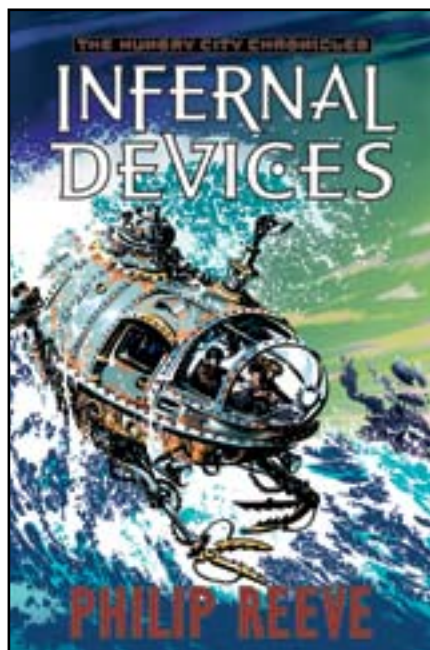
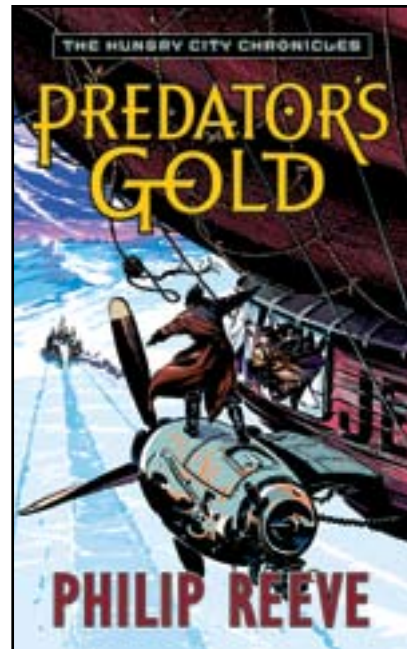
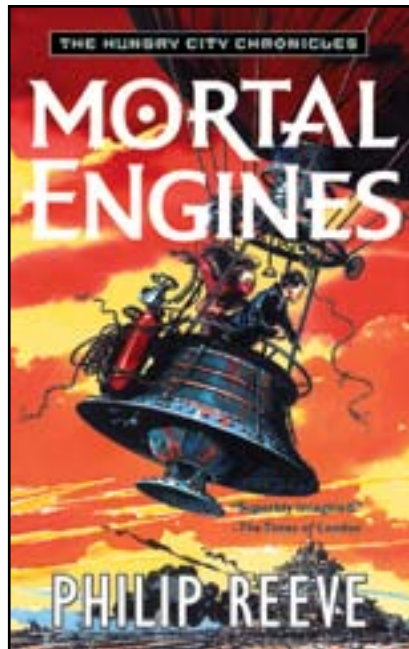


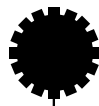
A DISCUSSION GUIDE TO

THE HUNGRY CITY CHRONICLES

BY



**PHILIP
REEVE**



Series Summary



I

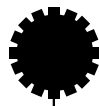
N THE HUNGRY CITY CHRONICLES, cities hunt. The Sixty Minute War left the world a barren wasteland, so people built movable, steerable, creaking cities that capture other cities and take their fuel and metal. As the series' first book, *Mortal Engines*, begins, Tom Natsworthy lives on one of the grandest of these Traction Cities, London. He dreams of joining London's Head Historian, Thaddeus Valentine, on expeditions to find old technology and adventure. Then Tom, like a hero in one of his daydreams, saves Thaddeus Valentine from an assassination attempt by a horribly scarred girl. But when the scarred girl leaps from the city to the desolate ground below, Valentine pushes Tom after her. Surprised, confused, and ill prepared to chase London across the treacherous land, Tom needs the help of the would-be assassin, Hester Shaw, to survive. As they search for London together, Tom finds himself entangled in a mystery from Valentine's past, one that involves Hester's scars, men resurrected from the dead, a growing fight between stationary and hunting cities, and a dangerous, Ancient weapon.

Tom and Hester's adventures continue in *Predator's Gold*, *Infernal Devices*, and *A Darkling Plain*. Anti-Tractionists—those who think the hunting Traction Cities are further ruining Earth—build an army of resurrected dead soldiers, and Tom and Hester become increasingly caught up in the Traction City vs. Anti-Tractionist conflict. They eventually find a safe city where they raise a daughter, Wren, but don't realize their home holds a book with a dangerous technological secret. After fifteen years these conniving foes trick thrill-seeking Wren into taking the book and running away from home. Tom and Hester rush to find Wren, who uses her wits and the help of a new friend, handsome Theo Ngoni, to elude danger.

Then Tom, Hester, Wren, and Theo are drawn into the war between Anti-Tractionists and Traction City dwellers. In the face of seemingly insurmountable difficulties—people fighting over how to best live on Earth, cities desperately hunting for resources, dreadful old machines devastating lives—Tom, Hester, Wren, and Theo courageously help create their world's startling future.

About the Author

Philip Reeve was born in Brighton, England, and worked in a bookshop for many years before breaking out and becoming the illustrator of several highly successful children's book series in the United Kingdom. He has been writing since he was five, but *Mortal Engines* was his first published book. Mr. Reeve now lives on Dartmoor with his wife, Sarah, and their son, Samuel.



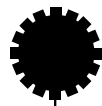
Book Talk

FOR LIBRARIANS AND EDUCATORS

IN *MORTAL ENGINES*, THE HUNGRY CITY CHRONICLES' first book, Tom Natsworthy lives on London, a moving Traction City that catches other cities for metal and fuel. Tom dreams of helping his hero, Head Historian Thaddeus Valentine, seek ancient artifacts and adventures. Then Tom saves the Head Historian from an assassination attempt, and he finds an adventure . . . but not the kind he's been dreaming of. Instead of thanking him, Valentine pushes him off London. To survive, Tom must travel the barren land with Valentine's would-be assassin, grotesquely scarred Hester Shaw. As Tom struggles to catch up with London, he starts uncovering a secret from Valentine's past, one that involves Hester, a Resurrected dead man, battles between moving and stationary cities, and a mysterious piece of old technology.

The fighting between rushing Traction Cities and motionless cities grows fiercer in the other *Hungry City Chronicles*: *Predator's Gold*, *Infernal Devices*, and *A Darkling Plain*. Anti-Tractionists claim Traction Cities further tear up the already-desolate Earth, while Traction City dwellers claim Anti-Tractionists are trying to destroy the only chance for survival: fast, hunting cities. As the warring groups battle to obliterate each other, Tom and Hester try to escape the warfare and eventually end up in a safe city for fifteen years. But while they raise their daughter, Wren, they don't realize their home hides a book with an ancient technological secret, one that others seek. When adventure-hungry Wren is duped into taking the book and running away, Tom and Hester go after her. Soon Tom, Hester, Wren, and Wren's new friend, Theo, find themselves caught up in a war of old and new technologies, racing and static cities, machine soldiers, fast airships, and guns that shoot lightning—a war that could annihilate their world.





Thinking About the Books

DISCUSSION PROMPTS

- 1) What do you think about Municipal Darwinism? If, someday, we have cities that hunt one another, why would you want to live on one? Why wouldn't you want to?
- 2) Why does Tom love ugly, unpleasant Hester instead of Katherine or Freya? Besides physical beauty, what attracts you to someone? Could you love someone you didn't find physically beautiful or handsome? Why or why not?
- 3) Valentine's old secrets surprise Katherine in *Mortal Engines*, and Hester's surprise Wren in *Infernal Devices*. Have secrets or previously unknown facts about your friends or family ever surprised you? How did learning these things change your perception of the person?
- 4) What technological devices—like MEDUSA, ODIN, and half-machine, half-corpse soldiers—do we have that are far more dangerous than we first realized? How might we use such devices more safely? What technological devices do you think are impossible to use safely?
- 5) Consider the reasons Anna Fang, the Anti-Tractionists, and the Green Storm have for fighting against Traction Cities. If you were a character in *The Hungry City Chronicles*, why might you fight for the Anti-Tractionists, or why might you fight against them? Which of our recent or ongoing wars would you consider fighting in? Why?
- 6) Who in your life is most like Hester? What good things and what harmful things has this person done? If you're close friends with this person, explain why.
- 7) *Infernal Devices'* Brighton has cafés and thrilling air shows but also has a hidden underworld, that of slavers like Nabisco Shkin. What cities in our world have hidden underworlds? Have you visited any of them? Why do these underworlds thrive? In what ways could a city shrink or eliminate its underworld?
- 8) Why might Grike's and Anna Fang's memories and feelings make them weak Stalkers? How do these traits make them more advanced Stalkers? Are Grike's and Anna Fang's feelings and memories simply stored data, or are their former human selves alive in some way? What are your reasons for your answer?
- 9) How do new technology and Old Tech change people's lives by the end of *The Hungry City Chronicles*? In what ways has technology changed your life? How might it continue to change your life? How could it harm or improve the tough situations our world faces?

1

If you had to live off garbage, as some cities in *The Hungry City Chronicles* do, what kinds of garbage would you choose? How could you use it and what could you make with it?

2

Design an eight-tiered Traction City of your own. What neighborhoods or businesses are on each tier, and why?

3

Think of the characters who die or survive each adventure in *Mortal Engines*, *Predator's Gold*, *Infernal Devices*, and *A Darkling Plain*. How are their deaths or escapes just? How are they unjust? Why do you think authors write stories in which characters have unfair deaths or escapes?

4

If you had an airship like the ones described in *The Hungry City Chronicles*, what would it be like? What name would you choose for it, and why?

5

Philip Reeve has said in an interview that he's more interested by old-fashioned "stuff," like steam trains, than modern technology. What vehicles or weapons in *The Hungry City Chronicles* seem old-fashioned compared to contemporary vehicles or weapons? Invent your own machine by blending new and old technologies.

6

How is the world Philip Reeve has created original? How is it similar to and different from the world we live in? Why would an author choose to invent a world rather than write stories set in a real place?

7

If you were a trader of the future, what kinds of Old Tech—technological devices from our time—would you search for? To whom would you sell it, and how do you think they would use it?

8

Choose a scene, chapter, or section from any of *The Hungry City Chronicles* books. Illustrate it the way you think a graphic novelist would.

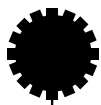
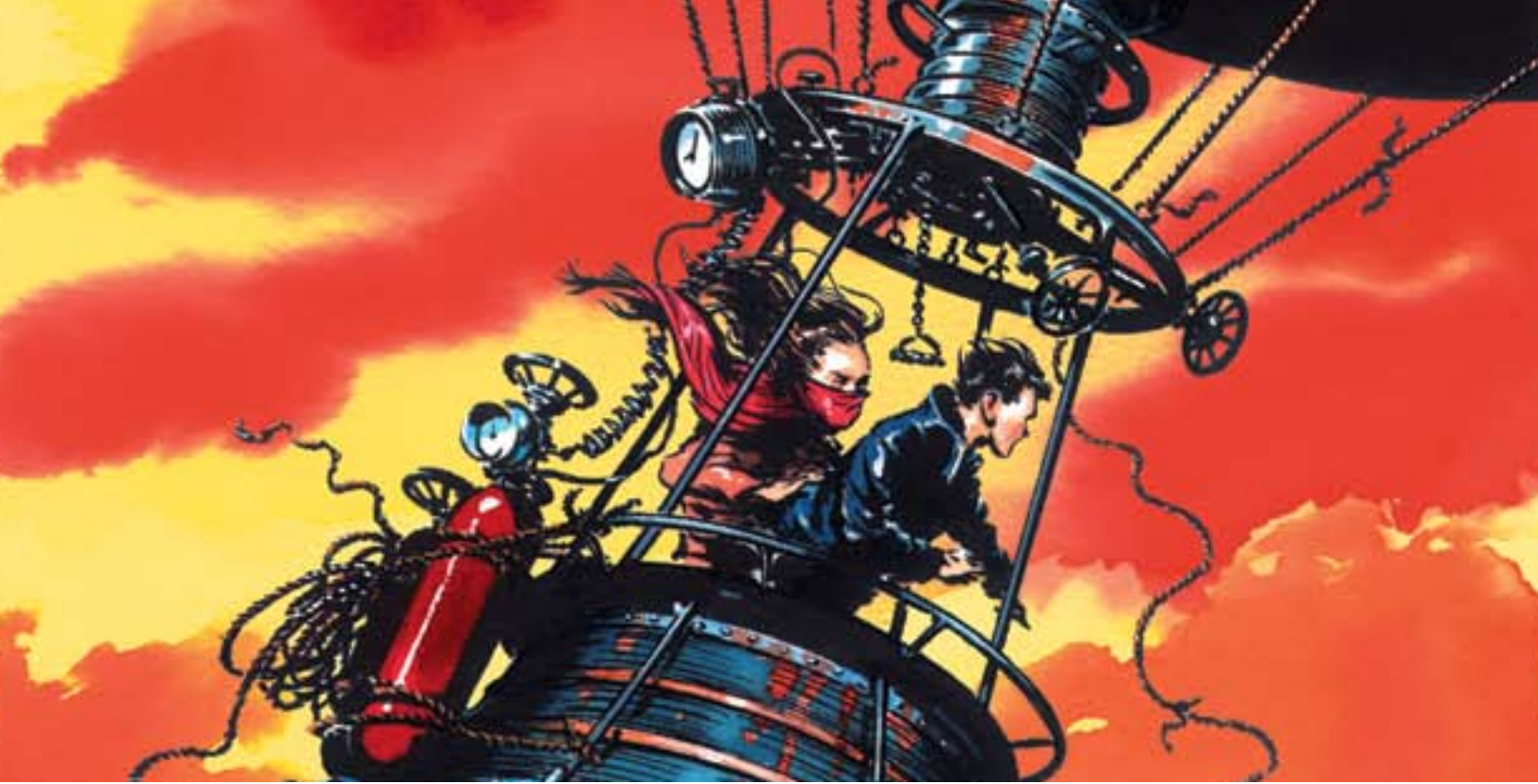
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What other series have you read, and which have you liked best? What elements—like plot twists from one book that affect plot twists in later books—must a series have to interest you?

Thinking Beyond Books

DISCUSSION & ACTIVITY PROMPTS



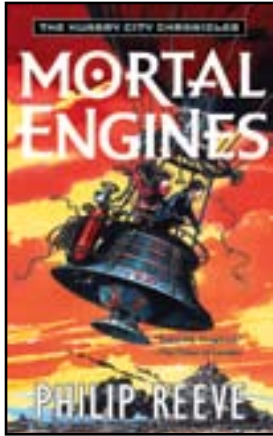


Interesting Facts

ABOUT THE SERIES
AND THE AUTHOR

- *Mortal Engines* was shortlisted for the Whitbread Children's Book of the Year and was awarded the Gold Nestlé Book Prize. *A Darkling Plain* won the 2006 Guardian Children's Fiction prize. These awards are among the most prominent awards given to children's books in the U.K.
- MEDUSA is the name of a mysterious piece of old technology in *The Hungry City Chronicles*, but in classical mythology, Medusa is a monstrous woman with snakes for hair. Anyone who looks at her face turns to stone.
- In *Mortal Engines* Tom Natsworthy finds a "seedy," a silvery plastic disc that the Ancients used in computers to store information.
- When Philip Reeve is trying to think of character names, he often looks in an atlas or a reference book. He found Shrike (which he changed to "Grike") and Smew in a guide to British birds. Scabious and Pennyroyal are both the names of flowers in the U.K.
- In *Predator's Gold*, Alternative Historian Professor Pennyroyal tells Tom Natsworthy that North America was discovered in 1924 by Christopher Columbo, a great explorer and detective.
- The name of Brighton's newspaper, in *Infernal Devices*, is *Palimpsest*, which means paper from which writing has been partially or entirely erased to make room for new writing.
- In an interview, Philip Reeve said: "I wouldn't dismiss modernity completely, but I'm not very interested in anything post-1946. I think the "stuff" was better in the past—the trains, the clothes, the machines—everything had more character then. Modern technology doesn't appeal to me, but a great big steam engine does."
- Philip Reeve says he tries to work from nine to five but usually ends up "skiving off in the afternoon and going for a walk on the moor."
- One of the characters in *A Darkling Plain* names his children Ford Anglia and Saab, after "Old Tech ground cars." Another boy Wren meets is named Timex.
- ODIN, the name of a dangerous piece of old technology in *The Darkling Plain*, is also the name of the chief god in Scandinavian mythology. He is the god of war, poetry, knowledge, wisdom, and the dead.

THE HUNGRY CITY CHRONICLES



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