**Curriculum Guide for Educators and Librarians for *Passengers of the Underworld***

**The Haunted Chronicles**

**Target Audience**

* **Grade Levels**: Upper elementary to middle school (Ages 9-13)
* **Themes**: Mystery, suspense, supernatural, morality, personal growth
* **Learning Objectives**:
	+ Analyze character development and motivations.
	+ Explore themes of regret, redemption, and choices.
	+ Engage in creative writing and problem-solving inspired by the plot.
	+ Develop critical thinking through symbolism and foreshadowing.

**Overview of Activities**

| **Category** | **Activity** | **Skills Addressed** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Reading Comprehension** | Chapter-by-chapter discussion questions | Analyze plot, infer themes |
| **Creative Thinking** | Create your own haunted train car | Imagination, storytelling |
| **Critical Analysis** | Symbolism in the train and pocket watch | Symbol interpretation |
| **Group Collaboration** | Role-play: Rewrite the ending | Teamwork, creativity |
| **STEM Connection** | Design a "time-stopping" device | Problem-solving, design thinking |

**Lesson Plan Framework**

**1. Pre-Reading Activity: Building Anticipation**

* **Objective**: Introduce students to the concept of regret and personal choices.
* **Activity**:
	+ Lead a discussion on hypothetical "what-if" scenarios.
	+ Ask: *If you could revisit a past mistake, would you? What would you change?*
	+ Students write brief responses to share in groups.

**2. Chapter Analysis**

Each chapter has unique focus areas for classroom discussions.

* **Chapter 1: The Fog Descends**
	+ *Focus*: Setting the tone—how does the fog create suspense?
	+ *Activity*: Create sensory descriptions for a similar eerie setting.
* **Chapter 5: The Conductor’s Deal**
	+ *Focus*: Choices and consequences.
	+ *Activity*: Debate Cole’s options—what would you do in his place?
* **Chapter 8: Racing the Clock**
	+ *Focus*: Time as a motif.
	+ *Activity*: Identify other instances in literature or media where time plays a central role.

**3. Key Themes & Symbolism**

* **Objective**: Identify and interpret key themes and symbols.
* **Discussion Prompts**:
	+ *The train as a metaphor*: What does it represent?
	+ *The pocket watch*: How does it reflect Cole’s internal conflict?
	+ *The fog*: Is it more than just an atmospheric effect?

**4. Writing Workshop: Continuing the Story**

* **Objective**: Develop creative writing skills.
* **Activity**:
	+ Students write a chapter from the perspective of another passenger.
	+ Encourage them to include details about the passenger’s regrets and journey.

**5. STEM Tie-In: Train Engineering**

* **Objective**: Explore the mechanics behind trains and time.
* **Activity**:
	+ Students research how steam trains work.
	+ Create a design for a fictional "time-stopping train engine."

**Discussion Questions by Chapter**

**Chapters 1-3: Introduction and Atmosphere**

1. How does the author use the setting to build suspense?
2. What motivates Cole to board the train despite his fear?

**Chapters 4-6: Conflict and Development**

1. What role does regret play in the characters’ journeys?
2. Why do you think the conductor offers Cole a deal?

**Chapters 7-10: Resolution and Reflection**

1. Was Cole’s ultimate decision the right one? Why or why not?
2. How might Sage’s perspective differ from Cole’s?

**Creative Group Project: Design Your Own Haunted Train Car**

* **Objective**: Encourage collaboration and creativity.
* **Instructions**:
	1. In groups, students design a new car for the Midnight Train.
	2. Include a theme (e.g., memories, fears, riddles).
	3. Create a story about the passengers or events tied to the car.
	4. Present to the class with visuals and a short narrative.

**Extensions for Librarians**

**1. Book Club Discussion Guide**

* Focus on the moral dilemmas in the story and how readers can relate to Cole’s journey.
* Discuss other books with similar themes (*The Polar Express*, *A Christmas Carol*).

**2. Interactive Display**

* Create a “Midnight Train” interactive bulletin board with clues, facts, and student-written regrets or "what-ifs."
* Include QR codes linking to companion site activities.

**3. Hosting an Escape Room**

* Set up a small-scale escape room in the library with puzzles inspired by *Passengers of the Underworld*.
* Example puzzles: Solve riddles to “unlock” the next car.

**Evaluation Tools**

1. **Rubric for Creative Writing Projects**
	* Creativity: 25%
	* Alignment with Themes: 25%
	* Grammar/Clarity: 25%
	* Presentation: 25%
2. **Class Participation**
	* Contribution to discussions.
	* Engagement in activities.

**Closing Activity: Letters to the Conductor**

* **Objective**: Reflect on personal growth.
* **Activity**:
	+ Students write a letter to the Conductor, explaining what they’ve learned from the journey and what they would do differently.
	+ Encourage artistic expression (e.g., decorated letters, thematic designs).