

COGHEART

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Ages 8–12

Peter Bunzl

SOME SECRETS CHANGE
THE WORLD IN A HEARTBEAT.

Lily's life is in mortal peril. Her father is missing and now silver-eyed men stalk her through the shadows. What could they want from her?

With her friends—Robert, the clockmaker's son, and Malkin, her mechanical fox—Lily is plunged into a murky and menacing world. Too soon Lily realizes that those she holds dear may be the very ones to break her heart ...

"Introduces dastardly villains, friendly mechanicals, and thrilling airship action . . . with hair-raising and cinematic charm." —*Kirkus Reviews*

"An exciting, fast-paced adventure." —*Booklist*

"Fantastically imaginative. . . . With great panache, the novel deftly winds through the intricacies of friendship and moral choice while maintaining a fun edge." —*Publishers Weekly*

"Swiftly paced with clever details, this novel's world of weird mechanical creatures, heroes, and villains in a fantastic Victorian England setting will appeal to young readers." —*School Library Journal*





Discussion Questions

Before Reading

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.3.7-5.7

- Study the cover of *Cogheart*. When do you think this story takes place? Why do you think the fox has a winding key on his back? Predict what might happen in this story based on the cover illustrations and text.

While Reading

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.3.1-7.1

- What do you learn about the setting of the story from the Prologue? Who are John and Malkin? What's unique about Malkin?
- Describe Miss Octavia Scrimshaw's Finishing Academy for Young Ladies. How does Lily fit in at the school? What adjectives would you use to describe Lily? Why is she known as Lily Grantham at school?
- What are mechanicals? How are they treated by society?
- Describe Robert. How does he feel about working in his father's clockmaker's shop? How does Malkin become involved with Robert and his father?
- Who is Madame Verdigris? Why does she take Lily from the school? Do you think she cares for Lily? Lily and Madame meet Mr. Roach on their zeppelin ride. What is unusual about Mr. Roach? Do you think he can be trusted?
- How have things changed at home since Lily's father has gone missing? What's happened to the mechanicals in the household?
- Who is Professor Silverfish? What's his history with Lily's father?
- Why does Robert come to Lily's house? Why does Lily run away to Robert's father's shop? What is the problem with the letter Malkin gives to Lily from her father?
- What happens when Roach and Mould find Lily and Malkin at the clockmaker's shop?
- Who is Anna Quinn? How does she help Lily and Robert?
- What is the Cogheart and why is Professor Silverfish so desperate to find it?
- Lily learns a terrible secret about her mother's death when she is in London. How does this secret affect her? How does it change her view of herself and her family?

The Common Core State Standards addressed by the discussion questions and activities in this guide are noted throughout. For more information on the Common Core, visit corestandards.org.



Extension Activities After Reading Cogheart

Writing Prompts

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.3.3–7.3; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.3.2–7.2

- How does Robert change over the course of the novel? How do his experiences with Lily affect his view of himself?
- Thaddeus tells his son, “No one conquers fears easily, Robert. It takes a brave heart to win great battles.” Describe two events in the book where a character had to overcome a fear or worry.
- Choose one of the mechanicals in the story and write a character study about him or her.
- Lily’s father keeps secret the truth about Lily’s mother’s accident and the Cogheart. Do you think he should have told Lily the truth or was he right to spare her the anguish? Write a paragraph expressing your opinion.

Activities for Students

Map It

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.3.7

Study the map at the beginning of the novel. Draw a map of your neighborhood. Be sure to include significant buildings and landmarks.

Mechanical Rights

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.5.1

In *Cogheart*, mechanical robots like Mrs. Rust, Mr. Wingnut, Captain Springer, and Miss Tock are servants to the human characters. Lily and Robert treat the mechanicals in the story as friends and believe that all mechanicals should be treated as equals to human beings. Madame Verdigris and the students at Lily’s school feel the opposite. Imagine that you live in Robert and Lily’s world in 1896 where these robots exist. Write a letter to the editor stating your opinion as to whether mechanicals have feelings and can think for themselves and should or should not be treated as equal to humans.

A Dictionary of Unusual Words

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.7.4

With interesting words like “fiendish,” “miscreants,” “contraption,” “dithering,” and “veritable,” the vocabulary in *Cogheart* is rich and unique. Skim through the book and select 10–15 words that you find to be especially intriguing. Arrange them in alphabetical order and write a definition for each word. Try to use these words in your own writing.

My Mechanical

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.4.2

Malkin is a mechanical animal, or mechanimal. He needs to be wound regularly to keep awake and has his own skills and personality. Design your own mechanimal and give it a name. What’s its personality like? What are its special skills and abilities? Is it a pet or more like a wild animal? Draw a picture of your mechanimal and write a short description of it.

