**Curriculum Guide for Educators and Librarians: The Cursed Carnival**

**The Haunted Chronicles**

**Age Group: 9-13**

**Overview:** *The Haunted Chronicles: The Cursed Carnival* is a thrilling supernatural mystery that offers young readers an engaging story full of adventure, friendship, and intrigue. This guide is designed to help educators and librarians make the most of this book by providing lesson plans, discussion questions, and activities that align with educational standards in literacy, critical thinking, and creative writing.

**Learning Objectives:**

* **Reading Comprehension:** Students will be able to analyze the plot, setting, characters, and themes of the novel.
* **Critical Thinking:** Students will explore the themes of bravery, friendship, and facing fears, applying them to real-world situations.
* **Creative Expression:** Students will develop creative responses to the text, including writing prompts, drawing activities, and group projects.
* **Vocabulary Development:** Students will enhance their vocabulary through focused study of key terms and phrases found in the novel.
* **Collaboration:** Students will work in teams for discussions and activities, developing their ability to communicate and collaborate effectively.

**Chapter Breakdown and Discussion Questions**

**Chapter 1: The Return of the Carnival**

**Summary:**  
The story introduces Scarlett and her friends, who are intrigued by the return of the legendary cursed carnival. They soon find themselves drawn to the mysterious place, even as the warnings of danger grow more real.

**Discussion Questions:**

1. What are Scarlett's motivations for investigating the carnival? How does her curiosity affect the decisions of her friends?
2. What role does setting play in establishing the mood in this chapter? How does the carnival come to life for the reader?
3. What is your initial impression of the carnival? How would you feel about visiting it?

**Activity:** Have students research the concept of a "blood moon" and share how this might symbolize something in the story. Ask them to write a paragraph predicting what they think might happen next, based on the eerie introduction of the carnival.

**Chapter 2: Welcome to the Show**

**Summary:**  
As the friends step into the carnival, they are greeted by a sinister ringmaster, who informs them they are the stars of the night’s terrifying show—whether they like it or not.

**Discussion Questions:**

1. How does the ringmaster’s introduction create a sense of suspense and tension?
2. What do the clowns and performers symbolize in the context of the carnival’s sinister atmosphere?
3. Discuss the theme of being "chosen." How does this change the dynamic of the story?

**Activity:**  
In small groups, students will brainstorm and design a “cursed carnival” ride that symbolizes one of the fears faced by the characters. They can draw a diagram or create a written description of their ride and its significance.

**Chapter 3: The Twisted Rides**

**Summary:**  
The carnival comes alive, but it quickly becomes clear that nothing is as it seems. The rides are dangerous, and the characters must navigate their way through.

**Discussion Questions:**

1. How does the carnival's distortion of reality affect Scarlett and her friends? Why do you think the carnival rides represent such a challenge for them?
2. How are the rides symbolic of larger fears or dangers? What does the Ferris wheel represent?

**Activity:**  
Ask students to reflect on their personal fears and how they might be represented in a fictional carnival ride. Have them write a descriptive paragraph about what their ride might look like, drawing from their own experiences and imaginations.

**Chapter 4: The Sinister Clowns**

**Summary:**  
The group encounters dangerous clowns that seem intent on trapping them inside the carnival forever. Their journey becomes even more perilous as they realize the carnival is alive.

**Discussion Questions:**

1. What makes the clowns so frightening to Scarlett and her friends? What other figures in popular media use clowns as symbols of fear?
2. Why do you think clowns are a common source of fear in stories? What might they represent in *The Cursed Carnival*?

**Activity:**  
Have students create a character profile of one of the clowns. They should describe its appearance, personality, and how it serves as a symbol within the carnival. They can draw their version of the clown or write a short backstory about it.

**Chapter 5-6: The Hall of Mirrors & Dark Reflections**

**Summary:**  
The friends enter the Hall of Mirrors and confront distorted reflections of themselves, forcing them to face their inner fears. The carnival begins to manipulate their reality, making escape seem impossible.

**Discussion Questions:**

1. What does the Hall of Mirrors symbolize in terms of facing fears and confronting inner demons?
2. How does each character’s reflection represent a part of themselves they don’t want to acknowledge?

**Activity:**  
Students can write a journal entry from the perspective of one of the characters in the Hall of Mirrors, reflecting on what their dark reflection reveals about them. How do they feel facing this version of themselves?

**Cross-Curricular Activities**

**Creative Writing: Alternate Ending**

Have students write an alternate ending for *The Cursed Carnival*, imagining what might happen if Scarlett and her friends had made different choices. They can also choose to write an epilogue about what happens to the carnival after the story ends.

**Art: Design a Carnival Poster**

Ask students to create a poster for *The Cursed Carnival* as if it were a real carnival coming to their town. Encourage them to use symbolism from the story to create a mysterious and eerie design.

**STEM: The Science of Fear**

Discuss the physiological responses to fear (e.g., adrenaline, fight or flight, etc.) and how the characters in the story experience these feelings. Ask students to research and create a short presentation on how fear affects the brain and body.

**Vocabulary List**

1. **Cursed** – affected by something supernatural and harmful.
2. **Carnival** – a traveling amusement show with rides, games, and performances.
3. **Sinister** – giving the impression that something harmful or evil is happening.
4. **Distorted** – pulled or twisted out of shape; giving a misleading or false account.
5. **Reflection** – an image seen in a mirror or shiny surface.
6. **Ringmaster** – the person directing the performers in a circus.
7. **Ominous** – giving the impression that something bad or unpleasant is going to happen.
8. **Abyss** – a deep or seemingly bottomless chasm.

**Final Projects**

**Group Project: Carnival Reimagined**

In groups, students will reimagine the cursed carnival with their own theme. Each group will create their own map of the carnival, describe the different rides, and invent new challenges that Scarlett and her friends must face. The project can be presented as a poster or digital presentation.

**Individual Project: Character Development**

Students will choose a character from the story and create a full character development profile, including backstory, strengths, weaknesses, and how they evolve over the course of the novel. They should include specific examples from the book to illustrate the character's growth.

**Assessment Options**

* **Quizzes:** Create comprehension quizzes after each chapter to gauge understanding.
* **Essays:** Have students write a short essay on one of the themes, such as bravery, friendship, or facing fears.
* **Class Discussions:** Engage the class in discussions based on the deeper meaning of the carnival and the characters’ struggles.
* **Projects:** Assess creativity and critical thinking through the final group or individual projects.