

RANDOM HOUSE TEACHERS' RESOURCE KIT

Donnel's Promise

Anna Mackenzie

Who betrays her?

Who fears her?

Who is she wrong to trust?

When Risha travels to Havre to take up her mother's throne there is celebration — for some. In the murky world of politics, how can you know who to trust, when to fight, when to run?

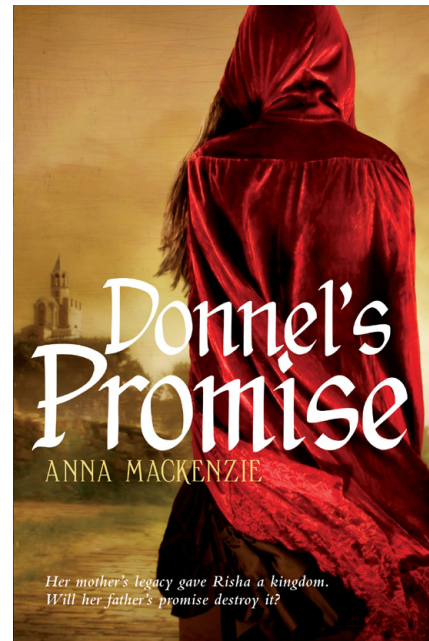
As war between the Five Duchies threatens everyone Risha loves, the hidden truth of Cattr's legacy is revealed — but for Risha there is no time to learn to use her arcane talent, even less to save those sacrificed in her name.

Risha must decide what matters most: a promise made by her father, or a future of her own choosing.

Donnel's Promise is the stunning sequel to *Cattr's Legacy* — award-winning YA writer Anna Mackenzie's magnificent young adult novel set in an imaginative medieval world.



Anna lives on a farm in the Hawke's Bay. She works as a magazine editor and creative writing teacher. This is her eighth novel.



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RESOURCE KIT CONTAINS:

- Before Reading
- Close Reading
- Style and Techniques
- Characters
- Themes
- Creative Responses

Price (GST inclusive) and author details are correct at the time of writing but are subject to change without notice.
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Before Reading

1. What does the cover picture suggest about the book's content?
2. When and where might the story be set?
3. What does the title suggest to you?

Close Reading

Prologue

1. To what extent is this summary of what happened in the novel *Cattra's Legacy* essential in assisting readers to re-enter Risha's world? Should a sequel be able to be read as if it is a stand-alone novel?
2. What possible events are foreshadowed in this opening section?

Chapter One

1. What mood does the opening paragraph create? What expectations are set up in your mind after reading the first page? (p. 13)
2. What does Risha mean when she says, 'I feel like a prize heifer being readied for market'? (p. 14)
3. What are your first impressions of Risha in this chapter? For those who have read the earlier book, are there any indications that she has changed since the events in *Cattra's Legacy*? (pp. 13–16)
4. What are your first impressions of Athan? What indications are there that he may not be trustworthy? (pp. 16–19)
5. What clues are there that Councillors Thatton, Willart and Vormer are also untrustworthy? (pp. 18–20)

6. What does the portrait of Risha's parents suggest about their personalities? (p. 21)
7. What are your first impressions of Ciaran, Verony and Lenora? (pp. 20–22)
8. What do we learn about Talben? Why do you think there is tension between him and Athan? (pp. 22–24)
9. Having read this first chapter, how does the author suggest that Risha has many challenges ahead of her? Who are potential enemies and who are potential allies among the people in the Court of Havre?

Chapter Two

1. Explain what Risha means when she says, 'They're like a flock of hens vying for the highest perch and never missing an opportunity to pull a feather or two'. (p. 25)
2. Why is Risha so frustrated after her first four days at Court? (pp. 25–26)
3. Why is Risha so keen to go riding on her own and how does Athan initially subvert her plans? (pp. 28–31)
4. Risha accuses the councillors of thinking of her as 'a silly girl, incapable of intelligent thought', when she realises they have attempted to have a clandestine meeting without her. Do you think that is their real opinion of her? (p. 33)

5. How does Athan attempt to dissuade Risha from meeting with Nonno and why do you think he does this? (pp. 35–36)
6. Why does Risha feel ‘a pang of longing for LeMarc’s informality’? (p. 37)
7. What do we learn about Timon’s parentage and connection to Risha in this chapter? (pp. 37–39)
8. Why is the fact that Athan is married to Ciaran a potential danger to Risha? (p. 40)

Chapter Three

1. What is the significance of the title of this chapter? (p. 41)
2. Why is Risha convinced that the attack was only a diversion tactic? (pp. 48–49)
3. What indications are there that Risha trusts Nolan completely? (p. 49)
4. Despite Nonno’s fragile state of body and mind, Risha is delighted to see her. What does Risha mean when she says, ‘You were my best friend’, and what does Risha mean by “mind speak”? (pp. 50–51)
5. What advice does Nonno give Risha and does it come as a surprise? (p. 54)
4. What do we learn about Ciaran and her relationships with her brother and her husband from this chapter?
5. What is Ciaran implying when she says that Donnel’s ‘style of governance is not Havre’s’? (p. 58)
6. What does Nolan mean when he tells Risha, ‘It will be good for morale for the people to see you, and with you a return to the grandeur of the past’? (p. 60)
7. For those who have read *Cattra’s Legacy*, what traits does Nolan seem to share with Muir? (p. 61)
8. What does Risha learn about her mother from her conversations with Ciaran? (pp. 64–66)
9. Ciaran tells Risha that ‘court allegiances are not primarily about love.’ To what extent is that comment a warning to Risha? (p. 65)
10. Do you think Ciaran is telling the truth when she says that her husband did not resent the return of Risha? (pp. 66–68)
11. In this chapter there are hints that Donnel may not be trustworthy. What does Ciaran say to make Risha doubt her father for a moment? How successful is Risha in dispelling her own fears about her parentage? (pp. 68–69)

Chapter Four

1. Risha’s first concrete proposal to the council is met with disapproval. How do Risha’s views on what her people need indicate that she has a very different approach to power and governance compared to the other councillors? (p. 55)
2. Why does Risha leave the meeting feeling less sure of her allies than before? (p. 56)
3. What do we learn about Goltoy and his power from this chapter?

Chapter Five

1. Why is Risha surprised when she reaches Bray? (p. 71)
2. What makes Croft, Ciaran and Nolan suspicious upon their arrival at Bray? (p. 72)
3. What clues are there that Bond, the man who greets them at Bray, is not to be trusted? (p. 74)
4. Do you think it was fair and reasonable to ask Lyse to pretend to be Risha? (p. 79)

Chapter Six

1. How does Lyse convince the Westlarn officer that she is really Risha? (pp. 89–91)
2. How does Nolan persuade Risha to go through with the deception rather than fight? (pp. 90–91)
3. Why does Ciaran insist on accompanying Lyse? (p. 92)
4. Why is Nolan convinced there is a traitor in their midst? (pp. 94–103)

Chapter Seven

1. What indications are there of a growing attachment between Risha and Nolan? (pp. 105–107)
2. With Risha meeting Fenn, the author is able to weave in a great deal of the back-story from the novel *Cattra's Legacy*. What do we learn about both Risha and Fenn from this encounter? (pp. 114–116)
3. What is Fenn implying when she says there is tension between Risha and Nolan? (p. 120)
4. Why is Risha alarmed at the prospect of a war? (p. 122)

Chapter Eight

1. While Risha is sick she has a number of visions relating to both Nonno and Ciaran. What do you think these visions mean? (pp. 128–129; 132–133)
2. Minna knows about both the Gift and mindspeaking. How does this reassure Risha? (pp. 135; 137)

Chapter Nine

1. What do we learn about Goltoy and his ambitions in this chapter?

2. To what extent do you think Fenn is right when she says that Risha is not obliged to take up Cattra's legacy? (pp. 148–149)
3. Why does Goltoy want Donnel to attack him? (p. 153)

Chapter Ten

1. What do the latest visions suggest to Risha? (pp. 159–161)
2. What does Croft learn about Lady Margetta from the tavern keeper? (pp. 166–167)

Chapter Eleven

1. What do you think Croft means when he says that '[it] feels like the whole place is in mourning'? (p. 169)
2. What is meant by the phrase 'trade shifts gossip as readily as goods'? (p. 173)
3. Fenn suggests to Risha that the constant scheming and battles between kingdoms is due to men's greed. To what extent do you agree with this statement, for the fantasy world in this novel and for the world in general? (p. 173)
4. What does Risha mean when she says, 'The best subterfuge is based on truth'? (p. 176)

Chapter Twelve

1. What indications are there that Muir has had a difficult time while he has been in Fratton? (p. 185)
2. Which lines suggest that the relationship between Muir and Risha is more than just a friendship? (p. 187)
3. Muir tells Risha, 'The first rule of Fratton is "Trust no one"' (p. 188). What does that suggest about life in the court of Fratton and the possibility that Risha will be able to get help from Margetta?

4. How is Margetta changed since Risha last saw her? (p. 191)

Chapter Thirteen

1. Why is Risha reluctant to tell Muir and the others about her Gift? (p. 197)
2. According to Muir, why did Donnel agree to attend the wedding even though it was organised by Goltoy? (p. 198)
3. Why does Margetta want to speak to Risha alone and why does Risha insist that Croft stay? (pp. 199–200)
4. Who is Kinnoc, and how is he a threat to both Risha and Margetta? (p. 201)
5. Why does Goltoy want to have Margetta and Risha marry his own sons and/or nephews? (p. 201)
6. According to Margetta, Donnel refused to let Muir come with him to help Risha. Why might this be? (p. 203)
7. Why does Croft say Margetta needs a mother? (p. 204.) Do you agree with his view (particularly as Risha also grew up motherless)?

Chapter Fourteen

1. Who do you think sent the men to the inn to capture Risha? (p. 220)
2. Do you agree with Croft when he suggests to Risha that they should not get entangled in the politics of Fratton? (p. 222)

Chapter Fifteen

1. Why does Risha want to find Talben? (p. 231)
2. What does Croft mean when he says to Risha, 'I know it goes against the grain, but it's not too late to choose the safe course'? (p. 231)

3. How serious a threat does Kinnoc pose for Risha? What form does this threat take? (p. 234)

Chapter Sixteen

1. To what extent has the attempted gang rape by the soldiers shaken Risha's confidence? Why didn't she tell them of her real identity? Do you think they would have been more respectful of her? (pp. 243–244; 247–255)
2. Croft comforts Risha by saying, 'It serves no purpose thinking about the things we might have done. Whatever decisions we take, good and bad happens just the same.' To what extent do you agree with this philosophy on life? (p. 252)
3. What evidence is there that the relationship between Muir and Risha is becoming more intensely romantic? (p. 255)

Chapter Seventeen

1. What evidence is there that Vormer is determined to begin a war? (pp. 258–259)
2. Why is Risha unwilling to talk with Minna about the attempted rape? (p. 261)
3. What do the visions Risha sees while she is asleep suggest about the direction this novel will take? (pp. 261–264)
4. Why is Muir upset when Risha asks for Nolan? (p. 267)
5. What indications are there that Risha knows her father well even though she has spent little time with him? (pp. 269–270)

Chapter Eighteen

1. According to Nieve, what are the different rumours circulating in Elion? (p. 275)

2. What does Risha discover about the connection between her own mother, Ciaran and Talben? To what extent does this discovery confirm that Ciaran is to be trusted? (p. 279)

Chapter Nineteen

1. Why does Muir disapprove of Risha's plans? (p. 282)
2. How does Vormer react to Ciaran's news that Risha was killed? (p. 287)
3. What does Vormer imply when he tells Ciaran that his wife is not well? (p. 288)
4. Why does Muir tell Risha that it was 'for the best' that he didn't come back from Fratton earlier? (p. 290)

Chapter Twenty

1. Why did Muir smile when Risha asked him what his best memory of Fratton was? (p. 293)
2. What is implied when Fenn tries to reassure Risha about Lyse by saying, 'There's worse things . . . She'll be fine. He might not be the man of her choosing, but that wouldn't put her at odds with plenty of women her age'? (p. 297)
3. How have Donnel and his force changed the situation in Elion? (pp. 299–300)
4. Why does Muir think that war between Donnel and Goltoy is inevitable? (p. 300–301)

Chapter Twenty-one

1. What is Muir implying when he says Risha doesn't have to 'live like this'? (p. 303)
2. Why does Risha think she may have upset Nolan by telling him that Lillet had grown fond of him? (p. 306)

3. Explain how one duchy could be expelled from the standing agreement or accord between the five duchies. (p. 307)
4. Why is Risha prepared to denounce her father at the sitting? (pp. 310–312)

Chapter Twenty-two

1. What does Muir mean when he says to Risha, 'You don't wish for my counsel, but you have my sword'? (p. 314)
2. How are Athan and Vormer's wife linked? (p. 319–320)
3. What does Vormer threaten Lyse with? (p. 321)

Chapter Twenty-three

1. How is Lillet able to smuggle Risha into the palace? (p. 324)
2. How are Margetta and Risha able to change the vote? (p. 334)
3. To what extent was Ciaran's attack on Vormer unexpected? (p. 335)
4. What does Risha's vision of Muir suggest about his future? (p. 337)

Chapter Twenty-four

1. How have things changed in Havre since Risha's return? (pp. 341–342)
2. Why would Risha prefer Lyse to stay married to Harbin? (p. 343)
3. Why hasn't Risha seen her father yet? To what extent are you surprised by his decision to stay in Westlaw and what does this suggest about Donnel? (p. 344)
4. Why is Quilec so keen that Ciaran should be punished 'to the full[est]'? (p. 347)

5. Why does Gorth suggest that Donnel now 'doesn't know what to do with himself'? (p. 351)
6. Who do you think killed Vormer and why? (p. 352–353)
7. What does Croft mean when he tells Risha to look in a mirror, then says, 'Likely you know them better than you think'? (p. 356)

Chapter Twenty-five

1. Why might Margetta be keen to take responsibility for Ciaran? (p. 358)
2. What is the gift that Margetta sends Risha? (p. 360)
3. What is implied about Muir and Risha at the end of this chapter? (pp. 363–364)
4. How satisfied are you with the ending of this novel?

Style and Technique

1. What genre does this novel belong to and why?
2. This novel is written from the omniscient narrator point of view but the writer has adopted a limited omniscient perspective so that we learn mostly about Risha's thoughts and opinions. How effective do you think this narrative style is? What limitations are there with using this perspective?

Vocabulary

This novel contains many words you may not have come across before. Find out what these words mean and create a glossary for the novel. You may like to add other words in this novel that are new to you, particularly words which have their origins in medieval society:

- clandestine
- infrastructure
- volubility
- scullion
- irrefutable
- bonhomie
- ingenuous
- doxy
- castilian
- barbican
- hiatus
- postern
- debacle
- coracle
- goad
- citadel
- seneschal
- autocrat
- perfidy
- renegade
- expunged
- elucidate
- lintel
- fug
- pragmatic
- defeatist
- mangonel
- burghers
- ram
- trebuchet
- escalades
- grapples
- portcullis
- scaling tower
- barbican
- prosaic

Characters

1. Select four adjectives to describe each of the following characters:
 - Athan
 - Vormer
 - Talben
 - Ciaran
 - Nolan
 - Nonno
 - Croft
 - Minna
 - Webb
 - Goltoy
 - Kinnoc
 - Lillet
2. How would you have described Risha at the beginning of the novel? Select four key events in the novel that you think are turning points for Risha and describe the effect of each of these events on her.
3. Violence against women, together with sexual harassment, is very evident in this novel. Discuss the vulnerability of women in this novel. To what extent are upper class women in a better position than lower class women?
4. Could either Margetta or Risha rule without the support of strong men? To what extent are they more vulnerable than young male rulers? Is it harder for women to be rulers?
5. Explain the nature of the relationship between Risha and Ciaran. How does it change and develop over the course of the novel?
6. Although this novel is called *Donnel's Promise*, he never actually appears. So what is the promise? Is it fulfilled and what does it suggest about what may happen to Risha in the third novel in this series?
7. Compare and contrast the characters of Muir, Nolan and Timon. Who do you think Risha will ultimately end up with and why?
8. Who do you consider to be the worst villains in this novel and why? Why do you think that all the evil characters are men?

Themes

Write a paragraph on each of the following themes and how they are explored in *Donnell's Promise*:

- Family bonds
- Loyalty
- Revenge
- Justice
- The use and abuse of power
- The rights and responsibilities that come with leadership
- Betrayal
- Moral choices

Creative Responses

1. Using the map at the front of this novel as a starting point, illustrate it and mark on it Risha's travels and adventures. You could begin by photocopying and enlarging the map.
2. Imagine you are Ciaran and write five diary entries based on key events in her life.
3. Imagine you are Lysa, Vormer or Muir and write a monologue explaining your thoughts and feelings about events in the first three quarters of this novel. You may wish to memorise the monologue and then present it to the class.
4. If this novel was turned into a movie what songs or music do you think would be appropriate for the soundtrack? Explain why you would use particular music/songs to accompany specific events in the novel.
5. What do you think could or should happen in the sequel to this novel? Write a one-page outline of the plot for the sequel you would write. Be sure to include a possible title for this sequel.
6. Write a review of the book, aiming it at the readership of your favourite magazine or website.
7. Choose and research one of the topics from the list below. Present your findings as a formal report, a powerpoint, or in poster format:
 - Life for women in the Middle Ages
 - Women in fantasy fiction
 - Fantasy worlds in popular novels
 - Historical fiction for young adult readers
 - Famous women leaders in history, e.g. Eleanor of Aquitaine, Isabella of Spain, Elizabeth the First, Joan of Arc
8. Design costumes for five of the characters in this novel.
9. Rewrite Chapter 23 as a play script and then act it out with a group of friends.
10. Write a fairytale or legend that seems appropriate for Elgard — the type of story that might be told to children of this fantasy world.

