

A Spell for Chameleon Study Guide

A Spell for Chameleon by Piers Anthony

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Plot Summary

Bink is a likable young man, with a rare handicap. His home is the North Village of Xanth, a land of magic, where everyone and everything has at least a minor magical capability; however, Bink has none. Although he has physical strength, Bink is treated badly by his peers and lacks self-esteem. He does have the affection of Sabrina, a beautiful girl he wants to marry, and the love of his parents, Roland and Bianca. As the story opens, Bink is near his home, watching a chameleon change its appearance and ultimately lose its life to a moth hawk, which foreshadows several events to come. After the chameleon is gone, Bink discusses his problem with Sabrina, who urges him to seek the advice of the Good Magician Humphrey. Although Bink is reluctant to seek Humphrey's help because the magician's price is one year of servitude, he relents, as his twenty-fifth birthday is only a month away. If he is unable to demonstrate a magical talent by then, Bink will be exiled from Xanth, the only home he has ever known.

On the long journey to Good Magician Humphrey, Bink overcomes many obstacles. He is bedeviled by some creatures and plants, but aided, protected or taught by others. Bink's first adversary is Chester, a mean centaur. Cherie, a friendly centaur, comes to his aid and helps Bink travel closer to Humphrey's castle. As they travel, she educates him about the violent history of how humans came to Xanth. She tells Bink that magic may not be as valuable as most people think it is. Before leaving him, Cherie also tells Bink about a centaur named Herman the Hermit who was banished from her herd for an act of obscenity, but refuses to elaborate further.

Bink's next obstacle is the Gap, a huge trench across Xanth that is filled with dragons and strange creatures. As night is falling, he agrees to stand in for a farmer at a rape trial in exchange for a night's shelter, before trying to cross the Gap. At the rape trial the next morning, both the charge and the victim are treated dismissively, but Bink has fulfilled the requirement and, when he leaves, is provided with the service of a gorgeous guide named Wynne. Wynne may be the woman who was raped, although he is not certain. Bink quickly realizes that, unfortunately, her intelligence leaves much to be desired. When a dragon appears from the Gap, he sends her away and ends up trapped in a cave in the Gap. Bink escapes the dragon by allowing a shade, named Donald, to possess him so that he can give the location of a silver tree to his impoverished wife and child, many miles distant. Bink is offered the wealth of the silver tree as a reward for helping Donald, but refuses the gift.

After traveling further, Bink falls into a sea and is saved by the Sorceress Iris, a mistress of illusion, who offers him anything to help her take Xanth's throne. Bink refuses and fights her illusions using the strength of his mind before escaping. As the journey continues Bink finds a badly wounded soldier, named Corporal Crombie, whom he saves using water from the Spring of Life. The Spring's water can heal any injury or illness and helps Bink to grow a finger that he lost in a childhood accident. He saves a little water to be used later. Crombie's magical talent is that he can discern danger from any direction and he becomes Bink's bodyguard and guide. When he senses danger ahead, he urges Bink to go toward it because he says danger must always be faced.



They find Dee, a very average-looking girl, whom Bink immediately likes. Crombie tells Bink that she is the danger, but Bink insists that she is not. The men ask Dee to travel with them, as she is heading for Humphrey too. The travelers are forced to take shelter from a magical hailstorm in a tangler tree, but Crombie's opinion that all women are mean and manipulative, angers Dee. She goes off into the storm, with Bink and Crombie behind. They ask her to resume traveling with them, but she refuses. Crombie takes Bink close to the castle of Good Magician Humphrey and amiably leaves him.

Humphrey is unable to discover Bink's talent but insists that he does have one. He gives Bink a note to give to the King at his trial, attesting to this fact and providing safe passage through the forest so he can quickly return to the North Village. At Bink's trial in the North Village, the King disregards the note and refuses Bink's gift of water from the Spring of Life. Bink is exiled and passes through the magical Shield separating Xanth from Mundania. He misses his parents, but realizes that his relationship with Sabrina was superficial and that he is better off without her. Soon, soldiers attack him. They take him to Trent, an evil magician, who twenty years ago had tried to overthrow the King. Trent still wants the throne and has amassed an army to help him attain it, but he needs the location of the Shield to do it. He has developed a magical suppression elixir that will render the Shield harmless, and tries to threaten Bink into revealing the Shield's location. Bink resists, but a woman named Fanchon comes through the Shield from Xanth and appears before Trent. Fanchon is very ugly and very smart. When both are imprisoned in a pit, she tells Bink that she chose to leave Xanth because Humphrey told her that her ugliness, which is magical, might be reversed if she went to Mundania. She develops a plan to escape from Trent and steal the magical suppression elixir, but Bink, Fanchon, and Trent end up back in Xanth after a dramatic sea battle. If discovered, Bink and Trent will be executed and Fanchon is still ugly. To escape the wilderness, they join forces and declare a truce.

Bink, Trent, and Fanchon take shelter in Castle Roonga, where Fanchon reveals her identity as Chameleon, a woman who undergoes three drastic changes in appearance and intelligence level every month. She is average-looking Dee, beautiful, stupid Wynne, and ugly, smart Fanchon for a period each month. Her hope was to travel to Mundania, where she could revert to the average looks and intelligence of Dee forever. Fanchon also admits that she followed Bink because she knew his good nature, from having met him as both Dee and Wynne. Castle Roonga was once the stronghold of dead King Roonga, the Magician King of the Fourth Wave, a smart, just ruler. It maintains its own level of magic and protects itself with zombies and other mechanisms. After researching in Castle Roonga's library, Trent announces that Xanth must open its borders to Mundanians or perish because of its isolation. He feels the pull of the throne again but the characters agree that their best option for survival is to work together and maintain their truce until they approach civilization. Trent promises the Castle that he will return to it to rule Xanth with its help.

After leaving Castle Roonga, Chameleon, Bink and Trent come upon a great battle, involving all of the creatures of Xanth, united against a swarm of wiggles, which are the most dangerous creatures in Xanth. They meet Herman the Hermit, who confesses that his obscenity was to use magic, something forbidden among the centaurs. The battle



ends when Bink is transformed into a fiery salamander to set the wiggle swarm on fire. He saves Chameleon from a fiery death, but ends up inside the ring of fire. Herman the Hermit saves him, but is gravely injured and asks for a quick death from Trent. Trent obliges, praising the centaur's courage.

At the edge of civilization, Bink and Chameleon agree to part company with Trent, but the Sorceress Iris appears. She coerces Trent into helping her take the throne. Bink is infuriated by Trent's decision and the men agree to a duel in the forest. As Bink battles Trent, the magician changes Chameleon into a winged doe, yet, he finds himself unable to transform Bink. Through the duel, Bink's magical talent is finally revealed: he cannot be harmed by magic. When his life is in true peril, Trent's most powerful transformation spells are useless against him. When Trent tries to kill him physically with a sword, Chameleon comes between the men and is gravely wounded. The Sorceress Iris urges Trent to kill them both, but he refuses, saying the he will not kill a man who has saved his life or the woman who loves him. He quickly changes Bink into a phoenix to fly off to Good Magician Humphrey for help in saving Chameleon.

Although Sorceress Iris hounds Bink on the way, he reaches Humphrey and they are soon en route to the North Village to obtain the help of Bink's father, Roland, a stunner. They also learn that the old King has died. When they return, Roland stuns Trent and Chameleon is healed. They all return to the North Village for Trent's trial. Trent is exonerated on the conditions that he marries the Sorceress Iris to control her and assume the throne. At the coronation, Bink again meets many of his old acquaintances. Trent appoints him as the Official Researcher of Xanth, but urges him to keep his magical talent private, as he explores the roots of Xanth's magic. Bink asks Chameleon to marry him, as the book closes.

The title of the book refers to Chameleon's quest for a spell that will allow her to have a single form, and therefore a stable identity. Her arrival in Bink's life is foreshadowed by his opening observations of the chameleon on the rock, which changes into a stingray beetle, stench puffer, fiery salamander and basilisk, before being killed and carried off by a moth hawk. The lizard's guises are a comparison to the woman, Chameleon, who can never have real happiness while she is constantly changing. Initially, Bink interprets the death of the lizard as an omen that his life will be in danger, but it is actually about how he saves Chameleon by giving her the "spell" of true, unconditional, love.



Chapter 1, Xanth

Chapter 1, Xanth Summary

Bink is a resident of the magical realm of Xanth, a place where all residents, common objects and plants have unexpected properties or abilities. As the chapter opens, he is observing a small chameleon change its appearance from stingray beetle to stench puffer, to fiery salamander to basilisk to protect itself from natural enemies. While trying to frighten Bink, the chameleon is killed and carried into the sky by a moth hawk.

Bink is one month away from his twenty-fifth birthday. Physically, Bink is strong, but the fact that he has no apparent magical ability is a terrible problem. If his magical talent does not emerge by his twenty-fifth birthday, he will be banished from Xanth. His lack of magical talent also makes him a target for local pranksters.

On a walk to Lookout Rock, Bink is accompanied by beautiful Sabrina, whom he is engaged to. She is sympathetic and suggests that he visit the Good Magician Humphrey for help in discovering his magical talent. Bink is reluctant to do this as Humphrey requires one year of service for a single spell, but Sabrina encourages him by saying that she will wait for him to complete his year of service.

As he ponders this, Bink laments the fact that many residents of Xanth possess seemingly useless magical talents, yet they are accepted, and he is not. As the pair returns to the village at dusk, Bink goes to the aid of Justin Tree, a human that was changed into a tree by an evil magician named Trent. Village troublemakers, Jama, Zink, and Potipher, attack Justin Tree before Bink scares them away. At the conclusion of the first chapter, Bink decides to visit Good Magician Humphrey for advice, because he feels he has no other choice.

Chapter 1, Xanth Analysis

Young readers may easily identify with Bink's love for Sabrina, as much as they may relate to his feeling of isolation from his peers and fellow residents of Xanth. His frustration and the prejudice he faces lead him to make a decision to seek the advice of Good Magician Humphrey, which will cost him a year of servitude. It is a steep price, but the alternative of exile is less acceptable. He is simply choosing between the lesser of two evils. In this chapter, Bink emerges as a likable, sincere young man, who would be happy with a simple answer to his question regarding his magical talent, so that he can live with Sabrina in peace. His desire for love and peace are universal, but he also shows a strong moral conviction when he faces personal risk to aid Justin Tree.

Several other characters are introduced in the first chapter, including Roland and Bianca, Bink's loving, supportive parents. Village troublemakers, Jama, Zink, and Potipher, are also shown as malicious and destructive; however, their poor behavior

serves to highlight Bink's positive traits. The death of the chameleon on the rock is an omen that foreshadows several important events that occur later in the book.



Chapter 2, Centaur

Chapter 2, Centaur Summary

As Bink begins his journey to Good Magician Humphrey's castle, he meets a mean centaur named Chester. He is shielded from harm and given a ride by a pleasant, knowledgeable centaur named Cherie. She explains that centaurs have had problems with kids from the North Village, where Bink lives. Bink tells Cherie that the culprits are being punished because of their attack on Justin Tree. Cherie notes that the King is supposed to maintain the law, forcing Bink to admit that the King has lost much of his power.

As Cherie takes Bink through several dangerous areas, he realizes that he could have died if he had continued traveling alone. She shows Bink the skeleton of someone who fell under a peace spell from a tree and simply died rather than get up. Cherie notes that complete peace can be destructive, as those who experience it lack initiative. She also shows him a brook that was cleaned out years ago by an evil magician named Trent, and says that anyone who drinks from it will become a fish because it is trying to restock itself. The centaurs also had problems with Trent but were aided by Humphrey. In return for his help, Humphrey demanded a year of service from 300 centaurs.

Bink learns that Humphrey is a divinatory, someone who can find any knowledge on any topic. Bink tells Cherie why he is traveling to see Humphrey. She points out that centaurs do not possess magic, nor would they want it. In exchange for Bink's honesty, Cherie tells him the bloody history of humans in Xanth. The first group of humans to come to Xanth was called Firstwavers; the second invaders are called Secondwavers, and so on. The Institution of the Magic Shield put an end to the waves, keeping the Mundanians out and all of the residents of Xanth in.

As Cherie drops Bink off, she mentions a centaur named Herman the Hermit who was exiled from her herd for obscenity, but refuses to tell Bink what his offense was.

Chapter 2, Centaur Analysis

The King's ability to rule is called into question, having been briefly mentioned in the first chapter. This foreshadows events surrounding the yet-to-be-seen ruler, whose character emerges later in the story.

Cherie's discussion, that true peace breeds a dangerous lack of initiative in those who experience it, also foreshadows events to come, as does her comment about Herman the Hermit. She emerges as a teacher rather than merely a means of transportation, as she relates the history of humans in Xanth. Through her, Bink learns that conflict can foster positive initiatives and people can end up better for it. This is a new way for him to see his lack of magical ability, as a driving force in his life.



Chapter 3, Chasm

Chapter 3, Chasm Summary

After Cherie drops Bink off, he finds himself in front of a gigantic magical chasm in the earth, called the Gap. He wonders how he can possibly get across, but decides that he must find shelter, as dusk is near. As he walks through the forest, he realizes that he is much farther from the castle of Good Magician Humphrey than he thought. Finally, he finds a small farmhouse and offers the owners, Martha and her farmer husband, his service as a laborer in exchange for a night's lodging and food. Bink's offer is refused but the farmer convinces Bink to appear for him at a strange, unofficial rape trial the next morning.

At the trial, the identities of the victim as well as the accused attacker are shielded and the charges are not pursued because the victim did not scream and knew her attacker. As Bink leaves the trial, Wynne, a beautiful brunette, who was probably the woman who had been raped, guides him. As they travel together, Bink sees that Wynne is not very intelligent. She asks him to take her with him and seems to offer sexual favors as payment. Bink refuses just as a dragon appears from the Gap. He directs Wynne to run away, as he tries to escape himself, but he ends up in a cave in the Gap, stuck between the dragon and Donald, a shade who can possess him.

Bink escapes by allowing Donald to possess him long enough to fly through the roof of the cave, away from the Gap and the dragon. Donald travels back to his home to give his wife and child the location of a magical silver tree, so they may escape the poverty his death caused them. Donald declares his love for his wife a last time and then ends his possession of Bink. As Bink resumes his journey, he refuses an offer to share in the wealth the silver tree and notes that he has not known before how poverty and death could change a family so much.

Chapter 3, Chasm Analysis

Bink faces another magical obstacle in the Gap. Lacking options, he finds shelter at the home of a farmer who requires him to participate in a strange rape trial. The trial and Bink's experiences in joining forces with the shade, Donald, are lessons in the sometimes brutal nature of real life and justice. He must decide to allow Donald to possess him to escape the dragon of the Gap and he must decide to stand in the farmer's place at the rape trial in exchange for safe lodging. Both situations are compromises where Bink's idealism is challenged; however, his refusal to share in the wealth of the silver tree is symbolic of his lack of greed.

In this chapter, the Gap, the dragon, the odd landscape, the dark night, and the strange creatures that Bink encounters are symbols of evil that he must overcome despite his own fear. As such, his strength grows with each encounter.



Chapter 4, Illusion

Chapter 4, Illusion Summary

Bink's journey resumes, but he is now on the wrong side of the Gap. He has developed a cold but manages to find shelter, by offering to work for local farmers. He eventually comes to the edge of a sea and a strip of land that will allow him to get to the right side of the Gap. As he tries to cross, he is attacked by a sea monster and loses consciousness after nearly drowning. When he wakes, he is on a small yacht, being tended by the Sorceress Iris. She takes him to a small island, where she persuades him to come to her palace.

Bink confesses that he has no magic and little to offer in return for the Sorceress's hospitality, but she applauds his honesty, intelligence, and strength. Bink is suspicious, but the Sorceress reassures him by telling him that he may take the yacht and leave if he wishes. The Sorceress explains that the King's powers are limited to weather-related magic, while her talent is illusion, or making things appear as they are not. When the Sorceress has clothing waiting for Bink, as though he was expected, his suspicions are roused again. She provides for Bink's every want and tells him that she can create an illusion so that no one would believe that he had no magical talent. She offers him anything he wants, including sex, if only he will help her become Queen of Xanth. He would take the role of King, but be powerless, as she would hold the reins of power.

Bink refuses the offer on the basis that he would be living a lie and that Sabrina would never approve. As Bink leaves, Sorceress Iris tries to destroy him with dangerous illusions. Bink fights back using his mind and soon the illusions begin to crumble, revealing only shabby ugliness. He escapes on the yacht, which has now become a leaky boat.

Chapter 4, Illusion Analysis

Bink's encounter with the Sorceress Iris showcases his steadfast resolve and loyalty to Xanth and Sabrina. His iron will and moral nature will not allow him to accept a deal that many would find hard to turn away from. The Sorceress and her power symbolize the easy life many people fantasize about and yet she cannot offer these things without requiring Bink to compromise his morals. Once again, Bink is forced to make decisions about what is most important to him.

The island where the Sorceress lives is a symbol of the isolation necessary for such illusions to exist. Real life, although difficult at times, causes the illusions of complete power to fall apart. When Bink uses his mind and intelligence against the Sorceress, her illusions revert to their true nature. In doing so, he learns that his mind will be invaluable to his quest.



Chapter 5, Spring

Chapter 5, Spring Summary

As Bink's journey continues, he approaches a magical tree to cut a new walking stick. The tree screams that he should carve one of his own, like the wounded soldier nearby, sending Bink off to find the soldier. He does so, but the soldier's stab wounds require medicines Bink does not have. Acting on the advice of a wood nymph, he locates the Spring of Life, whose waters restore health. The nymph warns him that the Spring is cursed but Bink decides to risk the curse. At the Spring, a finger he lost during an accident fifteen years ago is healed, as is his cold, but he learns that the Spring requires a promise that anyone it heals cannot ever act in any way that will harm it.

The Spring's waters heal the soldier's wounds and Bink learns that the man's name is Corporal Crombie. Crombie offers to act as Bink's bodyguard on the remainder of his journey to Good Magician Humphrey's castle, and they move on. Bink tells Crombie that the King might benefit from the water of the Spring, but Crombie says that he does not think the King should have it. Crombie's magical talent is the ability to detect danger from any direction. Using it, he points Bink in a new direction, but Bink is reluctant to go on. However, he does so at Crombie's insistence.

They soon come upon an average looking girl named Dee. She is also traveling to Humphrey's castle, but will not elaborate much further. Crombie says that the girl is dangerous, but Bink insists that she is not and Dee is invited to join the men. The trio comes to a flesh-eating tree, called a tangler. Although the tree is dangerous, it has fed recently, as is clear in the hephalumph carcass nearby.

A magical hailstorm forces the travelers to shelter in the tree's enormous trunk. Crombie tells tales of his experiences as a soldier, but offends Dee when he voices his disparaging opinions about women. Dee leaves angrily, with Bink in pursuit. Crombie follows, feeling guilty that he offended her so deeply and because he has sworn to protect Bink. The men find Dee, but she insists on going on alone. As the chapter closes, Bink and Crombie part company, as Bink is within sight of the castle.

Chapter 5, Spring Analysis

Bink's aid to the grievously wounded Corporal Crombie is further evidence of his good nature. His reward is Crombie's guidance and protection. In this, Crombie assumes a role as another guide and teacher. His comment that the King should not have the healing water of the Spring of Life is unusual as it is in direct conflict with his mission as a soldier of the King. Although his reasoning is not explained, it is possible that he does not wish the King to be healed.

Although Dee is average in Bink's eye, her mission to travel to the castle of Good Magician Humphrey is mysterious. She presents little information about herself, yet Bink



feels an affinity for her because they share a desire to reach Humphrey and because he thinks that she is as unremarkable as he thinks he is. The magical hailstorm that forces the trio into the trunk of the vicious tangler tree is symbolic of the turmoil around Bink and his companions. The presence of the tangler tree itself, as a place that is both dangerous and safe at the same time, foreshadows Bink's ability to find safety in the most unlike places.



Chapter 6, Magician

Chapter 6, Magician Summary

When Bink arrives at the castle of Good Magician Humphrey, he is first greeted by a dolphin he must ride to cross a moat, then he encounters a huge door that he must use his wits to open, and a mantichora, with features of a horse, a man, a lion, a dragon, and a scorpion. Bink realizes that these are surmountable tests or Good Magician Humphrey would have no income. After escaping the mantichora, he is greeted by an argumentative elf, who turns out to be Good Magician Humphrey. Following an acrimonious exchange, Humphrey takes Bink to a laboratory, where he employs several means to discover Bink's magical talents, with no success. Humphrey discovers that Bink does have great magic but thinks that perhaps a spell is being used to prevent him from learning what his talent is. He theorizes that it may have been engineered by Trent and explains that they were once on friendly terms, even though many thought him evil. Humphrey also discusses with Bink the Sorceress Iris and her quest for the throne, saying that she may find an accomplice. Bink asks if Humphrey would assume the throne, but learns that Humphrey does not want the throne. The magician provides Bink with food, lodging, the promise of safe passage home and advice that perhaps the King might grant Bink a reprieve from the law regarding exile and magical talents. To help him attain the King's good will, Humphrey gives Bink a note, attesting to his hidden magical talent.

As the night passes, Bink talks amiably with the mantichora, who says that he is working off a year of servitude, as are the other creatures of the castle. Bink learns that the mantichora came to Humphrey to learn whether he had a soul or not. In learning that he did have a soul, the mantichora lost his fear of death. This revelation moves Bink to wonder how creatures that possess souls can be condemned as evil, even though he once thought of the mantichora as evil.

Chapter 6, Magician Analysis

Bink's time with Humphrey is almost anticlimactic, as he comes away with the knowledge that he does have a magical talent and that it is strong. This leaves Bink with a few unpleasant options. He can face exile or ask the King for a special pardon from the law requiring the demonstration of magical talents.

Although Bink's first encounter with the mantichora is very frightening, his second encounter is far different. Bink learns that he has much in common with the mantichora who came to the castle to learn whether he had a soul or not. The mantichora explains that the information was worth a year of servitude and much more because he feared that only oblivion waited for him after death. Knowing that he has a soul allows him to know that death will not be an ending. By seeing the two distinct sides of the

manticora's personality, Bink learns that even those who seem evil and threatening may have a positive side to personalities.



Chapter 7, Exile

Chapter 7, Exile Summary

With Humphrey's instructions and promise of safe passage, Bink's travel is faster and easier. He realizes that the obstacles he has faced and defeated have made him stronger, but when Zink torments him at the edge of the North Village, he knows that not much has changed at home.

The next day, the King presides over Bink's trial at the outdoor amphitheatre, amid great pageantry. Roland, Bianca, and Sabrina are present. When Bink is asked what his magical talent is, he presents the note he has from Humphrey, stating that his talent exists but remains undiscovered. The King dismisses the note, saying that Humphrey is not the ruler. Bink offers the King a gift of water from the Spring of Life, but the monarch is insulted by Bink's assumption that he is ill and needs to be healed. He dumps the water on the ground, ruining Bink's last chance to remain as a citizen of Xanth.

Bink leaves Xanth with provisions from his mother, but does not see Sabrina before leaving. As he travels to Mundania, he thinks of his parents, whom he considers good despite the fact that they had not been able to help him find a way to avoid exile or accompany him. His feelings for Sabrina change, however, as he realizes that their love was more artificial than he believed. He now considers Corporal Crombie's opinions and thinks that he would have been foolish to marry Sabrina. Looking back, Bink realizes that he has a newfound freedom from the rules of Xanth and magic that he has never experienced before, but weeps once he is through the magical Shield.

Chapter 7, Exile Analysis

Although Bink had hoped to avoid exile, he cannot. Even this bitter lesson in justice is a learning experience, when Bink realizes that the King is jealous of Good Magician Humphrey. Even the powerful have their limits and petty personality traits. His exile represents a kind of freedom, as he will be away from the rules of Xanth, some of which are as unyielding, as they are foolish. He also regards his lost love Sabrina scornfully, as she now seems shallow and as self-serving as the King. Bink's tears, as he crosses into Mundania, are a symbol of the loss of his home, as well as his anger and lost innocent idealism.



Chapter 8, Trent

Chapter 8, Trent Summary

As Bink gathers his courage and sets out into Mundania, he is attacked by a group of men who take him to Trent. He explains why he was banished, but Trent offers him a chance to return to Xanth if he will give Trent the exact location of the Shield. Bink does not believe this is possible, but Trent tells him that there is a plant growing near the Shield that suppresses magic, which would render the Shield powerless. Trent also points out that they have something in common in that they have both been wronged by the powers that be in Xanth. Trent's army could invade Xanth, after destroying the Shield, so he could take the throne. Although he discusses the good points about Mundania and says that he would require the citizens of Xanth to travel in Mundania if he were to become King, Trent admits that he would prefer to return to Xanth.

As Bink refuses to help Trent, a soldier enters to announce that another person has come through the Shield. Bink thinks that perhaps it is Sabrina, but an ugly woman, named Fanchon, is brought to the tent. Trent asks her for the location of the Shield. As she agrees to tell him, Bink screams that she is a traitor and he is dragged from the tent. As he is dragged off, Bink thinks that the chances of another resident of Xanth being exiled so soon after he has been is unlikely, and suspects that Fanchon is actually working to get him to reveal the location of the Shield to Trent.

Chapter 8, Trent Analysis

Bink's time in Mundania begins dramatically, as he finds Trent there with an army, ready to invade Xanth, if he can only locate the Shield and render it useless. Bink's opinion of Trent has been formed by rumors about the magician who is reportedly evil. Although he has been exiled, his loyalty remains strong for Xanth and its people.

Trent's observations that Mundania is not a terrible place and that Mundanians have compensated for their lack of magic with science, medicine and philosophy is a surprise to Bink, but he clings to his love for the only home he has ever known. The appearance of Fanchon is also suspicious as Bink thinks it unlikely that another could be banished so soon after he.



Chapter 9, Transformer

Chapter 9, Transformer Summary

Bink ends up in a pit with Fanchon, who tells him that she has told Trent that the Shield is located beneath the King's throne—an inaccurate location. Bink thinks that Fanchon reminds him of someone, but he cannot think who it might be. Fanchon knows a lot about Bink, including the nature of his trial and his journey through the Gap and admits that she knew Wynne and Dee. She also admits to having followed him into Mundania because she learned what type of person he was from her two friends. Fanchon says that she left Xanth because she has been changed into an ugly woman through magic and the Good Magician Humphrey told her that the spell's effects might wear off if she were in Mundania, where there is no magic. She has a second reason for wanting to leave Mundania that she will not disclose.

Trent visits the pit, trying to tempt Fanchon and Bink into cooperation, but they resist. When it rains, Fanchon uses the water to mix with straw and dirt from the floor of the pit to make bricks behind a privacy curtain. She tells Bink to say the word, 'chameleon,' if a guard approaches so she can hide the bricks. Bink thinks that her choice of the term may be an omen, as the last time he saw a chameleon it had changed itself into a basilisk to threaten him, but was killed by a moth hawk.

In the morning, Trent's patience is wearing thin, as he fears the location of the Shield will change before he can pry its location from Bink or Fanchon. He moves them from the pit to an area that is actually near the invisible Shield, where he changes Fanchon into a basilisk in a cage. He also changes Bink into a cockatrice, before Bink loses consciousness. When Bink wakes, he finds himself back in the pit with Fanchon. Both are human again. They agree that they will not betray Xanth to Trent and plan an escape using the bricks. They also agree to steal Trent's magical suppression elixir before they go.

Chapter 9, Transformer Analysis

Bink's imprisonment is physical but it is also symbolic of his imprisonment by the prejudice he has faced in Xanth and his limited circumstances. His loyalty to Xanth remains strong even though he has been banished because of the loved ones he left behind. He will not knowingly betray them even if his life is threatened. He has, however, found a smart ally in the ugly Fanchon, who seems familiar. She knows more about him than would be natural and may be more than she seems. This foreshadows an important event in Chapter 12.

Fanchon's choice of the code word, 'chameleon,' is interesting for several reasons. A chameleon changes its appearance without the use of magic to protect itself, in much the same way that Bink has changed to meet whatever obstacles he has faced. The



story also opens with Bink's observations of a chameleon changing into a basilisk and ultimately being killed a natural predator. Bink fears that this is a bad omen, foretelling his doom, but Fanchon's transformation may foreshadow a time when Bink must kill her.



Chapter 10, Chase

Chapter 10, Chase Summary

Bink and Fanchon use the bricks to build a crude ladder to the top of the pit and lift the grate. Once free, they decide that the magical suppression elixir is being kept on one of two ships they passed when they were being taken to Trent to be transformed. On board, they manage to fight off three sailors who guard the ship, but the sailors swim to the second ship to pursue the pair.

As they search their ship for the elixir, Fanchon and Bink come upon a dog-an animal they have never seen before-and an injured fourth sailor. Although they are fearful of the dog, the sailor tells them that the dog's name is Jennifer and that she is tame. The sailor's injuries prevent him from doing much to resist their efforts, and he tells them that Trent is viewed as a good leader. He promised his men the chance to have peaceful lives in Xanth with farms, families, and magical children in return for their help, which inspired great loyalty. Trent also had a wife and son who both died from an infection. He believes that magic might have saved them, even if science could not. This is another reason that he wishes to return to Xanth.

After finding the elixir, Fanchon and Bink realize that Trent is in hot pursuit on the second ship and that the current is driving their ship toward the Shield itself. As they do not have the magical implements to protect themselves, if they pass through the Shield into Xanth, they are likely to die. The elements conspire against them, as they fight a storm, sharks, crocodiles, whirlpools, and more. At the chapter's conclusion, Bink loses consciousness and seems to be drowning in a whirlpool.

Chapter 10, Chase Analysis

Bink has learned much about Trent through captivity and escape. Like many of the supposedly evil creatures that Bink has encountered before, he learns that Trent also has positive characteristics and had truly inspired the men he led while in Mundania. The sailor that Fanchon and Bink talk with on the ship speaks longingly of the things that Trent would have given his men had his campaign to take Xanth been successful. His description of how they would have received lands and peaceful lives in Xanth are universal desires. Trent also had a wife and child that he loved and whose deaths he mourned, which is new information that highlights Trent's humanity. His desire to return to Xanth to take the throne shows that he is a tenacious, strong willed man who may possess morals, despite his imprisonment of Fanchon and Bink.



Chapter 11, Wilderness

Chapter 11, Wilderness Summary

When Bink wakes, he finds himself in a kraken's cave in Xanth, with Fanchon and Trent. Passing through the Shield should have killed them, as they had no magical protection; however, they decide that they have passed beneath it, allowing them to live. Bink learns that Trent saved his life by pumping water from his lungs, something Trent simply describes as, "the right thing to do". The vial containing the magical suppression elixir has been broken, but it renders the kraken-a magical sea monster-unconscious. Fanchon and Bink decide a truce with Trent is in order. As the monster begins to regain consciousness, the trio dives into an underground river to escape.

As their adventure continues, Trent, Bink and Fanchon face mermaids, tritons, a sea serpent, carnivorous grass, a harpy and other monsters as well as peace spells that sap their will to even move. They agree to extend their truce as working together has saved all of their lives

Chapter 11, Wilderness Analysis

Against all odds, Bink ends up back in Xanth, with Fanchon and Trent. Bink and his companions would not have been able to pass through the Shield alive; however, they now know that the Shield, a symbol of Xanth's isolation, has limits. The obstacles they work together to overcome serve a single purpose; to bring them closer together and allow a certain trust to emerge in their relationships. Although Bink and Fanchon remain somewhat suspicious of Trent, the magician appeals to their common sense and suggests they remain allies until they are no longer in the wilderness. His purposes are not entirely clear in this chapter; however, his behaviors here are beyond reproach.



Chapter 12, Chameleon

Chapter 12, Chameleon Summary

Bink, Fanchon, and Trent enjoy a respite from danger, but discover that they are in a precarious position. Having been exiled, Bink and Trent will be killed if discovered in Xanth. As such, Trent cannot use magic to help them travel anywhere else because it will draw attention. Fanchon simply remains ugly. Although they discover that they are near Humphrey's castle, the magician would be compelled to turn them over to the King if they appealed to him for help.

In the forest, they come upon an animal known as a magic sniffer. When the animal reacts to Fanchon, Bink realizes he does not know much about her or her magic. The animal reacts strongly to both Trent and Bink. As night falls, it becomes obvious that the forest itself seems to be guiding them forward. Soon they take shelter in what they think is a ruined, haunted castle. Trent shows no fear of the ghost they meet, but they agree that sleeping in shifts will be best. Trent easily hands his sword over to Bink in an act that says more of his opinion of his companions than words might. After a night's rest, Fanchon appears less ugly to Bink, as she lies sleeping near him. As he stares at her, he realizes that she looks like Dee, whom he met when he was traveling with Corporal Crombie. When she wakes, Fanchon explains that she is in fact Chameleon: a woman whose nature and appearance changes throughout the course of each month. She is the ugly Fanchon, the average Dee, and the beautiful Wynne for a portion of each month. Her intelligence varies inversely. Her mission to see Humphrey was to seek a spell that would make her normal, but Humphrey advised her to go to Mundania, where her appearance would revert to the average looks of Dee, which seemed her best option. She followed Bink because of the kindness he showed to her other forms. When Bink thinks of the chameleon he observed in the beginning of the story, he worries that this Chameleon might be the death of him.

In the meantime, Trent finds that the castle is actually Castle Roonga, the home of the Magician King of the Fourth Wave, who ruled well before dying and the Fifth Wave advanced. The Castle has its own kind of magic and now requires a new, powerful magician to support as a candidate for King. This accounts for how Bink, Fanchon, and Trent have been guided to the Castle, but Trent's desire for the throne is once again apparent, although he admits that Bink also possesses great power. The new information leads to a discussion of the truce, but Trent says that he doubts that Bink and Fanchon will be allowed to leave, and they are prevented from doing so by zombies.

Chapter 12, Chameleon Analysis

Inside Castle Roonga, Trent's opinions of his companions as honorable are clear in how easily he relinquishes his sword to Bink during the night. This act does a great deal to



increase Fanchon's trust for him, as she believes that only an honorable man would trust them. It is a symbol of how words are less valuable than actions, a strong component of the story as a whole.

Chameleon reveals herself to be a creature of magic, whose appearance changes three times each month. Women may draw a comparison between her transformations and their own menstrual cycles, which are governed by hormones instead of magic. The changes in Chameleon's appearance may also be compared to the ways most people willingly change their appearances to suit occasions or their own needs.

The truce that has served Bink, Fanchon and Trent well thus far is now in peril as Trent's aspirations for the throne are once again displayed. It seems that Castle Roonga guided them to itself, in the hopes of finding a mighty magician to take Xanth's throne. What is unclear in this chapter is whether the new King will be Trent or Bink.



Chapter 13, Rationale

Chapter 13, Rationale Summary

As the chapter opens, Castle Roonga becomes more hospitable to Bink and Chameleon because they are no longer fighting to leave it. When Chameleon enters her beautiful-but-stupid phase, she finds and nearly eats a cherry bomb. Bink comes to her aid and finds her in his arms, but denies himself the pleasure of making love, as it would be immoral to take advantage of her. The cherry bombs provide him with an idea for leaving the castle and he instructs Chameleon to gather more.

Bink tells Trent of his plan to use the cherry bombs to escape from Castle Roonga, but Trent warns him that doing so will cause an uproar in the magical environment surrounding the Castle and probably cause Bink's death, as well as Chameleon's. He goes on to explain that Xanth must develop a relationship with Mundania or perish because Mundanians far outnumber the residents of Xanth and are much better armed than the people of Xanth. Through research in Castle Roonga's library, Trent has also concluded that inbreeding between Xanths and magical creatures that has occurred over the past thousand years, will continue until only crossbreeds remain in Xanth. He justifies his pursuit of the throne as a means to prevent these catastrophes and outlines a plan to dismantle the Shield. Bink remains adamant that he will leave Castle Roonga and swears to oppose Trent.

Trent says that he will join Bink and Chameleon as long as they spare Castle Roonga and defuse the bombs. He also promises to see both through the surrounding forests to safety, as he has learned the magic to disarm the tricks of the Castle and the forests.

Chapter 13, Rationale Analysis

Castle Roonga presents Trent with several surprising revelations about the history of Xanth and what may await the magical land in the future. His desire to overtake the throne is now related to his assurance of the survival of Xanth as opposed to an open bid for power. As such, he is assuming the role of a patriotic savior, instead of a power hungry magician.

Bink's continued loyalty to the land that he was banished from is surprising in its strength, as he seems to have known little happiness or peace in Xanth. He remains suspicious of Trent, but has little choice but to cooperate. Bink's moral nature is on display again when he refuses to make love to Chameleon in her most vulnerable state.



Chapter 14, Wiggle

Chapter 14, Wiggle Summary

After obtaining fresh clothing, food, and supplies from Castle Roonga, Bink, Chameleon, and Trent leave with no difficulty. When they are beyond the Castle's magical reach, Trent informs Bink and Chameleon that he told the Castle that he would return to it as King to rule with its help. Farther from Castle Roonga, Trent changes Bink into a sphinx to battle a mean dragon. When the battle is over, Bink flies Trent and Chameleon away.

They land so that Chameleon can relieve herself and Bink realizes that he could squash Trent in his present form. He resists this idea, because there will be no one to transform him back into a human and he does not wish to violate the truce. When Trent and Bink worry for Chameleon's long absence, Trent transforms Bink into a bloodhound to go find her.

While tracking Chameleon, Trent and Bink come to a huge gathering of humans and magical creatures, involved in a great battle. The creatures in the gathering are sworn enemies, yet they all appear to be working together to fight. Soon Trent and Bink are learn that the creatures have united to fight wiggles, wormlike creatures that can burrow through flesh of any kind. More ferocious looking creatures exist, but wiggles are despised as a danger to all of Xanth; therefore, all have joined to fight them, including the centaur, Herman the Hermit, whom Cherie spoke of in Chapter 2. Herman tells Bink and Trent that he was banished from the centaur's herd because he practiced magic, an act of obscenity to the centaurs. He recognizes Trent and urges him to transform the wiggle swarm, but Trent cannot, as there are too many. Instead, Trent transforms Bink from a dog to a fire-breathing salamander. Bink sets the wiggle swarm on fire but when he goes to save Chameleon he ends up inside the fire ring,.

When Herman leaps in to save Bink and Chameleon, he is nailed by a wiggle. He asks Trent to kill him, as he knows he cannot survive. Trent grants Herman's request. He then praises all of the creatures that have survived, as well as those who gave their lives for Xanth, before urging all of them to depart peacefully. As the fires burn lower, Trent transforms Bink from a fire-breathing salamander back to a sphinx so their journey can continue

Chapter 14, Wiggle Analysis

Although Bink has a chance to kill Trent again, he does not because of he has given his word to remain true to their truce. This restraint is a symbol of his abhorrence of going back on his word and violence. The great battle against the wiggles is a symbolic and literal struggle for Xanth's survival. The unification of all of the creatures that are sworn enemies show what can be accomplished by joined forces when a common enemy threatens all. Trent and Bink now know that all of the creatures of Xanth can be united



for a common good if they perceive the threat to their lives and land as being severe enough.

Herman's crime and obscenity was the practice of magic, which is forbidden among the centaurs, as it provides an unfair advantage for one who uses it among those who do not. Herman's death is only hastened by Trent; yet, in giving the centaur what he asks for, the magician displays mercy as well as brutality, both of which are often found in great historical leaders.



Chapter 15, Duel

Chapter 15, Duel Summary

Bink flies Trent and Chameleon to the edge of the wilderness where civilization begins and is there changed back to his natural state. As they prepare to go their separate ways, Sorceress Iris appears and outlines her plan to blackmail them into helping her take the throne. Trent joins her and urges Bink to leave with Chameleon. When Bink refuses, the men agree to a duel in the forest to settle their disagreement.

Chameleon goes with Bink into the forest where they make love before trying to develop a strategy to defeat Trent and Sorceress Iris. When Chameleon goes off to relieve herself, Trent transforms her into a winged doe, but is unable to transform Bink. Trent announces that he has found Bink's magical talent—he cannot be harmed by magic. He can be changed, embarrassed, humiliated, or aided by it, but he cannot actually be killed by it. When the duel becomes purely physical, Chameleon flies between the men in her state as a winged doe and Trent inadvertently stabs her.

Bink thinks the omen of the dying chameleon is coming true in Chameleon's imminent death. He asks Trent to kill her quickly, as an act of mercy, but the magician cannot do it. The Sorceress Iris urges Trent to kill Bink and Chameleon, but Trent says that he cannot kill a man who saved his life, nor can he kill a woman who would give her life for such a man. Trent transforms Bink into a phoenix so that he can fly off to get help from Good Magician Humphrey.

Chapter 15, Duel Analysis

Bink's magical talent is finally revealed: he cannot be killed by magic, which makes him like a superhero in Xanth. In a land filled with hostile as well as benevolent magic, Bink might go anywhere or do anything without the fear of losing his life to magic.

The duel between Trent and Bink is a symbol of the struggle between good and evil, a battle that rages inside of the men, as well as between them. They are both tempted by the Sorceress to some degree, but neither can ultimately accept her offer. It should also be noted that the Sorceress herself is a symbolic embodiment of how the insatiable hunger for power is part of the nature of evil.

Love and honor are also major themes for Chapter 15. Bink and Chameleon consummate their love, which gives them greater strength and more reason to live, as they face Trent in the forest. Knowing of their love and the high moral standards they have displayed, Trent does not wish to kill them, so these attributes literally save the lovers' lives. Chameleon's love for Bink forces her to save his life, because life would mean nothing to her if Bink were to die. The inherent message in her decision to leap in front of Trent's sword is that love is what makes life worthwhile.



Chapter 16, King

Chapter 16, King Summary

As Bink heads for the castle of Good Magician Humphrey, Sorceress Iris assumes the form of a dragon to pester him. A magical storm also thwarts his progress but he manages to find Humphrey's castle. Although Bink is still a phoenix, Humphrey recognizes him and understands his plight. He is surprised to learn that Trent has helped Bink and Chameleon; however, he says that they will need a stunner from the North Village to oppose Trent and save Chameleon. At the village, a Village Elder informs them that the King has died and says that Humphrey must assume the throne, but the magician refuses.

Bink's father, Roland, is a stunner, and accompanies Bink and Humphrey back to Trent and Chameleon. Chameleon is healed and Roland stuns Trent before they all return to the North Village. Trent remains frozen by Roland's stun spell and is not permitted to defend himself verbally. Bink, who would defend him, remains a phoenix, because Trent is unable to transform him in his present frozen state. A magical mirror is used to reveal the actions of Bink and all of his companions, including Trent's actions to save Bink and Chameleon. At the trial's conclusion, Trent is released from Roland's stun spell and found guilty of violation of his exile. He is spared the penalty of death, on the conditions that he marries the Sorceress Iris in order to control her, and assume the throne of Xanth.

At the coronation, Bink renews his acquaintance with many and introduces Sabrina to Corporal Crombie, who has become Trent's bodyguard. He is awarded the job of Official Researcher of Xanth, with the assignment of discovering the true source of magic in Xanth. Trent and Bink then travel to Castle Roonga, where Sorceress Iris and Chameleon are waiting. Chameleon agrees to marry Bink, who realizes that she has found her spell, which is true love. Bink understands that in the omen of the chameleon at the beginning of the story, he was always supposed to be like the hawk that carries Chameleon away.

Chapter 16, King Analysis

In the final chapter, Trent is not permitted to speak at his trial because the author has already established the weak power of words when compared to the truth and value of actions over them. The use of a magic mirror to reveal the true motivations of the characters might be compared to a polygraph test. Through this mechanism, Trent is shown to be the best possible, available leader and is ultimately pardoned, even though he is found guilty of returning from exile. The outcome is another symbol of the dual nature of life.



Through the death of the old king, Sorceress Iris and Trent both receive what they wanted most in the throne. The King's death is a symbolic end to the isolation of Xanth and the laws that were the design of his shallow nature. Bink finds love with Chameleon, which is something he sought without realizing it. He also finds a place in the society of Xanth, as someone who has a very strong talent, a professional purpose, and love as well.

Chameleon finally finds her spell-the acceptance of all of her forms that can only exist through Bink's true love. As such, the omen of the chameleon, that opens the story, is fulfilled.



Characters

Bink

Bink is the main character and protagonist of the story, which is told through his maturation process. He is the son of Roland and Bianca, and has grown to the age of twenty-four in the North Village of Xanth, surrounded by magic. Bink's problem is that he cannot demonstrate a magical talent and will face exile unless he can learn what his talent is before his twenty-fifth birthday, which is only a month away. This deceptively simple conflict sends him across the wilds of Xanth, into exile in Mundania, and finally brings him back to Xanth.

Bink is physically strong, but his inability to demonstrate a magical talent is a handicap that makes him an easy target for pranksters and depletes his self-esteem. He dreams to live a simple life with his fiancée, Sabrina. He wishes for a life where he is no different from those around him who have magical talents. In this sense, Bink is a protagonist that most people will identify with and will share his desires for love and acceptance in their communities and by their peers.

As the story opens, Bink is watching a chameleon on a rock change its appearance to protect itself from predators. The small chameleon dies and is carried away by a moth hawk; however, its presence and trials haunt Bink, who sees its experience as an omen. His interpretation of the omen changes as the story progresses. At times, he thinks that the woman, Chameleon, will die. At other times, he thinks that his relationship with her will cause his death. At the story's conclusion, Bink provides the spell that Chameleon sought in true love. The trials of the chameleon on the rock symbolize the struggles he must face in order to grow and find his place in Xanth, as well as the love he finds with his Chameleon.

Bink's patience, strength, mental faculties, and ethics are tried on his journey, as he must overcome many perils that he never imagined to exist. As he meets each new obstacle or problem, Bink learns to rely on his intellect, instead of the magic that he has been surrounded with all of his life. He is forced to make decisions about what he is willing to compromise and what he is not, simply to survive. By the end of the story, Bink has matured into a strong, self-aware man, who has demonstrated an iron commitment to high moral standards and justice. Through a very challenging journey of self-discovery, he finally learns what his magical talent is, but he also finds love and he develops courage, true maturity, and fortitude.

Wynne/Dee/Fanchon/Chameleon

Wynne, Dee, Fanchon, and Chameleon are three different aspects of one woman. Bink first meets Wynne, a beautiful yet stupid woman who appears at a rape trial that Bink is forced to attend in place of a farmer, and who gives him shelter near the Gap. He is



tempted by her beauty, but resists her charms because making love to her would be taking advantage of her stupidity. Next, Bink encounters Dee, an average woman, with average intelligence, whom he likes immediately because he thinks they have some things in common. As he travels toward the castle of the Good Magician Humphrey with Corporal Crombie and Dee, Bink learns that Crombie feels that Dee is a danger. Bink cannot see how, but Dee exits when Crombie insults her. When Bink's travels take him to Trent's camp in Mundania, he meets Fanchon, who is ugly, but very smart. Bink escapes Trent's camp with Fanchon but when he comes to Castle Roonga with Trent and the woman he knows as Fanchon, Chameleon is revealed.

As Chameleon explains her situation, Bink and Trent learn that she is magical, but does not possess magic as a skill. Each month her appearance varies between beautiful, average, and ugly. Her intelligence level varies between stupid, average, and smart. Her cycles, which she describes in Chapter 12 as based on the female cycle, and equal to one lunar month, mark her as a symbol for all that is feminine and variable. Wishing to end the cycle and adopt a single form, Chameleon went to Good Magician Humphrey for advice. She was told to go to Mundania, where magic does not exist, so that her form and intelligence would become average. When she meets Bink as Wynne, Chameleon decides to follow him to Mundania because he seems kind, no matter what stage of change she is in. The title of the book refers to Chameleon's quest for a spell that would change her to a single form, but what she finds by the conclusion of the story is an even better kind of enchantment: the total acceptance and pleasure of Bink's true love, which will never change no matter what form she is in.

Trent

Trent is only mentioned briefly before Bink is exiled and is portrayed as an evil, ruthless magician before Chapter 7. Prior to that point, he is shown as a man who has allowed his ambitions to attain the throne to corrupt his morals and influence his every decision. His attempts to do so earned him exile in Mundania, but when Bink meets him for the first time, after he is exiled himself, Trent seems to have developed a respect for Mundania.

After being attacked by Trent's men and hauled to his tent in Mundania, Bink learns that Trent still wants Xanth's throne. Even though he is a little desperate for Bink's help in locating the Magical Shield, Trent displays an unexpected amount of humanity in how his prisoners are treated. He transforms them, and imprisons and threatens them, but he also provides Fanchon and Bink with food and a privacy curtain in the pit where he confines them. One of Trent's wounded sailors tells Bink and Fanchon that Trent is very respected among his men and had promised them good lives, with land and families in Xanth, if his attempt for the throne is successful.

It is not until after Bink ends up back in Xanth with Trent and Fanchon that he begins to admit to himself that Trent would be a good leader in Xanth and admire the qualities that would make him an asset. Trent is instrumental in saving their lives, and hands his sword to Bink when he goes off to rest, without fear of being stabbed. As the



adventurers continue traveling, Trent displays a number of attributes that show him as honorable, very intelligent, courageous, and a good leader. He eventually gets what he wishes for when he is exonerated of his crimes and literally ordered to take the throne, following the King's death. He must contend with the Sorceress Iris as his Queen, but the Xanths see this as positive as Trent may be the only magician who can control her.

Good Magician Humphrey

Good Magician Humphrey is grand, mighty and feared, but he is also viewed as an indispensable source of knowledge in Xanth, in much the same way as a benevolent ruler or father figure would be. Although he is a wise mentor, he also charges one year of servitude for a single spell, but Humphrey does not seem to lack customers, many of who see no one else to consult for their problems. Bink would happily provide a year of servitude to Humphrey if it would help him figure out what his magical talent is. Trent is acquainted with Humphrey and maintained a professionally amiable relationship with him. Bink's father and Sabrina are acquainted with him, as are most of the people Bink meets on his journey.

Unfortunately, Humphrey fails to help him discover the knowledge he needs most, but gives Bink a note to give to the King, stating that he does have a talent. The invaluable effect of Humphrey's advice is shown through a conversation that Bink has with his castle's manticora, a seemingly vicious creature, who desperately needed to know that he had a soul and is working off his year of servitude. Through the conversation, Bink learns that Humphrey's knowledge can have a very positive effect on the lives that seek it. Naturally, the King is jealous of Humphrey's power, because his own are failing.

Sorceress Iris

Sorceress Iris, the beautiful mistress of illusion, is a flat character, as only the more negative aspects of her personality are shown throughout most of the story. She sets up extravagant, illusionary traps to ensnare Bink on his journey and tempt him with promises of all he could dream of, if only he will become her accomplice in stealing the throne from the King. The Sorceress is also an agent provocateur who tempts Trent into becoming her accomplice, bringing about the duel in the forest between Bink and Trent. At the end of the story, the omniscient author seems to offer her a chance for future redemption and rehabilitation, when he places her in a surprising marriage to Trent and shows her apology to Bink.

Sabrina

Sabrina is Bink's beautiful fiancée in the beginning of the story. She befriended Bink after moving to the North Village as an adolescent and her relationship with him has deepened to love through time and exposure. She urges Bink to travel to Good Magician Humphrey to obtain help in figuring out what his magical talent is. His decision to do so is strongly influenced by Sabrina's promise that she will wait for him if he is



forced to provide one year of servitude to Humphrey; however, Bink comes to see her affection as less than true after he is exiled from Xanth for being unable to demonstrate a magical talent.

Sabrina appears at the beginning of the story and briefly in the final chapter, when Bink meets her after his triumphant return to Xanth. At that point, Sabrina thinks that she can rekindle her romance with Bink, but he realizes that his magical talent, which protects him from harm from magic, prevented him from marrying her. One of his final acts is to introduce Sabrina to Corporal Crombie, who distrusts women in general, but who may find some pleasure with Sabrina.

Roland and Bianca

Roland and Bianca are Bink's parents. They are loving, supportive and believe in their son, but do not appear often in the story. Bianca supplies Bink with food before he leaves the North Village to go to the Good Magician Humphrey, and again before he begins his exile. Roland is more apparent as a strong figure, whose talent as a stunner is used against Trent after he duels with Bink and wounds Chameleon, rather late in the story. It can be assumed that Roland and Bianca are good-natured characters with strong morals, simply because Bink's positive characteristics are a reflection of their parental influences.

Justin Tree

Justin Tree was once a human, but was transformed into a tree twenty years ago by Trent because he opposed the magician's aspirations to take the throne. Justin Tree is a village monument and has remained a tree because no one but Trent has enough power to turn him back into a man. He is significant because his story, presented very early in the story, establishes Trent's reputation in Bink's mind as an evil magician.

Jama, Zink, and Potipher

These three characters are North Village troublemakers, who delight in using their magical powers to torment Bink and others. They are seen briefly when they attack Justin Tree, when they tease Bink following his journey back from the castle of Good Magician Humphrey, and again at Trent's coronation. In the first two instances, they are mean; however, they are punished for their attack on Justin Tree and seem reformed when Trent assumes power. They are character foils that really serve to highlight Bink's positive characteristics. If Jama, Zink, and Potipher had never attacked Justin Tree, Bink could never have displayed his instincts as a Good Samaritan and gone to Justin's aid early in the story.



Cherie and Chester

Cherie and Chester are centaurs, non-magical, scholarly creatures, which have the torsos of humans and the bodies of horses. Bink encounters Chester, who attacks him, early in his journey to the castle of the Good Magician Humphrey. Chester suspects that Bink harbors malicious intentions, because troublemakers from the North Village have plagued the centaurs. Cherie, who helps Bink travel part of the way to Humphrey, calls him off. On the way, she gives Bink knowledge of how humans came to Xanth, laments the powerless King, and tells him bluntly that his quest for magic may be foolish, as centaurs neither use, nor wish for magical talents. Cherie also tells Bink of Herman the Hermit, who was banished from her herd for committing an obscene act, but refuses to tell him what it was. That conversation foreshadows a meeting with Herman the Hermit that Bink has later in the story

Donald, the Shade

Bink meet Donald when he is trapped in a cave in the Gap. A dragon looms above, while Donald, a shade, lurks near. Shades are rather repulsive ghosts that can possess a human being to continue enjoying the pursuits of the flesh or complete unfinished business. Although Bink has heard that possession is a disgusting experience, he allows Donald to possess him so that they can escape. While possessed, Bink does Donald's bidding to return to his impoverished wife and child. He gives them the location of a precious silver tree so that their poverty can end. Donald teaches Bink that there are times when he will be forced to compromise tremendously in order to survive. He also shows Bink how death and poverty can affect a family so deeply, but his most important lesson is about the nature of true love, which endures even after death.

King

In the opening chapters of the book, the King is described briefly as senile and almost powerless. He is sometimes called the Storm King because his magical talent is storm conjuring. Bink meets the King for the first time at trial in the North Village in Chapter 7, just before he is exiled. The King is a petty, jealous ruler, who is envious of the power the Good Magician Humphrey has. He refuses to accept Bink's note from the Good Magician Humphrey, attesting to his magical talent, and is insulted by Bink's offered gift of water from the Spring of Life, because he is offended by the suggestion that he might be ill. His life is a symbol of the abuse of power that exists in Xanth and his death signals the changes that may come to Xanth in the future.

Corporal Crombie

Corporal Crombie, a wounded soldier, is saved from death through Bink's assistance and water from the Spring of Life. He is another character who acts in Bink's best interest, becoming a protector and guide, so that Bink reaches the castle of the Good



Magician Humphrey safely. He also offers another opportunity for Bink to show his nature as a Good Samaritan.

Crombie dislikes and distrusts emotional relationships of substance with women, but has nothing against physical relationships. He tells Bink that Dee will put him in harm's way, and ultimately Crombie's words come true; however, Bink finds love, instead of death, as the result.

Herman the Hermit

Herman the Hermit is a centaur who was banished from his herd long ago after he used magic. The use of magic is considered obscene among the centaurs, but Herman proves to be a very virtuous centaur when he saves Bink and Chameleon from certain death as they fight the wiggle swarm. When he is fatally wounded by a wiggle, Herman asks Trent to kill him quickly, and becomes a memorable symbol of courage, before dying.



Objects/Places

Xanth/North Village

At first glance, Xanth is a beautiful, peaceful place, where magic seems to present an interesting diversion to the boring side of life. Based on a map provided by the author, it is a peninsula, shaped like Florida. The Gap separates the northern and southern regions. To the north lies the border between Mundania and Xanth. Bink lives in the North Village, near the Gap. The castle of the Good Magician Humphrey and Castle Roonga are in the south.

On closer inspection, through Bink and his travels, Xanth's magic and beauty take on tones that are more sinister. Objects and plants that appear innocuous have been equipped with powers that make them far more dangerous than they look, forcing Bink to remain constantly on guard. Xanth is also a place where a shallow ruler inflicts his petty will on the citizens, despite the attractive landscape. In this sense, Xanth is a symbol of the dual nature of life.

The Gap

The Gap is an enormous trench in the earth that stretches from the eastern border of Xanth to the western border. It is filled with dragons, shades, and other dangerous creatures, whose powers grow during the night. The Gap is symbol of all that is frightening on a primal level. Bink meets Donald, the shade, in The Gap, and is forced to overcome his personal, primitive fear of possession in order to survive.

Isle of Illusion

The Isle of Illusion is located off the eastern shore of Xanth and is the beautiful, illusionary home of the Sorceress Iris. The illusions, which make the Isle so attractive, crumble easily when Bink uses his mental strength to refuse her offers of power. It is here that Bink first learns the power of his intellect, and discovers that the strength of his morals is a valuable resource against evil.

The Spring of Life

The Spring of Life is a beautiful, clear spring whose water offers healing power to anyone who is ill or injured. The price for such healing is a promise that the person who takes the water will never act in a manner that will harm the Spring. The Spring's water heals Corporal Crombie and also Bink's finger, but in addition provides Bink with something to offer the King in return for a pardon.



Castle of Good Magician Humphrey

Good Magician Humphrey's castle seems a mysterious place, protected by ferocious magical creatures. In fact, it is significant as a place where Bink finds hope, even though he does not obtain what sent him there originally. The castle also serves as a backdrop for Humphrey and establishes his might as a magician, as he would look very out of place living in a shack.

The Magical Shield

The Magical Shield serves as the boundary between Xanth and Mundania. The Shield functions to keep all of the magic in Xanth and all of the non-magical creatures and people in Mundania. To try to pass through it in either direction without the protection of a magical timestone causes death; however, the Shield itself is invisible and only marked by a regular stone and a guard.

The Shield is also a symbol of what Trent dislikes about Xanth, in its enforced isolation and the narrow vision of its King. At the same time, the Shield is what Bink finds safe and familiar in Xanth's isolation. In this sense, it is a proverbial double-edged sword.

Trent's camp/The pit

Trent's camp in Mundania is where Bink first hears that Mundanians may have more going for them than those who reside in Xanth. It is also significant as the place where he encounters Fanchon, a smart, yet ugly version of Chameleon, who saves him and becomes very important as the story progresses.

Mundania

Mundania is comprised of the lands outside of Xanth, where magic does not exist. Bink actually sees little of Mundania, as he is there for a very brief time. His observations indicate that its appearance is similar to Xanth, with trees, rocks, and an ocean shore. Trent provides Bink with a quick overview of Mundania when he is imprisoned at Trent's camp, but this is significant as a location where Bink's understanding of life without magic is increased.

Wilderness

The wilderness is a desolate, dangerous area, outside of the civilized areas of Xanth, where Bink, Chameleon, and Trent appear most vulnerable to the power of magic and nature as well as the laws of Xanth. The protagonists land here when they first pass through the Shield to return to Xanth. The nature of this untamed landscape and the



dangers they find there force the travelers to form a truce and work together to avoid detection and stay alive.

Castle Roonga

The magical Castle Roonga appears to be a neglected, haunted, stone fortress, when Bink and his companions first come upon it. They find ghosts, zombies and cherry bombs in the castle, but it also provides them with more information about the history of Xanth, and leads Trent to believe that Xanth will be doomed unless the borders are opened to the ways of Mundania. The benevolent King Roonga, the Magician King of the Fourth Wave, once owned the magical Castle Roonga. Although the ruler is long dead, the Castle is very much alive and is able to impose its will on Trent, Chameleon, and Bink when they seek its shelter. Only after Trent promises to return to it to rule are the travelers permitted to leave.



Themes

Growth and Maturity

A primary theme of *A Spell for Chameleon* is growth and maturity, as it is a coming-of-age story for Bink, as well as for Xanth. As the protagonist, Bink matures between his twenty-fourth and twenty-fifth year, while on a quest. Through the sometimes painful process he gains knowledge and strength, while losing a previously held sense of innocence. Bink begins with a need for the self-knowledge of his magical talent, which is a kind of who-I-am-in-relation-to-my-world question. He finds the answer, but he also gains a realistic view of how humans came to Xanth, human nature, the seductive power of evil, and how even the best sources of power can be corrupted through greed and ambition. At the story's opening Bink is a likable, ethical, friendly guy with a simple but important desire. By the end of the story he is a hero, with a better place in his world as well as mature love.

Bink's maturation process also seems interwoven with Xanth's. The author provides some information on the possibilities in Xanth's future and, according to Trent, Xanth faces catastrophe if the land remains as isolated as it is in this story. The death of the old King and Trent's ascension to the throne are events that are likely to foreshadow the end of Xanth's isolation and the possibility of a new era in the future, just as Bink's newfound magical talent and new love signal the end of his isolation and his struggle for a better life.

Justice and Power

An implicit theme of the story is that justice can be corrupted through the misuse of power. It is a lesson in reality, even though the story is fantastical. The use and unfair misuse of justice is seen throughout the story through many of Bink's experiences. His exile by a petty King is an example of injustice on a large scale, as he has no control over the nature of his magical talent. In fact, his inability to demonstrate such a talent in a land of magic is a severe handicap and the treatment he receives from those in power is severe discrimination. A realistic comparison might be the exile of someone because they had been born with a physical challenge, such as blindness.

Bink's troubles with local peers are an example of injustice on a smaller scale. Again, he is targeted for issues beyond his control and must develop different coping strategies, as he does not have available to him what his peers do. These injustices serve a purpose, guiding Bink toward the justice and fair compensation he receives at the novel's conclusion, greater knowledge, and maturity. In this case, injustice is seen as a strong motivational factor for the protagonist and he ultimately finds happiness because of it.



There are also trials in the story that are significant because they provide lessons about justice for Bink. At the first trial, a woman faces her rapist among her peers, yet the charges are treated as unimportant because she did not scream and she knew her attacker. At Trent's trial, he is frozen and unable to speak to defend himself. Bink, who would defend him, cannot as he has been changed into a phoenix. In the end, justice prevails with the death of the old King, Trent's ascension to the throne, and Bink's new love and position. Again, these situations expose an extreme level of unfairness, but they bring Bink further along on his journey and educate him about the use and misuse of justice and power.

Good and Evil

The struggle between good and evil is apparent in most literature, and *A Spell for Chameleon* is no exception. What makes the author's treatment of the subject unique is the addition of the magic of Xanth. This spices up the battle for dominance between good and evil by adding an element of the unknown and unexpected. The author uses the theme to expose the good that exists in all living things, whether they appear evil or not; however, there seems to be an inherent message that appearances can be deceiving.

In Xanth everything and everyone has magic, except Bink. Naturally, he must survive; however, to do so, he must confront hostile and magical creatures, magical plants, and more. It may appear that Bink's initial trial is presented by Chester, the mean centaur; however, evil arrives much earlier in the form of the King, whose discriminatory rule forces Bink to undertake a life-threatening journey.

When Bink meets Donald the Shade in the Gap, he thinks Donald evil until he joins forces with him. At that point, Bink sees that Donald was once a man who loved his wife and child so much that he finds a way to return from the dead to relieve their poverty. The manticora that threatens Bink when he finally reaches the castle of the Good Magician Humphrey certainly is frightening, but Bink learns that the creature is working off his year of servitude to Humphrey. His quest began with a deep desire to know if he possessed a soul. The manticora's life only became worth living after he learned that his spirit would survive death, a revelation to Bink who had assumed the creature simply evil. The message here seems to be that even the most terrible, repulsive creatures or people have their better points if you take the time to get to know them.

Although Bink believes Trent to be evil because of what he has heard about him, he quickly learns that there is much to respect and value in Trent's leadership skills. He begins as Trent's prisoner in Mundania, but quickly turns into a friend, although both men struggle with their inner conflicts about each other and to survive. At the other end of Bink's spectrum is Sabrina, his beautiful fiancée. Although Bink's love for her is real enough, it is only after he is exiled that he comes to see that she was very superficial and that her affections were less than he had hoped.



The best example of the deceptive nature of appearances may be found in Bink's experiences with Sorceress Iris, who can create any illusion and who often changes her appearance to suit the occasion. Although she is gorgeous in most of her forms, Sorceress Iris is the only character whose better side is explored so little. She remains a source of trouble throughout the story, but the author provides briefly for her possible rehabilitation in the future, through her mandated marriage to Trent and the apology she offers Bink in Chapter 16.

Men and Women

The author portrays men and women in very different ways in the story. Women are generally portrayed as deceptive and unworthy of trust, while men generally appear as more honest.

The first woman to appear is beautiful Sabrina. Bink loves her enough to want to marry her in the first chapter; however, after he is exiled, he comes to believe her love for him as false. At the conclusion of the book, in a spiteful act, he introduces her to Corporal Crombie, a man who displays a distrustful attitude toward women, even though he says he has nothing against physical relationships with them.

Next to appear is Wynne, the beautiful, unintelligent aspect of Chameleon's personality. Wynne is probably the woman who was raped near the Gap; however, she is victimized again at the trial when her experience is treated dismissively because she did not scream and knew her attacker. As Wynne leads Bink through the Gap, she appears to offer sexual favors to him if he will take her away with him. This seems like an act of desperation, but on more than one occasion, Wynne is portrayed as dumb and promiscuous. It is possible that this rape is what leads Wynne's aspect of Chameleon to seek safe passage with Bink and ultimately seek the advice of the Good Magician Humphrey when she is Dee or Fanchon. She no longer wishes to be beautiful because it may have led to her rape. Although the author does not make the statement clear, Chameleon chooses to follow Bink to Mundania because he chooses not to have sex with her in the Gap; a testament to his honorable nature. Dee is average in all respects and Bink seems to like her because he thinks that she is as unremarkable as he is; an odd display of the protagonist's lack of self-esteem or confidence with women. Fanchon, the ugly, smart aspect of Chameleon's personality, appeals to Bink because of her intelligence. This intelligence helps Bink to escape from Trent's pit. Bink says that one of the reasons that he falls in love with Chameleon is that she can offer him variety. Perhaps fidelity to one woman would bore Bink, but with Chameleon, he can actually maintain relationships with three women. The Sorceress Iris is another beautiful woman, but she has few redeeming qualities.

The exception to the somewhat negative portrayal of women is Bink's mother, Bianca, although she is a supportive character who appears briefly. Bianca cares for Bink, scolds him when he behaves recklessly, and supplies him with provisions whenever he must leave the North Village. His relationship seems positive but is not fully developed in the story.



As a last comment on the omen of the chameleon, the author compares Bink and his love for Chameleon to the moth hawk, stating, "And at last Bink understood the meaning of his omen: he was the hawk who had carried away Chameleon. She would never get free." The statement implies a possible struggle for freedom, even though the characters are presented as being deeply in love.

In contrast, men are presented in a more positive fashion. Bink is everyone's good guy. His father, Roland, is shown briefly in the beginning and end of the story, but he appears to be strong and reliable and demonstrates faith in his son to meet and surmount any obstacle. The farmer that Bink meets near the Gap may be guilty of rape, but he goes unpunished. Humphrey is a mighty force for the powers of goodness and a wise mentor to many, even though he charges a staggeringly high price for his services. Trent is the quintessential leader, with a wounded heart and a lot of ambition. He is simultaneously tough and tender, and ambitious and honorable. He is also good looking, but his attractive appearance does not seem to conceal darker aspiration, as is the case among the female characters of the novel. The old King is the one male character that does not seem to have any redeeming qualities. When he dies, the throne conveniently becomes available to Trent.

Style

Point of View

The story is told from the limited, omniscient, third person point of view. The author tells what happens to Bink and those around him, and provides insight into characters' thoughts, fears, and hopes; however, events that are occurring away from Bink are not shown. For example, as Bink is allowing Donald to possess him in the Gap to escape the dragon, his thoughts and what he feels are shown, but how Wynne is faring is not shown, because Bink sent her on her way. Near the end of the story, a magic mirror is used at Trent's trial to reveal what actions he took when Bink flew off as a phoenix to fetch Humphrey so that Chameleon can be saved. As Bink is flying, Trent's actions are not seen. The narrative style is significant in *A Spell for Chameleon* because one of the important themes of the story is Bink's maturation. Without this point of view, that process would be less clear.

The author often treats characters sympathetically, as if to give them the benefit of the doubt. Characters may behave in a negative manner, but their more honorable motivations are often explained. Trent kills Herman the Hermit in a savage manner, but Herman is dying painfully, so Trent is forced to take this action for the sake of mercy. At the same time, other characters behave or appear in a positive manner, yet the author seems to assist Bink in remaining on his guard. The Sorceress Iris saves Bink's life when he is drowning, but Bink's suspicions are roused when clothing appears to be waiting for him at her palace.

Setting

In *A Spell for Chameleon*, settings often aid or oppose Bink and other characters and become antagonistic or protagonistic. Most of the story takes place in Xanth, a beautiful land of positive and negative magic, where few things are what they seem. Xanth is an integral setting, as the story could not exist without the magic that defines the location; however, Bink is often at odds with that magic, which makes Xanth an antagonist at times.

An integral setting within Xanth is Castle Roonga, which has a will and actually extracts a promise from Trent before allowing its guests to leave. The information that Bink, Chameleon, and Trent obtain at Castle Roonga, including Xanth's history and possible future, could not come to light in any other location, which is a contrast to the castle of Good Magician Humphrey. Humphrey's castle is a backdrop location, where characters interact, or events unfold. Bink might have spoken with Humphrey in any area that was distant enough from his home to force him to travel across Xanth and grand enough to be the home of a mighty magician.



Mundania is seen very briefly during Bink's exile and imprisonment; however, he describes it as looking much like Xanth. In Chapter 8, Trent describes the mechanism of an abacus, and a hot air balloon used by Mundanians to travel. These quick descriptions provide clues that it is unlikely that Mundanians are living in a technological age. The wilderness, where Trent, Bink, and Fanchon land when they return to Xanth, is a setting that highlights the protagonist's vulnerability against nature and magic. Its sheer desolation and danger unite them more and provides a backdrop for the fight between the creatures of Xanth and the wiggles, the most vicious creatures of Xanth.

Language and Meaning

A Spell for Chameleon was written in 1977. Although the time frame for the story is undefined, the language is clear, contemporary, and easily understandable for teens and adults. Characters engage each other through plain American English, and would be easily understandable if they were to converse with readers. The use of contemporary language helps to move the plot easily and quickly, as readers are not forced to analyze passages as the plot progresses.

It is notable that characters are straightforward with each other and themselves. An example is how Bink thinks of Fanchon as "a marvelously ugly female," when he meets her in the eighth chapter. In the ninth chapter, Fanchon describes herself as being "as smart as I am ugly" with no pretense at all.

Descriptive passages present particularly graphic images of Xanth's features and those that inhabit the magical land. The author's descriptions are most valuable as he describes characters that exist only in his imagination. There are many examples of this; however, two of note are the ferocious creatures guarding the castle of the Good Magician Humphrey. The hippocampus is described as a sea horse, featuring the head and forefeet of a horse and the tail of a dolphin. Another of Humphrey's magical guardians is the manticora, which is the size of a horse, with the body of a man, body of a lion, wings of a dragon and tail of a scorpion. Both are used to create suspense when Bink must face them, but as they are not known outside of Xanth, the author's descriptions are needed to show the danger they represent. Other magical and non-magical creatures, such as the tiny chameleon that Bink sees in the first chapter or unicorns, are known outside of Xanth and will be easily recognized.

Structure

A Spell for Chameleon is told during the course of sixteen sequential, episodic chapters. Each is named for a thing, person, or an event that is described in the same chapter and provides a clue to what will be happening in the coming pages. Although chapters are between fourteen and twenty-four pages long, each is filled with action, dialogue, imagery, complications, and suspense, which moves the plot along quickly.

Through exposition in the first chapter, Bink, Sabrina, Good Magician Humphrey, Roland and Bianca, and other characters are introduced. Bink's problem, which will



explain the nature of his quest, is explored and a possible solution is examined. The second chapter begins the rising action of the story, when Bink leaves the North Village of Xanth to travel to Good Magician Humphrey. As Bink travels, he matures rapidly through positive and negative encounters, as the author effectively draws him toward the conflict that will define the story. The crisis in *A Spell for Chameleon* begins when Bink is exiled from Xanth in the seventh chapter and extends through the fifteenth chapter when Bink and Trent duel and Chameleon is wounded. The duel is a classic struggle, where the characters battle their inner turmoil as well as each other and other forces. In the final and sixteenth chapter, conflicts are resolved in such a way that the author preserves the possibility of a sequel and provides the audience with enough information to encourage questions about how protagonists, antagonists, supportive characters and Xanth itself will fare in the future.



Quotes

"One day you'll discover that the opinions of worthless people are worthless," he murmured to Bink. "You have to do it your own way. I comprehend that, and wish you well-on your own." Chapter 2, p. 20

"In folklore, such a hero always received a most intriguing reward. In reality, the hero was as likely as not to find himself in need of rescue, as now. Well, such was real life justice in Xanth." Chapter 3, p. 69

"Bink, I'm glad you said that. It shows you are a fine honest lad. Most magic talents aren't worthwhile anyway. What use is it to make a pink spot appear on a wall? It may be magic, but it doesn't accomplish anything. You with your strength and intelligence, have more to offer than the great majority of citizens." Chapter 4, p. 83

"Women are the curse of mankind," Crombie said vehemently. "They trap men into marriage, the way this tangle tree traps prey, and they torment them the rest of their lives." Chapter 5, p. 118

"No, there are qualities in you that would honor the throne-if you only had identified, controllable magic. The Sorceress may have chosen better than she knew, or intended. But evidently, there is countermagic that balks you-though I am not sure the source of that countermagic would make a good King either. It is a strange matter, most intriguing." Chapter 6, p. 140

"This counts for naught," he mumbled. "Humphrey is not King; I am!" Chapter 7, p. 148

"You should wonder, lest you allow your outlook to be unconscionably narrow-as mine was when I emerged from Xanth. Every young man should go abroad into the Mundane world for a period of a year or two at least; it would make him a better citizen of Xanth. Travel of any type tends to broaden one." Chapter 8, p. 163

"This is what I mean, Bink. Magic is marvelous, but it is also limited. In the long run, the instruments of the Mundanes may have greater potential. Probably the basic life style of the Mundanes is more comfortable than that of many Xanths." Chapter 8, p. 164

"The evil magician was, in many respects, the opposite of the popular image; instead of being ugly, weak and mean-Humphrey fitted that description better-he was handsome, strong and urbane. Yet, he was the villain, and Bink knew better than to let fair words deceive him." Chapter 9, p. 187

"Evil has an insidious way about it, and there is some evil in all of us that seeks to dominate. We have to fight it, no matter how tempting it becomes." Chapter 11, p. 220

"It doesn't work that way, Bink. It is the untrustworthy man who distrusts others, because he judges them by himself. I don't see how a documented liar and villain and schemer for the throne like the Evil Magician can be this way." Chapter 12, p. 241



"My intelligence varies inversely," she explained. "That is the other facet of my curse. I range from ugly intelligence to lovely idiocy. I've been looking for a spell to turn me normal." Chapter 12, p. 243

"Xanth is a small area, compared to Mundania. If the Mundanes were determined, they could saturate Xanth. In such an attack, even the Shieldstone would be destroyed. The people of Xanth can no longer afford to ignore the Mundanes. There are too many Mundanes; we can't remain undiscovered forever. They can and will one day wipe us out. Unless we establish relations now." Chapter 13, p. 267

"No," Herman said. I am holed through the liver. I am done for. Let the clean fire take me." He grimaced. "Only, to abate the agony quickly-your sword, sir." And he pointed at his neck. Chapter 14, p. 294

"Xanth is saved, thanks to Herman-and to you all," he announced. "The wiggles are exterminated. Disperse, with our gratitude, and go with pride. There is no more important service you could have performed, and I salute you." Chapter 14, p. 295

"That's the point," he said. "I like variety. I would have trouble living with a stupid girl all the time-but you aren't stupid all the time. Ugliness is no good for all the time-but you aren't ugly all the time either. You are-variety. And that is what I crave for the long term relationship-and what no other girl can provide." Chapter 15, p. 306

"It is not for us to decide. The Council of Elders will choose the next King. If the crown starts being available by conquest or conspiracy, we'll be back in the days of the waves, and no one will be secure. The laws of Xanth must determine the possession of the crown." Chapter 15, p. 309

"Your talent is remarkable and subtle. It is in its totality a think of Magician rank, equivalent to any magic in Xanth. All other citizens, whether of the spot-on-the-wall variety or of Magician class, are vulnerable to those types of magic they don't themselves practice." Chapter 16, p. 339

"I'm sorry Bink, I really am. I just got carried away there during the duel and after. I didn't know you were going to fetch the Elders, to make Trent King." Chapter 16, p. 343



Topics for Discussion

In the beginning of *A Spell for Chameleon*, Bink lacks a defined magical talent, which sets him apart from his peers and the other residents who live in his village. Have you ever felt different from the people around you for reasons that could not be helped? If so, what did you do to cope?

Can you see parallels between *A Spell for Chameleon* and other magical stories like *The Wizard of Oz* by L. Frank Baum, or *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* by J.K. Rowling? What does Bink have in common with Harry Potter, Dorothy, the Tin Man, the Cowardly Lion, or the Scarecrow? How is his situation different?

In the third chapter, Bink participates in an odd rape trial where the identities of the accused rapist and the victim are concealed through the presence of others who stand in for them. Do you think that the identities of victims and alleged rapists should be concealed completely? What do you think about the charges being dismissed on the grounds that the victim knew her attacker and did not scream when attacked?

The Sorceress Iris offers Bink a great deal to become a figurehead ruler. Have you ever had to turn away from an attractive offer because of your personal morals? If so, how did you feel afterward?

When Bink meets Dee, he assumes that she is harmless because she seems so average. Corporal Crombie insists that she represents some danger to Bink, but cannot say what. How do you evaluate whether someone will be a friend or not when you first meet him or her? Have you ever met someone that you thought would be a friend, who turned out to not be so friendly? What did the experience teach you?

Bink's magical deficiency is a handicap in his world. Although it is beyond his control, he is exiled, even though he is a good citizen in all other ways. Although people are not banished because of physical disabilities in our world, do you think they face obstacles?

Trent displays both mercy and savagery when he kills Herman the Hermit. How might he have handled Herman's request for a quick death differently? What qualities do you think are essential for someone to be a good leader?

In the fifteenth chapter, Chameleon is stabbed instead of Bink because she wants to save his life. Is love what makes life worthwhile? Discuss what is most important to achieving happiness-power, wealth, or love.

Throughout the story, Bink seems to end up in the right place at the right time, even though he faces many obstacles. Do you believe that things happen for greater reasons than are often apparent or are the events of our lives random?