural value, and role in society. The limitation must matter as much as the power.

F. Newspaper from the Fault Lines

Write two front pages about the same event: one published in Karthune and one in the Barrens. Compare word choice, omissions, and point of view.

G. Magnetism and Fiction

Read the science note in this guide. Identify which parts of the novel are inspired by real geomagnetism and which are speculative inventions.

6. Science Connection: Magnetic Pole Reversals

What is real?

- Earth has a magnetic field generated by motion within its liquid outer core.
- Earth's magnetic polarity has reversed many times in the geological past.
- Magnetic reversals are generally understood to unfold over long periods rather than as a sudden overnight flip.
- During a reversal, the field may weaken and become more complex, with multiple magnetic poles.
- Rocks and seafloor minerals can preserve evidence of past magnetic-field directions.
- Scientists do not consider geomagnetic reversal itself an extinction event, and the catastrophic consequences in the novel are fictional.

Fiction-versus-science discussion

1. Why might an author begin with real science and then exaggerate its consequences?
2. Which fictional effects in the novel make the world more dramatic or symbolic?
3. How does the magnetic premise support the novel's theme of alignment?

Reliable starting sources

NASA Science: Earth facts and the magnetosphere

NOAA National Centers for Environmental Information: Geomagnetism FAQs

U.S. Geological Survey: Geomagnetic reversals and excursions

Teacher note: The novel uses geomagnetic science as a speculative foundation. Students should distinguish scientific evidence from fictional worldbuilding.

7. Vocabulary and Language

catastrophe	a sudden event causing great damage
convergence	a coming together
compliance	the act of obeying a rule or demand
instability	a condition likely to change or fail
precision	accuracy and exact control
restraint	the ability to hold back
proximity	nearness in space or relationship
contingency	a plan for a possible future event
calibrated	carefully adjusted
anomaly	something that does not fit the expected pattern
perimeter	the outer boundary
improvisation	creating or acting without full preparation

Language activity

Choose four words. For each, locate or recall a scene where the concept matters. Explain why the idea—not only the dictionary definition—is important to the story.

8. Writing Prompts and Assessment

Creative writing

- Write a missing scene from Vetra's point of view.
- Write a letter from Gideon to his father after the summit.
- Retell one event from Kull's perspective without changing the facts.
- Create a training lesson for one of the five powers.
- Write a scene in which two characters disagree about whether the Magnet should be destroyed.
- Explain whether Gideon is a hero because of his powers or because of his choices.

Analytical essay choices

- How does the novel show the difference between control and leadership?
- How does Gideon's identity as both Uunder and surface-born affect his role in the conflict?
- Which friendship most changes Gideon? Use evidence from at least three scenes.
- Is Kull primarily driven by fear, ambition, conviction, or something else?

Simple rubric

Criteria	4 - Strong	3 - Proficient	2 - Developing	1 - Beginning
Claim	Clear, insightful, specific	Clear and supportable	General or uneven	Missing or unclear
Evidence	Multiple precise examples	Relevant examples	Limited or weak examples	Little evidence
Reasoning	Explains how evidence proves claim	Connects evidence to claim	Some explanation	Mostly summary
Organization	Purposeful and easy to follow	Logical overall	Some confusion	Hard to follow
Language	Clear, controlled, varied	Mostly clear	Repetitive or imprecise	Frequent confusion

9. Suggested Answer Notes

These are discussion directions, not single required answers.

Why Gideon steals

He steals primarily to feed others. The motive complicates the morality: the act breaks rules, but the ruling system itself withholds food and punishes survival.

Careful is a practice

Vetra means caution is a repeated discipline, not a promise someone makes once. The idea becomes a leadership principle throughout the novel.

Gideon and Kull

Both possess unusual power and feel separated from existing categories. Kull seeks stability through control; Gideon increasingly learns through alignment, trust, and restraint.

Role of friendship

Thea contributes strategy, Bram courage and humor, Toma precision and steadiness. Together they help Gideon remain himself as his powers expand.

Karthune and the Barrens

Karthune presents order, abundance, and institutional safety, but it also hides political secrecy and prejudice. The Barrens is visibly dangerous yet contains strong community loyalty.

The Magnet

The Magnet is not a weapon. It helps Gideon understand and align forces, reinforcing the difference between domination and understanding.

Educator resources and updates: www.terencejmurphy.com