



## Discussion Notes for *Tide of Terror*

### The Books

*Vampirates* first swept into book stores on a tide of expectation in 2005 with *Demons of the Ocean*. The book was an instant success with readers and critics alike. Cleverly intertwining two popular genres, the imaginative mix of bloodthirsty vampires and swashbuckling adventure on the high seas proved to be a winning combination, scooping two children's books awards earlier this year. The second book in the series, *Tide of Terror*, has just hit the shelves; publishers Simon & Schuster brought forward the publication date after being besieged with requests from fans desperate to find out what happens next to orphan twins Connor and Grace Tempest.

International interest in *Vampirates* has been equally phenomenal - the series has been the subject of a frenzied bidding war and will be available in 23 territories. Author Justin Somper is no stranger to the world of children's books. He has worked as a publicist for both Puffin and Random House Children's Books, and now runs his own successful PR consultancy, Just So, which specialises in children's publishing.

### The Story

Connor and Grace have been reunited on board the pirate ship The Diablo, while ruthless fugitive Sidorio has left the Vampirate ship behind him, destined to tread his own path, winning over new converts to the ranks of the undead. Cheng Li has now left The Diablo, and is a tutor at the elite Pirate Academy where the Federation is training the crème de la crème to take over as the pirate captains of tomorrow. While Connor relishes every new challenge, honing his skills and pushing himself at every opportunity, Grace struggles as she discovers that she has acquired some unorthodox and slightly disconcerting new powers of her own. As the tide of terror begins to rise and threatens to engulf them all, the twins realise that not all their new allies are to be trusted - and the consequences may well be deadly.

### Things To Think About

#### The Characters

- Connor and Grace have matured and grown more confident since *Vampirates: Demons of the Ocean*, but, if anything, the bond between them is stronger than ever. Why is this, and why does it seem that the bond is even stronger when the twins are parted?
- Friendship is an important theme in the book. Connor and Grace learn that although they don't have parents, true friends are invaluable. Who are their true friends, and what qualities do they have? How do they know they can trust them?
- One character, the anonymous Vampirate Captain, is shrouded in mystery. Why is this? What are your own feelings towards the captain?
- Traditionally in fiction and on film, vampires are looked upon as being evil, blood-sucking creatures. How do you feel about vampires after reading this book? Has it changed your view in any way?

#### The Language

- In ***Vampirates: Tide of Terror***, award-winning author Justin Somper writes in great detail about the concept of swordsmanship, and the rituals involved. Why is this so important to our understanding of the story?
- The author has conducted careful research into the history of pirates throughout the centuries - how can you tell this? What do you learn about pirates and their code of conduct? How would it affect the novel if this historical detail was absent?
- With a fast-moving, action-driven plot that builds to a blistering crescendo, *Tide of Terror* is a real page-turner. How does the author's use of language sustain this while still challenging its audience?
- We finally discover the name of the Vampirate ship at the end of the book. What do you make of the name, and why is it a suitable choice for a Vampirate vessel?

### **Favourite Moment**

***Vampirates: Tide of Terror*** builds to an explosive climax, but we won't spoil the ending if you haven't read it yet. Earlier in the novel, a gripping duel takes place when The Diablo and rival pirate ship The Albatross clash. This is only resolved when Captain Molucco Wrathe agrees to settle the matter with a heart-stopping duel to the death - a duel that involves the two best swordsmen from each crew. Bloody and exhausting, the duel stretches both men to the limits of their endurance. But there can only be one victor, and for the loser, the ignominy of losing both the contest and his life.

### **Vampires in Fiction**

Justin Somper's ***Vampirates*** series is the latest incarnation in a distinguished tradition of popular novel that can be traced right back to Victorian times. It was Bram Stoker's gothic masterpiece *Dracula* that first captured the public's imagination in 1897, and since then audiences have displayed a fevered pleasure in reading about (and later, watching) the blood-sucking undead in action. In children's books, this trend has not just been reserved for older readers, either. *Mona the Vampire* has made the transition from book to small screen, and the best-selling series *The Saga of Darren Shan* has built a dedicated audience among readers aged 10 plus. Although ***Vampirates*** belongs firmly in that tradition, its clever amalgamation of pirates and vampires is unique.

### **Sum It Up**

In terms of rip-roaring sea-faring adventure, ***Vampirates*** could certainly hold its own. But with the additional draw of bloodthirsty vampires, Justin Somper's series has found its own niche among young readers with a taste for the darker side of fiction. More than just a concept novel though, Somper actually makes us question our own preconceptions and attitudes towards what we ordinarily consider 'evil' by treating the vampirates - normally dehumanised characters - with great sensitivity and sympathy. The result is that in *Tide of Terror*, Grace is even prepared to sacrifice herself for the sake of Lieutenant Lorcan Furey. Far from being worthless undead, consigned to stalk the seas for all eternity, this book portrays these vampires as restless, troubled victims in search of resolution, acceptance, and ultimately, love.

## Further Reading

If you're coming to *Vampirates* for the first time, start with the first volume *Demons of the Ocean* before getting stuck into *Tide of Terror* - go to [www.vampirates.co.uk](http://www.vampirates.co.uk) for more details. If you're interested in getting your teeth into more vampire tales, Darren Shan's twelve book saga, commencing with *Cirque du Freak* (HarperCollins) is worth seeking out for readers 10+, while older readers aged 12+ will no doubt feast upon Stephenie Meyer's *Twilight* (Atom). For more swashbuckling adventures, seek out Celia Rees' *Pirates!* (Bloomsbury), and Dugald Steer's *Pirateology* (Templar).

**NB** these notes were written on the publication of *Vampirates: Tide of Terror*. The third *Vampirates* novel *Blood Captain* is also now available.