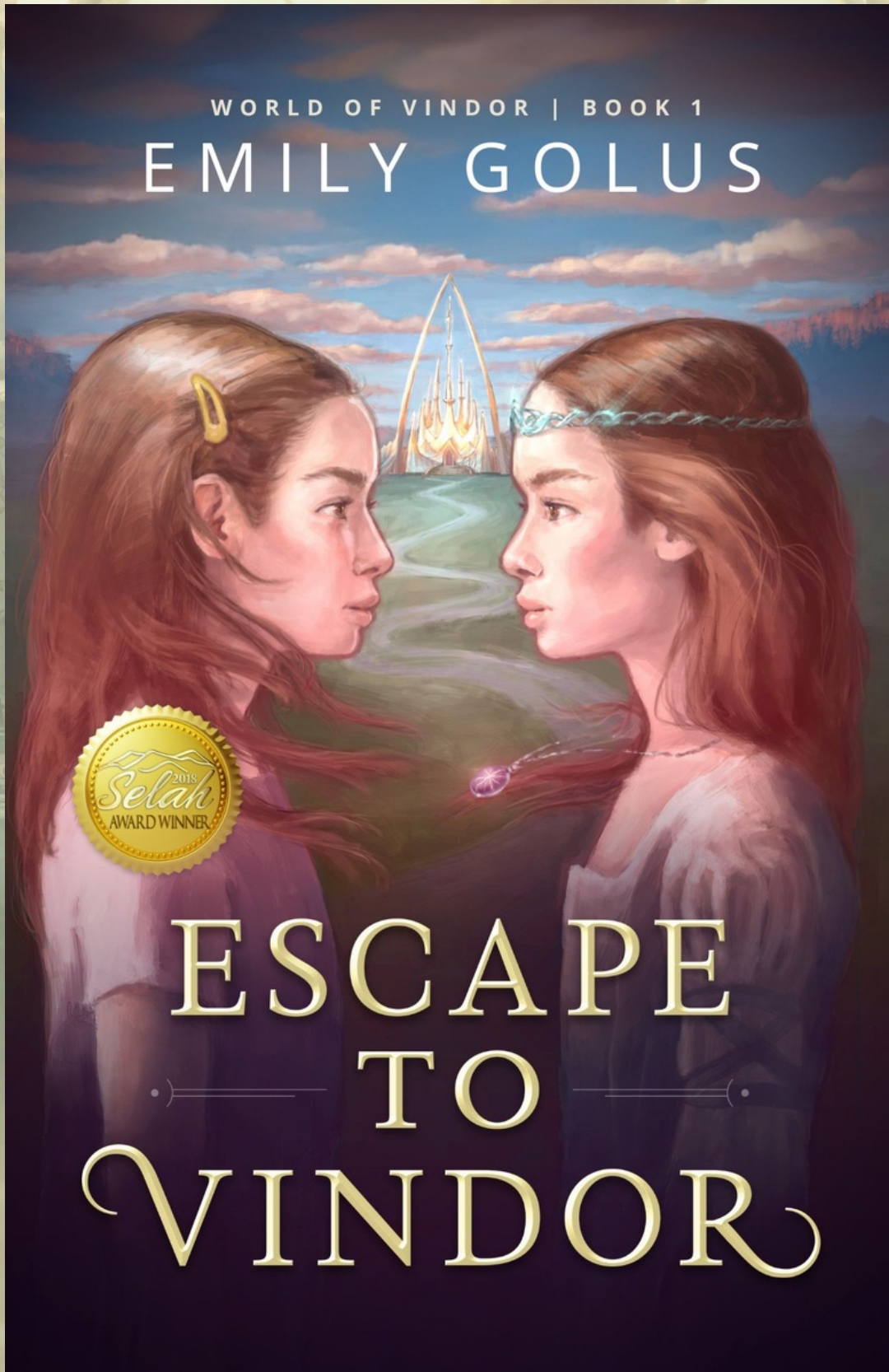


Unit Study for Grades 6–8



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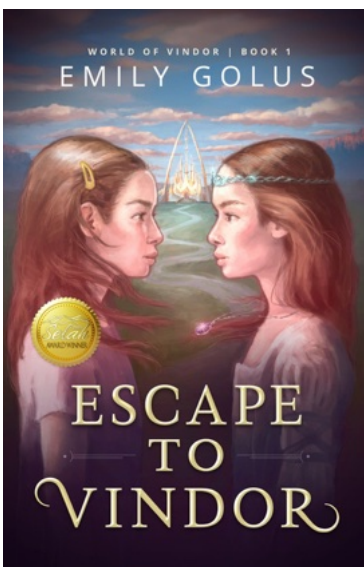
About this study guide

This study guide is designed as a supplemental literature unit for homeschoolers in grades 6 through 8. It will accompany students as they read *Escape to Vindor*, a young adult portal fantasy book by Emily Golus.



About *Escape to Vindor*

Escape to Vindor follows Megan Bradshaw, a shy and imaginative 13-year-old who gets pulled into a fantasy world of her own making. Megan must face a host of adversaries—external and internal—in order to save her new friends and discover where her true courage lies.



While readers of all ages have enjoyed the Vindor books, *Escape to Vindor* was written specifically for teens who struggle with anxiety, and it points to a Gospel-centered solution.

In 2018, the novel won the Selah Award for Young Adult Fiction.

If you do not yet have a copy, it is available on Amazon in paperback (ISBN 979-8-9927086-0-8), as an ebook, and on Kindle Unlimited.



Weekly assignments

This unit is designed to be completed over a period of six weeks. At the beginning of each week, students will read between five and seven chapters of *Escape to Vindor*. At the end of each section, they will complete short assignments in the following categories:

Vocabulary

Students will be encouraged to use context clues to discover the definitions of unfamiliar words.

Reflection questions

Students will answer questions that go beyond mere reading comprehension, asking for their opinions, reactions, and interpretations of story elements. Students will also have space to record their own thoughts if they'd like.

Critical thinking with Scriptural connection

During the middle school years, teens start to recognize that not all problems have easy answers. Students will be encouraged to think through complex moral questions, considering their own observations and applying Scripture to figure out what they believe. Each section includes several verse references for the student to read in a print or digital Bible where they can see the passage in its original context. Encourage your student not to skip this step.

Note: This study contains no answer key. The point is for students to wrestle with these difficult questions for themselves—not simply repeat what they think an adult wants them to hear.

Bonus worldbuilding content

Students who are interested in creating their own imaginary worlds will be given topics to consider as they brainstorm. This is a freeform activity that can take any shape that they like, though we do recommend they record their notes in a journal, sketchbook, or on a tablet or computer.



About the World of Vindor

The fictional world of Vindor is a diverse fantasy landscape with many different people groups—including centaurs, goblins, merfolk, and more. It takes inspiration from around the globe, borrowing influences from classic Greece and Rome, the British Isles, East Asia, and West Africa, to name a few.

This immersive world has been developed over the course of 25 years and is the setting for four fantasy books:

- *Escape to Vindor*
- *Mists of Paracosmia*
- *Crack the Stone*
- *Starfall Quest*

You and your student can explore artwork and additional information about the world of Vindor on **worldofvindor.com**, an interactive website.





Section One

Entering Vindor



Reading assignment

This week, read chapters 1 through 6.

Behind the Scenes

The world of Vindor has twelve different people groups, most of whom appear briefly in the Council of Vindor scene.

You can find more information about each group (plus illustrations!) on our interactive website, WorldOfVindor.com





Vocabulary

For each of the underlined words below, write what you think the word might mean, based on the context. Then look the word up in a dictionary (such as Merriam-Webster.com) to see how close your guess was.

1. "Cruel claws like scimitar blades digging into the earth ..."

What it might mean: _____

Dictionary definition: _____

2. "It stays the raging of the flood."

(note: This is a word that you'll recognize, but it has another, older meaning you may not be familiar with)

What it might mean: _____

Dictionary definition: _____

3. "Beyond the towers stretched the labyrinth-like palace gardens."

What it might mean: _____

Dictionary definition: _____



Reflection

Megan, like many teenagers, experiences anxiety about daily life and the future. What are some things Megan worries about in the real world?

When Megan gets to Vindor, she has a new set of problems. What are some of the things she fears?

Do you share any of Megan's worries? What are some things that make you nervous or that you are afraid of?

Other story notes (optional):



Critical Thinking

Cross-cultural conflict

During the tense Council of Vindor meeting, members of different nations begin to quarrel with one another—not primarily to debate strategies, but for the purpose of insulting one another’s cultures and perspectives.

Each of these nations values different things, which makes it difficult for them to see eye-to-eye. For example, the Kavannan centaurs see farm labor and warfare as marks of good and honest character, while the urban Mauritians perceive these things as a lack of sophistication. Neither is willing to consider the others’ perspective, and this has turned into a lack of respect, resentment, and outright hostility.

Cultural diversity is a beautiful thing. The biblical vision for the church includes people coming to Christ from “every tribe and language and people and nation” (Revelation 5:9). But even in the early church, differences in culture and traditions caused friction. Jews, Greeks, and Romans, who had all been taught that their culture was the “civilized” one, suddenly found themselves at odds with people who did things the “wrong way.” And yet these groups were brought together by the blood of Christ, and were commanded to love and accept one another.

Read the following passages:

John 17:23

Romans 14:1–19

Ephesians 2:11–20



Considering the passages above, how do you think a Christian should react to another believer who has different cultural ideas about food, holidays, worship style, government, how to dress, etc.?

Read the following passages:

Romans 12:17-18

Colossians 4:5-6

2 Timothy 2:23-25

Considering the passages above, how do you think a Christian should handle cross-cultural conflicts with people who are not yet believers?



Worldbuilding (optional)

Have you ever been like Megan and dreamed up your own world? An invented world (sometimes called a “paracosm”) is a fictional location where your imagination is the only limit. It can become the setting for a book or drama, but it can also bring joy and entertainment on its own.

An imaginary world might be known only to you, or it can be something you create along with a friend. There’s no right or wrong way to do it!

Over the next six weeks, we’ll explore some of the things that make a make-believe world more interesting. You might want to use these prompts to add details to a world you’ve already established, or start something entirely new.

Materials

To build a fantasy world, all you really need is your imagination. But to do these exercises, we recommend having a place to jot down ideas. You can write neat paragraphs in a notebook, capture doodles in a sketchbook, write scattered notes in a journal, or even use a computer or tablet.

Remember: this is your world and you can create it however you like.

Introductory questions

To start, let’s get the big picture. Think of the answers to the following questions as they relate to your world.

1. What is the name of your world?
2. What kind of genre would your world fit into?
 - a. Is it science fiction, full of aliens and spaceships or impossible technology?



- b. Is it fantasy, with elves and unicorns, or knights battling against wizards?
 - c. Is this a place that could exist in the real world somewhere, either now or in the past?
3. What is your setting? Is it a desert planet, a lush woodland, the bottom of the ocean, a high-tech city, or something else?
 4. Do the laws of reality in this world work just like ours, or are there major differences? For example, maybe your world has two moons, or instant teleportation between dimensions, or people who can wield the power of fire.
 5. What kind of people or creatures live in your world?

Think of these questions to help you brainstorm. If you don't know an answer (e.g. if you haven't settled on a name for your world yet), you can come back to it later.



End of Section One



Section Two

The journey begins



Reading assignment

This week, read chapters 7 through 11.

Behind the Scenes

Inspiration for Photogen and Nikterra came from an 1882 George MacDonald fairy tale called “The Day Boy and the Night Girl.” In it, teenagers Photogen (raised completely in light) and Nycteris (raised completely in darkness) escape and run away together. “Nycteris” was the name of the centaur heroine for the first several drafts of *Escape to Vindor*. Unfortunately, it’s not easy to pronounce, and test readers consistently struggled to remember it. It was changed to “Nikterra” for ease of reading.





Vocabulary

For each of the underlined words below, write what you think the word might mean, based on the context. Then look the word up in a dictionary (such as Merriam-Webster.com) to see how close your guess was.

1. "Hood and shadow obscured his face."

What it might mean: _____

Dictionary definition: _____

2. "She had never considered that maybe Nikterra had other things to worry about besides being at her beck and call."

(note: This is an idiom that uses an archaic word. Try looking up the phrase together instead of the individual words.)

What it might mean: _____

Dictionary definition: _____

3. "The handful of cricket chirps turned into a full-blown cacophony."

What it might mean: _____

Dictionary definition: _____



Reflection

How do you feel about the character of Nikterra? Is she a “good guy,” a “bad guy,” or something in between?

Did your feelings about Nikterra change by the end of the section?

How about Bat the goblin? Good, bad, or something in between? Did your feelings about him change during this section?

Other story notes (optional):



Critical Thinking

Reading motives

In the world of Vindor, goblins are rarely seen above ground, and those who do come to the surface are typically aggressive warriors. The concept of a *good goblin* is very difficult for most Vindorians to wrap their heads around.

This may be why several characters in the story are confident that Bat is secretly up to something nefarious.

What do the following characters believe Bat's motives are? What are they basing their beliefs on?

Captain Okoro: _____

Nikterra: _____

Megan: _____

Bat himself: _____

Each character feels strongly that he or she is right. But which of the above characters *actually* knows what is happening in Bat's head?



Read the following passages:

1 Samuel 16:7

Proverbs 22:3

Matthew 7:20

1 Corinthians 4:4-5

Jesus tells us when we are among tricky people, we are to be “as wise as serpents but as innocent as doves” (Matthew 10:16). If you are not sure of someone’s motives, how do you balance being wise to avoid being harmed, while also not relying on unjust prejudice or surface appearances? Write your thoughts below.



Worldbuilding (optional)

The physical setting of your make-believe world can tell you a lot about how it works. Consider these factors as you build your world:

Climate

Is the weather good for crops, or are your people constantly fighting nature in order to survive? Are your inhabitants especially suited for a difficult environment (e.g. can they withstand cold, breathe underwater, see in low light, etc.)?

Terrain

How difficult is it for people to travel to and from your settlements? Have the people come up with innovations to deal with this (e.g., a system of rope bridges between crags, or subway tunnels)? Are villages isolated from their neighbors? Do they fear outsiders or mingle freely with them?

Food

What do your people eat, and how do they get it? Keep in mind that if your world regularly experiences snow or drought, you won't be able to have tropical foods such as bananas or chocolate unless your people trade with distant lands. (Of course, you can always invent something if you want to bend the rules. Snow bananas, anyone?)

Animals

What kinds of creatures live in this environment? How do people interact with them? Are there domestic animals (e.g., livestock or mounts that can be ridden), beautiful creatures that inspire art, or predators that must be fought off?



End of Section Two



Section Three

The Huntsmen



Reading assignment

This week, read chapters 12 through 16.

Behind the Scenes

Some Huntsmen names and terms are pulled from the Anglo-Saxon language (or “Old English.”) For instance, *Edgwyn* was inspired by *Ecgwynn*, an English queen in the 890s, and *Drishten* was inspired by *dryhten*, a word that means *lord* or *prince*.

If they sound like something out of *The Lord of the Rings*, it’s because J.R.R. Tolkien was a professor of Anglo-Saxon and drew from its rich history in his worldbuilding.





Vocabulary

For each of the underlined words below, write what you think the word might mean, based on the context. Then look the word up in a dictionary (such as Merriam-Webster.com) to see how close your guess was.

1. "She grabbed her bow and a scarlet-fletched arrow from her quiver."

What it might mean: _____

Dictionary definition: _____

2. "It was the same insult one of the Mauritians had used at the council, Megan remembered, right before the fight broke out. The words seemed to have the same incendiary effect on Nikterra."

What it might mean: _____

Dictionary definition: _____

3. "Dagger is the one who's come up with most of the amulet lore, insisting that by finding and wearing better charms we can control the spirit world. She saves the most powerful talismans for herself, of course."

What it might mean: _____

Dictionary definition: _____



Reflection

The Greyhawk Huntsmen believe in a spirit world and have grown superstitious. What are some of the things the people fear?

How do they attempt to handle these fears?

How does the Shadow use the Greyhawks' fears during its attack? Do their superstitions make the Huntsmen braver or more frightened?

Other story notes (optional):



Critical Thinking

Superstition and “magical thinking”

In today’s world, people generally aren’t worried about forest spirits lurking behind trees, and most of us don’t wear amulets to try to scare them off. However, many people in our culture participate in modern forms of superstition.

One kind of “magical thinking” teaches that neutral encounters or objects in our life are actually directly in control of what happens to us. Examples might include a belief that wearing a certain stone will give you spiritual wisdom, that repeating a lucky phrase each morning will cause money to come your way, that avoiding an unlucky number will prevent you from hurting yourself, or that forwarding that meme will make good things happen to you tomorrow.

Ironically, as people try to manipulate these encounters or use little rituals to gain more control over life, they can actually worsen their anxiety about things going wrong.

Can you think of other examples of magical thinking in modern life?

Sometimes people have benign little rituals that are based in superstition but not truly believed. For example, a sports fan might say, “It’s game day so I’ve got to wear my lucky hat!” but she does it for fun, not because she really believes the hat magically gives her team the power to win.



Where would you draw the line for yourself between fun, “lucky” traditions and a problematic superstition?

Christians can sometimes fall into magical thinking. Some people hesitate to trust God’s promises, depending instead on the appearance of a sign or mystical message before they believe. Even some forms of prayer can turn into superstition, if the focus turns to using certain words or repetitions to make sure the prayer *itself* “manifests” what we want.

Read the following passages:

John 6:26–40

Matthew 6:7–8

Romans 8:26–28

Philippians 4:6–7

Considering the passages above, where should we ultimately put our trust? How do you think a Christian can avoid superstition in his or her walk with God? Write your thoughts below.



Worldbuilding (optional)

Your imaginary world may have one group of people, or several. How are these cultures different from one another? For each culture in your world, consider the following topics:

Language

Do your cultures each have their own language, or do different cultures share a common language? How might each language sound? Does it have sharp consonants like German, an abundance of vowels like Hawaiian, or different tones like Vietnamese?

Does your culture have a writing system? Is it based on an alphabet, or is it pictorial like Egyptian hieroglyphs or traditional Chinese? Do all people value reading and literacy, or is it just for scholars?

Note: Don't worry, these questions are for flavor only. Most worldbuilders do not actually create a full language or writing system. (But if writing your own language sounds fun, by all means, go for it!)

Clothing

How do your people dress themselves? First, consider your environment. In hot places, clothing tends to be loose and lightweight (and sometimes fully covers the body to protect the wearer from intense sunlight). Cooler places tend to require thicker materials, and sometimes multiple layers.

Consider what materials are available to your people. They may grow or forage plant fibers such as flax (for linen), jute, or cotton. They might collect animal wool, fur, skins, or even insect cocoons (which is where silk comes from).

Next, do people favor bright colors or busy patterns, or are things more simple? Is clothing complex and restrictive, or loose and flowing?



How much do people pay attention to how well-dressed a person is when forming an opinion of them? Does the type of clothing people wear change based on their job or their class?

Cuisine

What do your people eat? Again, the ingredients they use will depend on their environment. If they eat a lot of meat, they must have lots of grazing land for livestock, or plenty of hunting and fishing opportunities. If they eat a lot of grains and vegetables, they probably have access to farms. The kinds of plant foods they can grow depend on whether they're in a tropical, temperate, or cold environment.

Once they gather their ingredients, how do your people like to prepare them? Do they prefer simple and hearty meals, or do they like fancy dishes in lots of courses? Do they prefer their food to be spicy, savory, sweet, or sour, or do they like a combination of flavors?

Note: It's always fun to take inspiration from real-world cultures when inventing your world's menu.



End of Section Three



Section Four

Complexities



Reading assignment

This week, read chapters 17 through 23.

Behind the Scenes

With the exception of the name Nikterra, most of the Kavannan centaurs have classical Greek names. Specifically, they all borrow names from centaurs listed in Ovid's *The Metamorphoses*, a compilation of Greek and Roman myths which was written in the year 8 A.D.

"Ardvarnock" comes from the name of an Irish townland (a medieval Gaelic system of land division) where the author's grandmother grew up.





Vocabulary

For each of the underlined words below, write what you think the word might mean, based on the context. Then look the word up in a dictionary (such as Merriam-Webster.com) to see how close your guess was.

1. “You’re not going to let some biped outsider come—”

What it might mean: _____

Dictionary definition: _____

2. ““You palfrey!” Iphenous shouted, flipping over a worktable with a clatter.”

What it might mean: _____

Dictionary definition: _____

Bonus: Why would Iphenous use this word as an insult? _____

3. “Sunlight streamed down, filtering through the trees in incandescent shafts.”

What it might mean: _____

Dictionary definition: _____



Reflection

When we meet someone, we usually don't know their full story. Knowing someone's past can help give context to the decisions they make and sometimes explain key parts of their personality. Did knowing Bat's backstory change your opinion of him? If so, in what ways?

Did knowing Nikterra's backstory change your opinion of her? If so, in what ways?

Megan makes a pivotal decision when she meets Amadrya. Do you think it was a good decision or a mistake? What decision would you have made in her shoes?

Other story notes (optional):



Critical Thinking

Handling conflicts

In this section Nikterra encounters people—and ideas—from the place she grew up. But she's had a number of experiences outside of the Kavanna Valley, including her interactions with Bat, that have widened her perspective.

Iphenous seems to believe that if Nikterra isn't 100% in agreement with every idea she grew up with, she must be disloyal and ungrateful to her nation. Do you think he is right? Or is it possible to disagree with someone but still love them and appreciate what they've done for you?

What was Nikterra's main motive in standing up to Iphenous at the end of chapter 19? Was it noble?

What might her other motives have been? Are these noble?

Do you think the way Nikterra handled her fight with Ipheneous was completely right, completely wrong, or some mix of good and bad choices?



Read the following passages:

Romans 12:17–21

James 1:19–20

1 Peter 2:21–23

You may have heard the phrases “all is fair in love and war” or “the end justifies the means.” Considering the passages above, can Christians use any tactic they choose as long as their goal is ultimately for the glory of God? Write your thoughts below.

Where do you think the line is between standing up to a bully and becoming a bully yourself?



Worldbuilding (optional)

When a number of people come together, they soon begin to organize themselves. (And we assume that the same would happen with elves, merfolk, aliens, etc.) But how exactly this structure looks is different for each society. Consider these questions for your world's cultures.

Urbanization

Do most people live spread out on farms or in the wilderness, or do they live close together in cities? Or is there a mix of both? How do “city folk” and “country folk” interact with one another?

Family structure

Do families tend to have many children, or only a few? When these children grow up, are they encouraged to set off on their own, or do they tend to stick close to their parents in a multi-generational community? Do men and women tend to have very specific kinds of work they can do, or can nearly anyone do any kind of job?

Class system

Is there a large gap between the “least” and the “greatest” in your kingdom, or are most people relatively equal? (For example, in a large city, a beggar may never even see the king in his lifetime. But in a nomadic tribe, the youngest child may be able to speak to the chief.)

Are people divided into specific, recognized classes (lower class, middle or merchant class, nobility, etc.)? If so, how easy is it for people to move from one class to another?

Values

Societies tend to have a shared idea of what is most important for a person's behavior. Some things are fairly universal (most would agree that betrayal is wrong), but there are other nuances that shape culture.



For example, one society may idealize independence and self-expression, while their neighbors may emphasize honoring traditions and doing what is best for the group. This will cause these cultures to approach the same challenges in very different ways.

If your culture were to choose just one or two of the following values as being more important than the others, what would they be? (Feel free to add your own to the list.)

Artistic creation
Cleverness
Enlightenment
Family honor
Generosity
Group harmony
Independence

Inner peace
Loyalty to country
Loyalty to family
Loyalty to one's ideals
Personal beauty
Personal honor
Performing good works

Physical strength
Religious piety
Scientific advancement
Self-expression
Tradition
Warfare
Wealth



End of Section Four



Section Five

The underground city



Reading assignment

This week, read chapters 24 through 30.

Behind the Scenes

Elnat is inspired by ancient ruins discovered near Derinkuyu, Turkey. The underground city had 18 levels and could house 20,000 people, plus animals. The tunnel system was built in stages over more than a thousand years, and served primarily as a retreat during times of danger. (It housed Christians fleeing persecution in the 600s A.D.)

Derinkuyu was lit by torches and had an advanced ventilation system to handle the smoke. The fictional city of Elnat was made smaller and given smokeless light to make it feel more plausible for readers.





Vocabulary

For each of the underlined words below, write what you think the word might mean, based on the context. Then look the word up in a dictionary (such as Merriam-Webster.com) to see how close your guess was.

1. "Resh frowned. 'No sign of frostbite or hypothermia. But you said she was frozen?'"

What it might mean: _____

Dictionary definition: _____

2. "They were built before our ancestors perfected their excavation techniques, so everything there is too rough and narrow for our modern tastes."

What it might mean: _____

Dictionary definition: _____

3. "Her heart pounded, and her shaking breaths came too quickly. *Don't hyperventilate. Stop it!*"

What it might mean: _____

Dictionary definition: _____



Reflection

"But that is the way fear serves us: it always sides with the thing we are afraid of." -George MacDonald, The Princess and the Goblin

When the group confronts the Shadow, what are the images it uses against Megan? What are the deeper, underlying fears that these things symbolize?

How do the following characters show courage in these chapters?

Megan: _____

Bat: _____

Nikterra: _____

King Mriv is convinced that Megan's plan won't work. Who do you think is right—the king or Megan?

Other story notes (optional):



Critical Thinking

Pride versus confidence

Nikterra goes through a humiliating situation in which her main point of pride—her belief that she’s superior to others—is stripped away. She recognizes how her arrogance led her to mistreat people and to make choices as though she would never face consequences.

Pride goes beyond a healthy sense of self (i.e., “I have value and worth”) to an inflated view of one’s importance (i.e., “I have *more* value and worth than other people”). For some, it’s a way to mask (but not deal with) deep-seated insecurities. It can also prevent healthy growth, because proud people struggle to acknowledge their mistakes and therefore can’t learn from them.

Read the following passages:

Proverbs 30:12–13

John 9:39–41

Romans 12:3

James 3:13–17

How does pride affect an accurate understanding of ourselves?

As Nikterra processes this radical change in her self-image, she belittles herself, stops caring for her appearance, and loses all confidence. Some people think this is what humility looks like: constantly talking about how awful we are, loathing ourselves, and refusing to take any action because “we’ll only mess it up.”



But for Christians, our model for humility is Jesus Christ himself. He was never mopey or self-deprecating. He also didn't boast or demand audience with the rich and powerful, but instead worked quietly with those considered least important in society. He had a confidence rooted in His position as God's beloved Son. And while we are not sinless like Jesus, if we trust in Him for our justification we become His younger brothers and sisters in the same beloved position (Romans 8:29-30).

Read the following passages:

John 13:3-5

Philippians 2:3-9

Romans 12:16

Hebrews 4:15-16

What do you think it looks like for a Christian to be humble and confident at the same time?



Worldbuilding (optional)

Once you know the nature of your environment and the culture of the people who live there, you're well on your way to having a robust fictional world.

But people and places don't exist in a static bubble. Part of worldbuilding includes the story of how your people have made their home there, and the conflicts they've had along the way. In other words, you can write the history of your land.

Consider these questions as you build your world's story:

- How did the current inhabitants come to this place?
 - How long ago was it?
 - Where did they live before?
 - What caused them to seek a new land?
- Have they gotten along peacefully with their neighbors?
 - Do they have long-standing enemies, or do groups vacillate between being enemies and allies?
 - If they live peacefully with others, what threatens this peace?
- What are some key conflicts that drive history?
 - Resources (e.g., is there always a struggle to control sources of clean water or to discover gold?)
 - Philosophies or religious movements
 - Natural disasters
 - Major threats (depending on your genre, it could be an invasion by armies, aliens, or monsters)
 - Larger-than-life personalities, such as military leaders, royal families, or villains
 - Crime



- How did the current leaders get to power?
 - Do the people of the land like or dislike the current leader, or is it mixed?
 - How has power been transferred—peacefully or with conflict?
 - Are people better off now than during a previous ruler, or worse?
- Have there been different factions trying to control or influence your people?
 - Is there one clear winner, or do different factions rule at different times?
 - How does the faction that's out of power influence the culture?



End of Section Five



Section Six

The Battle of Alavar



Reading assignment

This week, read chapters 31 through 36.

Behind the Scenes

Though not directly mentioned in the books, the different nations and locations within Vindor have their own crests with colors and symbols. Here are a few:



Alavar



Kavannans



Ipktu



Huntsmen



Rikeans

To see all of the designs, visit worldofvindor.com.



Vocabulary

For each of the underlined words below, write what you think the word might mean, based on the context. Then look the word up in a dictionary (such as Merriam-Webster.com) to see how close your guess was.

1. "... holding up a sheer black cloth and demonstrating how to tie it over one's eyes—kind of rudimentary sunglasses, Megan thought."

What it might mean: _____

Dictionary definition: _____

3. "... that ineffable music of the stars pulsating above them."

What it might mean: _____

Dictionary definition: _____

3. "An enormous black cloud swirled ominously, with the horrible anvil shape of a thundercloud above."

What it might mean: _____

Dictionary definition: _____



Reflection

Did you expect the Battle of Alavar to go the way it did? If not, what surprised you?

How does knowing God loves her unconditionally help Megan defeat her fears?

Go back to Section One, page 8, and look at your list of things that make you nervous. Will the same knowledge of being fully and divinely loved help you process these things differently?

Other story notes (optional):



Critical Thinking

The freedom of the Gospel

Sometimes, like Megan, we get so wrapped up in our anxieties and the challenges of life that we forget God's love for us. We lose sight of the immense and beautiful foundation of our relationship with Him.

The Christian life is not about coming from the right kind of family, or following the right list of rules, or otherwise being proud of our own righteousness. It is about flawed people who desperately need mercy and who find it in the perfect love of Jesus Christ.

Multiple New Testament books spell this Gospel out clearly. Here's one example, highlighted from the book of Romans:

1. We are all sinners and could never expect our good works to be enough to please God (Romans 3:9–12, 20).
2. Jesus, knowing we could never earn our way, lived a perfect human life and died as a sacrifice in our place (Romans 3:21–26).
3. Jesus invites anyone, no matter their past, to trust and take refuge in Him. Anyone who is in Christ has their record of sins—past and future—washed away and Jesus' perfect record is attributed to them (Romans 4:5–8, 24–25).
4. God loves and completely accepts anyone in Christ, and they are never condemned. Christians live humbly and joyfully, knowing they have full favor of God only through the kindness of Jesus (Romans 5:1–11).
5. We are no longer condemned for our sins, and Jesus gives us the power to turn away from our sin nature and to live in the Spirit (Romans 6:11–14, Romans 8:1–4).
6. While we will still go through difficult times, God works even these situations for our ultimate good, and His love will always be close beside us (Romans 8:35–39).



Read the following passages:

Zephaniah 3:17

John 10:27–30

Ephesians 2:4–10

1 John 4:16–19

If you've trusted in Christ instead of your works to make you right with God, then you have God's permanent, unconditional love forever. Does knowing this change how you live every day? If so, in what ways?



Worldbuilding (optional)

A map can be a handy way to keep track of your world and who lives where. You can make a beautiful map, of course, if you like creating art. But a simple sketch can be all you need to keep track of things!

Consider the following as you build your map:

Names

In a perfect world, cities and countries would have very logical names: Northtown, Westown, etc. But people don't name themselves or their homes that way, and country names don't tend to match each other neatly. Consider your people's languages and points of pride when deciding what they would call themselves and their settlements.

Borders

Natural boundaries may be based on rivers, coastlines, the edges of a mountain range, or the start of a forest. These lines tend to be irregular and squiggly.

Man-made borders tend to be straight. They imply someone sat down and drew a boundary line—maybe agreed upon, maybe arbitrary.

Settlements

People tend to settle where there is easy access to water and food. What people eat will determine what looks like a good spot for a village (e.g., good land for farming or a forest for plentiful hunting).

A city may be built in a place that is easy to defend (e.g., the top of a hill). In more peaceful times, it may be where it's easy to trade goods (like by a river, a major road, or a harbor).



If a village or city has no reason to suspect trouble, the houses may spread out. If there's a threat from enemies or animals, it's more likely to have walls to protect from invasion. Gates may open during the day or during peace time, but everyone can come inside for safety during a threat.

Congratulations

You have reached the end of the worldbuilding exercise—
or have you?

We hope this is just the beginning of your adventures. Like all creative endeavors, worldbuilding is a gift that can bring you joy. Even if you never plan to write a book, comic, or video game based on the world you've invented, you can still create it for the pure fun of it.

And who knows, maybe somewhere out there you have a
land in Paracosmia!



End of Section Six



You have reached the end of the *Escape to Vindor* unit study.

We hope you have enjoyed the journey through Vindor and that you've gleaned something meaningful from the time you've invested in this study.

If you liked *Escape to Vindor*, **please consider leaving a review** on Amazon, Goodreads, or BookBub. Reviews increase a book's visibility online and are a great way to help other readers discover the adventure.

Join the Vindor super fan club!

If you feel at home at Vindor, you can become an official member of your favorite nation—plus get lots of fun Vindor swag!

With a parent's permission, visit **emilygolusbooks.com/meet-the-author** and select “get in touch.” In your message, mention you want to join the Teen Super Fan Club, and include your mailing address and your favorite Vindor nation.

You'll receive a snail mail package that includes a letter from a Vindor character, a bookmark from your favorite nation, exclusive stickers and more. It's completely free as a thank-you to Vindor fans.

The adventure continues in



Return to Vindor and meet friends old and new in
the sequel to *Escape to Vindor*



About the author



Emily Golus is an award-winning fantasy author with more than 20 years of professional writing experience. Golus aims to engage, inspire, and show how small acts of courage and love create meaningful change. Her books feature diverse cultures, authentic characters, and cinematic fantasy settings.

Her first novel, *Escape to Vindor*, won the 2018 Selah Award for Young Adult Fiction, and a spin-off novel, *Crack the Stone*, won the 2024 Kudos Award for Fiction and was named a Realm Award finalist.

Golus lives in Upstate South Carolina with her husband, Mike, who is her greatest supporter. They have two active little boys and enjoy hiking, making Thai food, and exploring small towns in the Carolinas. For Vindor book news, visit WorldofVindor.com and EmilyGolusBooks.com, and follow her at [Instagram.com/WorldOfVindor](https://www.instagram.com/WorldOfVindor).



Look to the stars!