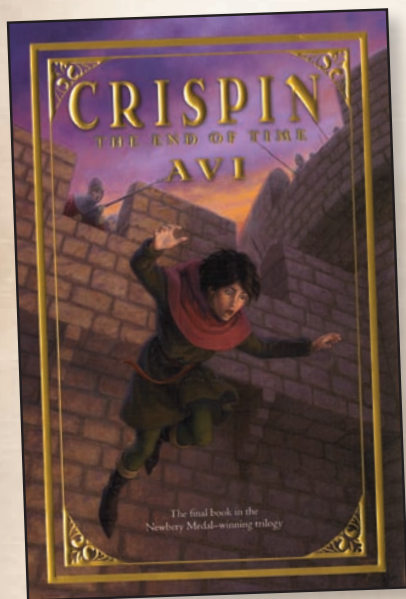


TEACHING GUIDE

CRISPIN: THE END OF TIME

by AVI



ABOUT THE BOOK

After the death of their beloved mentor, Bear, Crispin and Troth are more desperate than ever, wandering the desolate French countryside, where they don't speak the language and know no one. The only hope they cling to is that somehow they can reach Iceland and live in freedom. Crispin is determined to fulfill this dream, both for himself and to honor Bear's memory. But the road to liberty is filled with danger, betrayal, and loss. And Crispin must decide for himself what freedom really means—and how high a price he is willing to pay for it.

A CONVERSATION WITH AVI

What did you most enjoy about revisiting your characters and Crispin's world in this conclusion to the trilogy?

A writer can grow very fond of the characters he or she creates. Seeing them emerge, I want to know what happens to them. In a sense, as a writer, I am telling myself their story. If you are not curious about your own characters, you miss a lot of the fun of writing.

As for Crispin's world, the fourteenth century was a time of enormous changes in Europe. It was becoming modern. One can see it, read about it, and feel it. Even the English language is moving toward what we speak today, with Chaucer our first great English writer. I find it fascinating.

How did it feel to write that heartbreaking first line, "Bear was dead"?

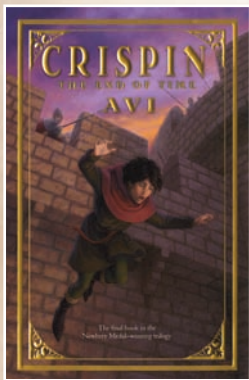
Bear is a pivotal player in Crispin's life—and key to much of what happens to our young hero. Some readers were angry that he died in *Crispin: At the Edge of the World*. But if this new book suggests anything, it is that although Bear may have passed on, his being, his ideas, and the way he conducted his life continue to have much to do with what happens to Crispin, how he shapes his own life. Indeed, when you reach the end of the book, you will see that . . . Well, you will have to read that for yourself. It will (I hope) explain the title.

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A CONVERSATION WITH AVI (CONTINUED)



What one thing in particular did you not expect to happen to Crispin and Troth when you started writing this book?

The importance of the convent—and what happened to Troth—was quite unexpected. My research about medieval convents was quite new to

me, and I learned much—not least, how some women were afforded a kind of freedom by becoming nuns, a freedom they could not have experienced beyond the world of the convent. As the poet Robert Frost once said, “No surprises for the writer, no surprises for the reader.”

What was the most interesting revelation from your research that you incorporated into the book?

My learning about Calais was all new, too. Here is a major city in what is today modern France (indeed, it was and now is a French city), but for a long period of time it was an important part of the Kingdom of England. Much is known about Calais in the time period of which I write, but not everything. It is always fun to track down details: the names of ancient streets, the shape of fortifications, and the special conditions in which people lived in such a place.

But most of all, as the book progressed, I grew to like Crispin more and more. In this book he stands for and by himself.

What has most pleased you about the responses from teachers, librarians, and children to the Crispin books?

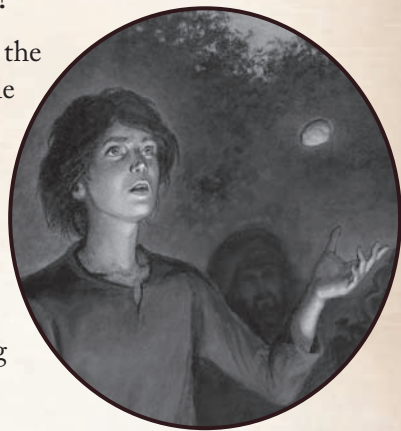
I worked very hard to be as accurate as I could be about the time period—the fourteenth century. No doubt I’ve made some errors, but I like to think I’ve given readers a real sense of what life was like then—its hardships, its pleasures, its richness—and its meaning for us. I do believe that, to know history, to live with history, is to extend your life back through time—so we can move into the future.

Having published the first novel about Crispin eight years ago, how did you feel when you had to say good-bye to your hero at the end of this book?

Maybe I won’t have to say good-bye. Iceland was (and is) a very fascinating place. I visited the country once. I might visit again.

What do you most hope readers will take away from Crispin’s journey?

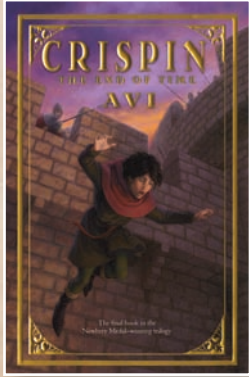
I like to think of the Crispin saga as a tale about a boy who comes to know who he is, discovers what he is capable of, and achieves, in his way, a level of heroism that is attainable by all young people.



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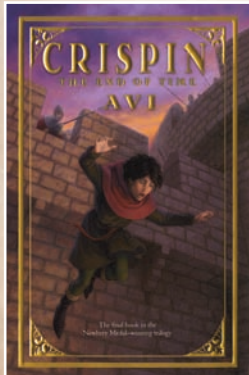
DISCUSSION PROMPTS

1. Troth says, “Once Aude told me that the biggest worlds can best be found in the smallest places” (page 5). What do you think this statement means? What “worlds” do Crispin and Troth discover in the novel? Do they find these worlds in the “smallest places”? Explain.
2. How does religion, namely Roman Catholicism, influence all areas of Crispin’s life? Consider the daily environment he lives in, the language he uses, his interactions with others, his beliefs, his hopes, and even his name.
3. Before the musicians reveal their true nature, what signs does Crispin disregard that they may not be as trustworthy as he hopes? Why do you think he chooses to ignore these signs?
4. After ordering Crispin to steal the purse from the murdered merchant’s son, Rauf says, “Crispin has been baptized” (page 84). What sort of baptism does Crispin’s act of thievery represent? How is Rauf’s use of the word “baptism” ironic?
5. How does the desire for freedom determine many of Crispin’s decisions and actions? Does Crispin attain the liberty he seeks? Which other characters are driven by their own desires for freedom? How does Crispin’s concept of freedom compare and contrast with your own?
6. Opportunities for women in medieval Europe were limited, as they were believed to be inferior and subservient to men. Even though unmarried women could own land, they forfeited their lands and their rights to their husbands upon marriage—and they often had no choice as to whom they married. Convents became refuges for many women, allowing for education, independence, and safety. How does the convent serve this purpose for Troth? How do Woodeth and Mistress Talbot embody the circumstances of many other women of the time?
7. Crispin observes, “The more love you have for others, the more pain there is in losing them” (page 36). Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Why? Why do you think Crispin continues to love, opening his heart to Owen, even after he loses Bear and Troth? Does Crispin really lose Bear and Troth, or are they still with him in some way? Explain.
8. Thorvard says that Iceland is “an awful, godforsaken place” (page 157). Yet Crispin still wants to go there. Why?
9. Why do you think Woodeth silently turns away from Crispin and Owen, allowing them to escape? Did you expect such generosity from her? Why or why not?
10. Thorvard advises Crispin to use Bear “to help you know where you are and where you’re going” (page 221). Though not physically present in the book, how does Bear help Crispin know himself and what he wants for his future?
11. What does the novel’s subtitle, *The End of Time*, refer to?
12. Even though *Crispin: The End of Time* takes place during the fourteenth century, many of its themes are still pertinent today. Discuss how religious intolerance, class divisions, foreign relations, war, friendship, and nontraditional families exist both in the novel and in the modern world. What other comparisons can you make between the book and your own life?

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BUILDING VOCABULARY

Expand students' vocabularies by having them learn the definitions, spellings, and pronunciations of the words listed below. Then have each student write an imagined adventure for Crispin, picking up where *Crispin: The End of Time* leaves off. Will Crispin reach Iceland? What might happen on his journey? Will Owen, like Bear and Troth before him, become part of Crispin's adopted family? Will Crispin and Troth ever reunite? In their short stories, students should incorporate at least eight new vocabulary words in such a way as to demonstrate meaning through contextual clues.

CHAPTERS 1–6

abbess
brigand
contemplate
desolation
fingerpost
hapless
infirmary
meager
milestone
tepid

CHAPTERS 7–12

balm
deft
drudge
garrison
ignorance
resolve
retinue
skirling
squall
suppress

CHAPTERS 13–18

avert
barren
camaraderie
cloying
frenzy
furtive
gallows
jerkin
levy
slew

CHAPTERS 19–25

berate
cascade
crenellated
glower
pious
plunder
rummage
steward
tapestry
transpire

CHAPTERS 26–32

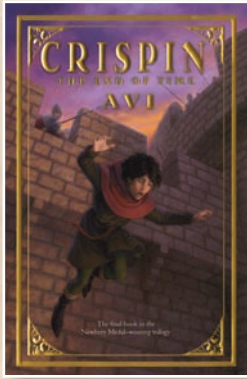
array
candelabra
kirtle
languid
pinnacle
rampart
sweetmeats
tether
vile
windlass

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EXTENSION ACTIVITIES



1. Map It Out. While reading, use a map of Europe to help students identify the many real places mentioned in the novel, including the countries of England, France, Iceland, Italy, and Norway; the regions of Flanders, Gascony, and Navarre; and the cities of

Bergen, Bordeaux, Bruges, Calais, Genoa, and London. In the Middle Ages, most people never left the village they were born in. How is Crispin's experience unique, and how do his adventures expand and enrich his worldview?

2. Perfect Saints. Roman Catholic saints infuse the thoughts and words of many of the characters in the novel. What defines a saint? Ask each student to research his or her name to see if it is shared by a saint. Students who have saints' names should present the history and significance of those saints to the class. For example, Crispin is named after a saint who, along with his twin brother, made shoes and evangelized Gaul (present-day France, Luxembourg, and Belgium) in the third century. Students whose names are not shared by saints should research and present information about one of the saints mentioned in the novel, such as Anselm, Christopher, Cyril, Denis, Dismas, Gerard, Giles, or Margaret.

3. Herbs, a Healer's Tools. Troth is elated by the herbs she finds growing at the convent. Divide students into small groups and have each group research

one of the herbs from the novel—chamomile, feverfew, lily of the valley, marigold, myrtle, parsley, or wormwood. Ask each group to answer the following questions: Where does the plant grow, and what does it look like? What are its healing properties? Does it have any harmful uses? What is the significance or history of the herb's name? Then have student groups draw prescription bottles on large pieces of poster board, recording the results of their research as the information on the bottles.

4. Music to Your Ears. Crispin plays the recorder and encounters a number of other instruments during the course of the story, including a bagpipe, a fiddle, a harp, a hurdy-gurdy, a lute, a mandola, a naker, a psaltery, and a trumpet. Share pictures of these instruments and recordings of the music they make with your students. Can your students identify each instrument based on sound alone? Provide recorders for your students and teach them a song to perform as a group.

5. Learn the Heavens. Thorvard says, "Learn the heavens, and you will know the earth" (page 218). Plan a class field trip to a planetarium or an observatory to learn more about the stars. Thorvard points out the bull, the fish, Hercules, Great Bear, and Little Bear. Can your students identify these constellations and others? What is the mariner's star that Thorvard describes, and how is it useful for navigation? Are students surprised that people in the fourteenth century knew the constellations that we recognize today? Ask students to research beliefs and theories about astronomy from the Middle Ages. What religious purpose did astronomy serve during that time?

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FURTHER READING

FICTION

- *Adam of the Road* by Elizabeth Janet Gray
- *The Book without Words: A Fable of Medieval Magic* by Avi
- *The Canterbury Tales* by Geoffrey Chaucer
- *Castle Diary: The Journal of Tobias Burgess* by Richard Platt
- *Catherine, Called Birdy* by Karen Cushman
- *Crispin: At the Edge of the World* by Avi
- *Crispin: The Cross of Lead* by Avi
- *The Door in the Wall* by Marguerite de Angeli
- *Good Masters! Sweet Ladies! Voices from a Medieval Village* by Laura Amy Schiltz
- *The Midwife's Apprentice* by Karen Cushman
- *The Great and Terrible Quest* by Margaret Lovett
- *The Trumpeter of Krakow* by Eric P. Kelly

NONFICTION

- *Books, Banks, Buttons: And Other Inventions from the Middle Ages* by Chiara Frugoni
- *Daily Life in Medieval Times* by Frances Gies and Joseph Gies
- *A Distant Mirror: The Calamitous 14th Century* by Barbara W. Tuchman
- *Life in Medieval Times* by Marjorie Rowling
- *Medieval Britain: A Very Short Introduction* by John Gillingham and Ralph A. Griffiths
- *Medieval Tales That Kids Can Read & Tell* by Lorna MacDonald Czarnota
- *Medieval Wordbook* by Madeleine Pelner Cosman
- *The Medieval World* by Philip Steele
- *The Middle Ages* by Morris Bishop
- *The Middle Ages: An Illustrated History* by Barbara A. Hanawalt
- *The Oxford Illustrated History of Medieval England* edited by Nigel Saul
- *The Time Traveler's Guide to Medieval England: A Handbook for Visitors to the Fourteenth Century* by Ian Mortimer



Photo by Gary Isaacs

AVI is the author of more than seventy books, including *Crispin: The Cross of Lead*, a Newbery Medal winner, and *Crispin: At the Edge of the World*. His other acclaimed titles include *The True Confessions of Charlotte Doyle* and *Nothing but the Truth*, both Newbery Honor Books, and most recently *Poppy and Ereth*, the sixth book in the beloved Poppy stories. Avi lives with his family in Colorado. You can visit him online at www.avi-writer.com.

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