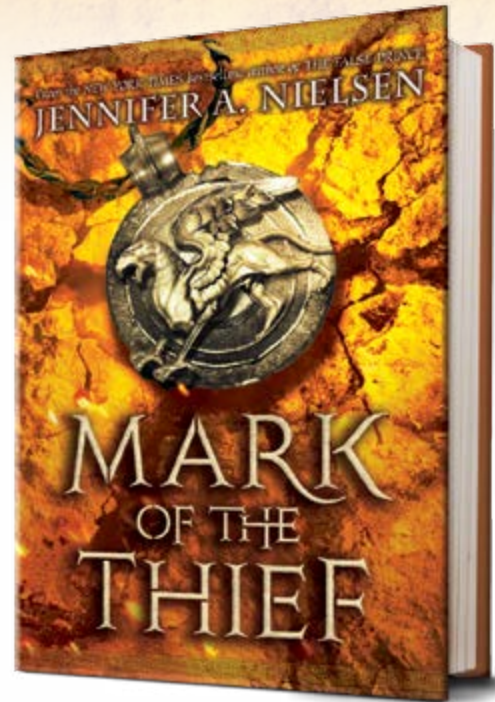


# USING MARK OF THE THIEF IN YOUR CLASSROOM!

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. How would the story have been different if Nic had given the bulla to Radulf? Do you think Radulf would have kept his promise to bring Nic with him to Rome?
2. After Nic escapes Caesar's cave, he has the chance to run away, but he doesn't. Why not? Considering everything that happens to him once he's recaptured, did he make the right decision?
3. The power structure in Rome plays an important part in the story. Consider how much power the Senators and General Radulf have when compared to Aurelia and Nic. Even Crispus, as the son of a Senator, can do things Nic and Aurelia would never dare do. What differences do you remember? Do we have similar power structures in our world today – are there some people with more privileges than others?
4. When Felix ties Nic to the horse then sends him into the arena, he says he is only following orders from the emperor. Is it okay to disobey if someone in authority tells you to do something you know is wrong? Or should we always obey?
5. Why does Aurelia want to bring Nic to Senator Horatio? Should she have told Nic the truth, even if it meant she wouldn't get her father back?
6. Why does the emperor believe Nic is a threat to him?
7. A lot of characters are either good people who make some bad choices, or bad characters who make some good choices. Can you give any examples of this?
8. Nic is really excited to get his first pair of sandals. Why do you think this matters so much to him?
9. Which character do you consider the "worst" villain — Radulf, Horatio, Valerius, or Sal (or someone else)? Why?
10. At the end of the book, Nic no longer has the bulla, and is trapped at General Radulf's home. What do you think he'll do next?



## WRITING PROMPTS:

1. In *MARK OF THE THIEF*, Nic finds an everyday object that contains magic. What everyday item might you find that contains magic, and what powers would it give you?
2. Write a story where you encounter a magical animal (unicorn, griffin, dragon) in your life. Is it good or bad? What problem does it help you solve?
3. Aurelia wears a crepundia that represents her lost family. If your family had a crepundia, describe what objects might be on it to represent them.
4. *MARK OF THE THIEF* takes place in Ancient Rome. Create your own story that takes place in Ancient Rome? (Or write about another time in history if you prefer.)



# WHAT INSPIRED JENNIFER A. NIELSEN'S *MARK OF THE THIEF!*

## Jennifer Nielsen Comments on Her New Series:

It's an alternate history of the Roman Empire, but a lot of the story is based on actual facts. Such as:

- Emperor Julius Caesar used to claim he was a literal descendent of the Goddess Venus.

*So I thought . . . hmm, what if he was telling the truth? That would've made him a Demigod. What if he had magic before he was killed? What happened to his magic afterward?*

- The lowest existence in Rome was for mining slaves. Because the work was so dangerous, the average mining slave lived only seven years.

*So I thought . . . hmm, what if that's my hero? Nic, a mining slave who has nothing else to lose. Except those he loves. What if he discovers Caesar's lost magic?*

- The Colosseum wasn't known by that name in Ancient Rome. They simply called it the Amphitheater, and it could hold about 50,000 Romans, all who were invited free of charge to watch the games.

*Hmm, what if we introduced some magic in the Amphitheater? A magic which Nic has no idea how to use or control.*

- Part of the games involved a Venatio or hunt. They would fight each other to the death, or animal hunters would take part in the battles.

*And what if one of those animals belonged to the Gods? A griffin, perhaps?*

If you enjoyed *The False Prince*, I think you'll enjoy this too. Though the heroes have some differences, they are for similar readers.



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