

# BOOKNOTES

EDUCATORS GUIDE

## the books of ember

Grades 4–8

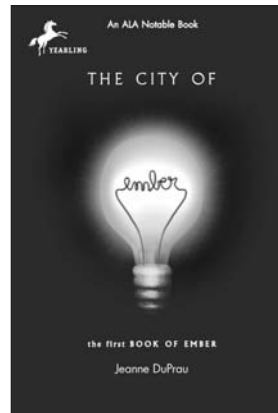
**The City of Ember**  
**The People of Sparks**  
**The Prophet of Yonwood**  
**The Diamond of Darkhold**

## about the novels of Jeanne DuPrau

Come inside award-winning author Jeanne DuPrau's imaginary worlds, where the characters may be fictional, but their reactions to potential catastrophes remind us what all humans are capable of when faced with the threat of war, starvation, or extinction.

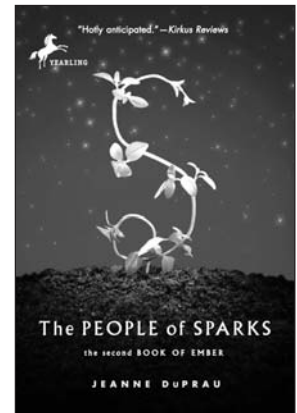
In *The Diamond of Darkhold*, the final Book of Ember, DuPrau juxtaposes yet another action-packed adventure with powerful themes about learning, hope, and the search for truth.

**Read the Books of Ember in  
your classroom—and then go see  
*The City of Ember* movie!**



### The City of Ember

Yearling PB: 978-0-375-82274-2  
Yearling Movie Tie-In PB:  
978-0-385-73628-2  
Random House HC: 978-0-375-82273-5  
GLB: 978-0-375-92274-9  
Listening Library CD: 978-0-7393-3167-5  
An ALA Notable Book for Children  
A CBC-IRA Children's Choice



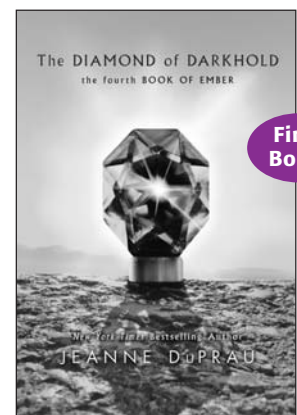
### The People of Sparks

Yearling PB: 978-0-375-82825-6  
Random House HC: 978-0-375-82824-9  
GLB: 978-0-375-92824-6  
Listening Library CD: 978-0-7393-3169-9  
A New York Public Library Book for  
the Teen Age



### The Prophet of Yonwood

Yearling PB: 978-0-440-42124-5  
Random House HC: 978-0-375-87526-7  
GLB: 978-0-375-97526-4  
Listening Library CD: 978-0-7393-3109-5



### The Diamond of Darkhold

Random House HC: 978-0-375-85571-9  
GLB: 978-0-375-95571-6  
Listening Library CD: 978-0-7393-6818-3

Visit Teachers @ Random at [www.randomhouse.com/teachers](http://www.randomhouse.com/teachers)

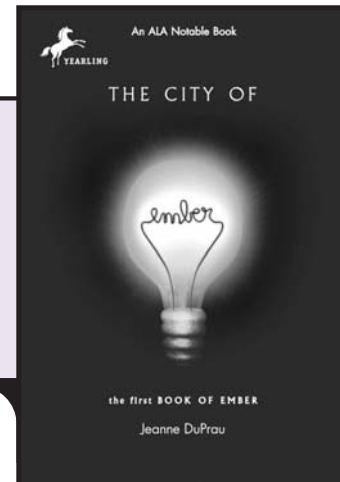


[www.booksofember.com](http://www.booksofember.com)

# the city of ember

## about the book

In the underground city of Ember, young Lina and Doon struggle with clues in order to reveal both the history of their city and a way to save the population before their source of light dwindles away to nothing.



## a winner across the states!

**Connecticut**—Nutmeg Children's Book Award

**Florida**—Sunshine State Young Reader's Award

**Indiana**—Young Hoosier Book Award

**Kansas**—William Allen White Award

**Maryland**—Black-Eyed Susan Book Award

**Minnesota**—Maud Hart Lovelace Book Award

**Missouri**—Mark Twain Award

**New Hampshire**—Great Stone Face Award

**New Jersey**—Garden State Teen Book Award

**New Mexico**—Land of Enchantment Award

**Nevada**—Nevada Young Readers Award

**Texas**—Lonestar Reading List

**Utah**—Beehive Award (Utah Children's Book Award)

**Vermont**—Dorothy Canfield Fisher Children's Book Award

**Washington**—Sasquatch Reading Award

## pre-reading activity

Explain that today is “Assignment Day” and students will get a job placement that will determine their future within the community. Distribute mock job assignments to students and give a talk about service to one’s community. Ask students how they feel about being

assigned to a profession. Ask them to speculate on what kind of world they are going to read about, where people are assigned jobs to work as messengers, laborers, electrician’s helpers, and supply clerks.

## connecting to the curriculum

**Economics**—The principles of supply and demand dictate what resources are available in the towns of Ember (and Sparks). As Lina says in *The City of Ember*, “You can’t divide a can of applesauce evenly among all the people in the city.” (p. 153) Teach students about the concept of supply and demand and ask them to make a list of all the items in the novel that are in demand. Then ask students to think about the creative ways in which the novel’s characters supply these items.

**Science**—The waning light source in *The City of Ember* emphasizes the importance of electricity. Have students research the fundamentals of electricity. How does it work? Who discovered it? What are the key scientific principles behind it?

**Music**—The townspeople of Ember have a “Song of the City” that describes the town and its people. Ask students to write a song, the lyrics of which reflect the spirit and the mission of their community and describe the kind of people who live there. Encourage students to use melodies that reflect the tone of the written descriptions.

**Art**—Lina dreams of a world full of color and wonders what it might look like. She uses drawing as a way to express her dreams about faraway cities and unknown regions. She says that pictures can capture an idea or a place in ways language cannot. Ask students to sketch a place they have often dreamed about, as Lina does, and carefully select colors that reflect the mood and tone of the dream. Request that students accompany their artwork with a one-page explanatory essay.

# the people of sparks

## about the book

Followed by fellow Emberites, Lina and Doon emerge from the underground city and are taken in by the first town they encounter—but the additional population puts a strain on the town’s resources, inciting conflict.



## pre-reading activity

Ask students to write an essay about community using the following writing prompt: What is the role of a community? Is the community responsible for taking care of *every* citizen? Ask students to share their writing responses and discuss how they would react if they were

asked to give up vital resources for strangers being added to their community. Consider role-playing the idea of “survival of the fittest” to demonstrate what happens when a community’s resources are strained, and individuals begin to rely on survival instincts.

## connecting to the curriculum

**Language Arts**—Ask students to write a magazine article for a travel magazine that describes either Sparks (or Ember) as a travel destination. Cite lines from either text that describe what it’s like to live there. Ask students to use elements of descriptive language like imagery, simile, and metaphor in their writing.

**Social Studies & Geography**—When the citizens of Ember escape their dark society for a more promising land, they become refugees. Ask students to define the word refugee and research the global refugee crisis. Provide your students with a brief overview of the top 10 locations on the planet with the highest population of refugees: Afghanistan, Angola, Burma, Burundi, Congo-Kinshasa, Eritrea,

Iraq, the Palestinian territories, Somalia, and Sudan. Then ask them to each choose one, and give a three page overview of that location’s current refugee situation as well as a brief history of its cause.

Ask students to use a map to pinpoint the 10 areas mentioned above. Have students consider why refugees flee their homelands and why some countries deny refugees access into their territories. This assignment is suitable for older grades.

**Science**—The idea of growing food and nurturing plants from seeds is paramount in both Ember and Sparks. Have students grow food from seeds and research the science behind it, like photosynthesis and the life cycle of a plant.

## internet resources

### Famous American Trials:

#### Salem Witch Trials

[www.law.umkc.edu/faculty/projects/ftrials/salem/SALEM.HTM](http://www.law.umkc.edu/faculty/projects/ftrials/salem/SALEM.HTM)

This site, hosted by the University of Missouri—Kansas City, outlines the fearful group hysteria of the Salem Witch Trials.

### New York Times Daily Lesson Plan

[www.nytimes.com/learning/teachers/lessons/19990708thursday.html](http://www.nytimes.com/learning/teachers/lessons/19990708thursday.html)

Contains activities that illustrate how electricity flows through basic circuits (grades 6–12).

### The Great Idea Finder

[www.ideafinder.com/history/inventions/lightbulb.htm](http://www.ideafinder.com/history/inventions/lightbulb.htm)

Fascinating facts about the invention of the light bulb by Thomas Alva Edison in 1879.

### Electricity and Magnetism

[www.galaxy.net/~k12/electric/](http://www.galaxy.net/~k12/electric/)

A series of experiments about electricity and magnetism.

### Black Dog’s Word Puzzles for Kids

[www.blackdog4kids.com/games/word](http://www.blackdog4kids.com/games/word)

Fun word puzzles like the one Lina deciphers to exit Ember.

### Kids RegenTeaching Themes: Healthy Kids, Healthy Planet

[www.kidsregen.org/educators/educators2.php?section=eduNga&ID=3](http://www.kidsregen.org/educators/educators2.php?section=eduNga&ID=3)

Activities for teaching students about gardening and its history.

### Barter

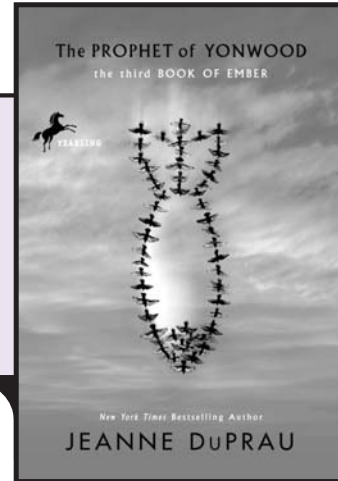
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Barter>

More information on the barter system.

# the prophet of yonwood

## about the book

Nickie Randolph is a young girl in the town of Yonwood, where the local prophet's predictions of doom and destruction have inspired the townspeople to build a "shield of goodness" against impending evil.



## pre-reading activity

Nickie Randolph, the young protagonist in *The Prophet of Yonwood*, says she wants to "do something helpful for the world, what that would be she had no idea, but the world needed help badly. She would keep her eyes open for an opportunity." (p. 14) The protagonists in *The City of Ember* and *The People of Sparks*,

DuPrau's other two novels, also seek ways to help their communities. Brainstorm the needs of the school and local community with students. Then ask them to write a journal entry on how they can make a difference and ultimately help the world.

## connecting to the curriculum

**Language Arts**—Nickie instantly falls in love with her grandfather's home in Yonwood. She describes the rooms of the house as "majestic" and decides to "point out good things about Greenhaven as often as she could, to change Crystal's mind about selling it." (p. 51) Review the elements of persuasive writing. Ask students to pretend they are Nickie and write a letter persuading Crystal to buy the house in Yonwood and remain there as a resident.

**Science**—Grover introduces readers to his love of snakes. He shows us how to care for snakes, and even describes how their jaws work. (pp. 185 & 187 respectively) Ask students to make a pamphlet featuring a type of snake. Include pictures of the snake along with explanations of how to care for it. Have students focus on one aspect of the snake's anatomy, like Grover did when he described the expandable jaws of his snake.

**Social Studies**—Police officers demand to enter Hoyt McCoy's house without a warrant, citing that a threat to security changes the rules. (p. 206) Ask students to investigate this claim in order to understand the constitutional rights of American citizens regarding their rights to privacy. In what instances can privacy laws be waived? Have your class research the standards for attaining a search warrant and design a search warrant for Officer Gurney to enter Hoyt's home.

**History**—Mrs. Beeson becomes overly zealous in her attempt to wipe out evil. Hoyt McCoy says that "these days Mrs. Beeson was seeing something wicked everywhere she looked." (p. 207) Ask students to research periods in history, such as the Salem Witch Trials, when citizens became zealots in the face of fear. Ask students to write an essay comparing the events surrounding the witch trials to the events in *The Prophet of Yonwood*.

**Performing Arts**—Nickie describes Hoyt McCoy's home as a "star-spangled chamber of night." (p. 250) Ask students to imagine the inside of Hoyt's celestial habitat and capture its essence with the composition of a song or a painting.

## vocabulary from the books of ember

**The Prophet of Yonwood**  
*jaunty* (p. 62), *blustery* (p. 100), *ardently* (p. 143), *flailed* (p. 217), *stymied* (p. 269), *vacillating* (p. 351)

**The City of Ember**  
*resonant* (p. 29), *enmeshed* (p. 55), *moldering* (p. 57), *pungent* (p. 59), *chortled* (p. 92)

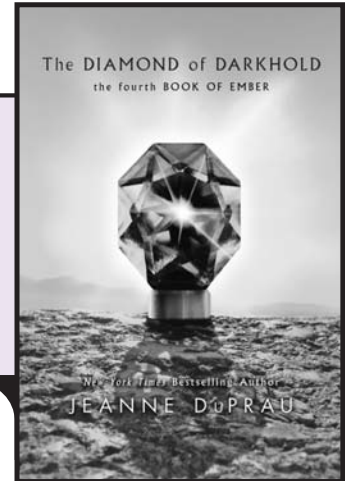
**The People of Sparks**  
*tasseled* (p. 25), *flummoxed* (p. 67), *thermodynamics* (p. 110)

**The Diamond of Darkhold**  
*replenish* (p. 15), *waning* (p. 64), *vicious* (p. 90), *blundered* (p. 93), *rampaged* (p. 102), *ingenuity* (p. 107)

# the diamond of darkhold

## about the book

While tensions have died down in Sparks, the town is in the grip of winter and resources are scarce. Together Lina and Doon will go back underground to Ember to retrieve what was lost and bring light to a dark world.



## pre-reading activity

**Power!** Many sources, many agents. An individual can be powerful, displaying strength and/or taking action. A group can wield power or authority over another weaker, smaller group. And then there is the power of an energy source. The Books of Ember portray all of these types of power. Ask students to brainstorm connections to the power of electricity throughout the Books of Ember. Students should then make a

time line for the use of electricity, beginning before Ember is built and following electricity through *The Prophet of Yonwood*. Based on their time line and before reading *The Diamond of Darkhold*, ask students to write a prediction of possible changes in the community in Sparks if a power source were to be introduced.

## connecting to the curriculum

**Science**—Doon asks himself the question, “How could a jagged line of light be the same thing that the old generator in Ember produced from river water? How could something that vanished in an instant be the same thing that made a lamp glow all evening?” (p. 13) Ask students to find a partner and then research the answers to these questions. When they discover the answers, have them illustrate their answers on a poster board to present to the class and to display in the classroom.

**Language Arts**—Ask students to recall a time when they experienced severe weather—tornado, hurricane, thunderstorm, blizzard, and/or windstorm. Have them make a list of words and phrases that describe the weather conditions and their feelings, even including bits and pieces of conversations. From this list of words and phrases, ask students to write a poem that can be shared with the class. Have students bring in readings of sound effects or music that conveys the mood of their poem. Host a class poetry reading to share the poems and accompanying sound recordings.

**Art**—The author writes beautifully descriptive passages that allow the readers to see pictures in their mind’s eye. Ask students to select a specific passage to illustrate using a variety of mediums: pastels, pen,

charcoal, watercolor, and/or paint. Have them title their artwork and site the page number of the passage they have selected to illustrate. Display the artwork in the classroom or the school’s library.

**Social Studies**—After Lina and Doon lead a group of townspeople to Ember for supplies to help survive the winter, the people of Sparks seem to be more accepting of the Emberites. Why is this a turning point for the community? What role do the blue diamonds play in the change of not only the town, but also the surrounding area? Ask students to think about conflicts in their school or community and to brainstorm ways they could help ease the tensions among the members of each group. Have them write a detailed proposal and action plan to present either to the principal or the mayor respectively to solve any current problems.

**Math**—On pages 67–68, Doon tries to decipher the concept of distance to determine how far away something is and the measure of a square yard. There aren’t any books in the Sparks library to help him. In groups of three, ask students to research and write a pamphlet explaining the units of measure. Have the groups include charts with explanations and illustrations, a title page, a table of contents, and an index.



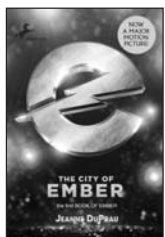
# the books of ember

## culminating activities/ ideas for further study

### Dynamic Characters

Lina and Doon become friends in *Ember* and they learn to depend on and understand each other through all their adventures. With a partner, ask students to write a character analysis of both characters, making notes about how the characters change individually and how their relationship evolves as they experience new adventures. Have the pairs make connections between their own lives and one or two of the other characters. Ask them to make a graphic representation of the comparison in a T chart, Venn diagram, or other appropriate graphic organizer. Share and display both the character analysis and the graphic organizers.

### Movies Anyone?



Many young adult novels are becoming movies, and *The City of Ember* is soon to be added to the major motion picture list. In small groups, ask students to investigate the process of how a novel becomes a movie. Then come together as a class and list the steps on a classroom

display. Have students brainstorm the names of other young adult novels made into movies. Then have them pick a favorite young adult book they believe would make a good movie. Have them write to a movie studio recommending the book and justifying its selection to be made into a motion picture.

### Full Circle

When *The City of Ember* begins, the existent problems in the city worsen as the book progresses until finally, the Emberites must flee their city to survive. In the final chapters of the final book, *The Diamond of Darkhold*, Lina and Doon lead a team of people back to Ember to retrieve supplies to help them all survive. It is almost as if the dead city reaches out to its people through its death. In pairs, ask students to trace the steps Lina and Doon have taken that lead them full circle back to Ember; back to electricity, back to their passions, and back to their hearts. Have the pairs create maps that illustrate Lina and Doon's journey, as well as other characters who made the trip with them, sequentially identifying and recording the steps along their way. Display the maps in the classroom.



## about the author

**Jeanne DuPrau** writes for several hours each day and finds inspiration in a quote from Thomas Mann that says, "A writer is someone for whom writing is harder than it is for other people." This quote guides DuPrau's writing, which she often finds to be a challenging task. DuPrau knew she wanted to be a writer at a young age and has tried related careers in teaching, technical writing, and editing. She has written four novels, six books of nonfiction, and essays and stories. She lives in California where she loves to garden.

For more information about the author, visit [www.jeanneduprau.com](http://www.jeanneduprau.com)

## on the web

For bios, teachers guides, and more . . .

Visit our FREE online site  
**Teachers @ Random**  
[www.randomhouse.com/teachers](http://www.randomhouse.com/teachers)



Search over 140 themes and holidays  
for books for your classroom!