

## **Second Guard**

**by J. D. Vaughn**

### **About the book:**

In the peaceful realm of Tequende, all second-born children at the age of fifteen must journey to the Alcazar to fulfill the mandate of the Oath of Guilds. There they train to earn a place among the Queen's guard, or work as indentured servants.

For Sun Guilder Talimendra of the Magda River Traders, joining the Second Guard will not only bring honor to her family, it will be a chance to uphold her mother's legacy. A lot of blood, sweat, and tears will be spent to bear the weight of this prestigious title, and Tali is prepared to make that sacrifice even as she competes against hundreds of other pledges.

But the Queen's guard may hold a secret Tali isn't quite ready for, a conspiracy that threatens to drag Tequende into all-out war. And the enemy is close.

There is very little time and too many unanswered questions, but one thing is for certain: if there is a traitor among the Second Guard, then everyone—including the Queen—is in grave danger.

### **About the authors:**

J. D. Vaughn is the pen name of Julia Durango and Tracie Vaughn Zimmer, two friends who are also writing partners. Julia is a former school librarian from Illinois and winner of the Golden Kite Award. Tracie, a high school English teacher from Ohio, has also received critical acclaim, including the Schneider Family Book Award. Together they share a love of travel, reading, chicken biscuits, and the teenagers who call them mom.

### **Common Core connections:**

This guide is aligned with the 9-10 standards for literature. If you teach another grade, you may want to visit the common core website and find a similar standard in the same strand.

Reading Literature:

Key Ideas and Details:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.1

Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.2

Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze in detail its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.3

Analyze how complex characters (e.g., those with multiple or conflicting motivations) develop over the course of a text, interact with other characters, and advance the plot or develop the theme.

**Craft and Structure:**

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.4

Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the cumulative impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone (e.g., how the language evokes a sense of time and place; how it sets a formal or informal tone).

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.5

Analyze how an author's choices concerning how to structure a text, order events within it (e.g., parallel plots), and manipulate time (e.g., pacing, flashbacks) create such effects as mystery, tension, or surprise.

**Speaking and Listening:**

Comprehension and Collaboration:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.1

Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 9-10 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.1.A

Come to discussions prepared, having read and researched material under study; explicitly draw on that preparation by referring to evidence from texts and other research on the topic or issue to stimulate a thoughtful, well-reasoned exchange of ideas.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.1.C

Propel conversations by posing and responding to questions that relate the current discussion to broader themes or larger ideas; actively incorporate others into the discussion; and clarify, verify, or challenge ideas and conclusions.

**Pre-reading Activity: Priming comprehension**

Have students mark their opinion of the following statements below. Then, place posters around the four corners of your room that correspond with the rankings and discuss the answers as a class, allowing students to move between their answers. Students love the chance to stand and to visually see their peer’s responses.

<b>Statement:</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>WHY I think this:</b>
I would rather be a soldier than a servant.					
Courage is seeking the truth no matter the cost.					
Friends can be as important as family.					
Sometimes the only way to keep an oath is to break it.					
Families pass on traditions and bias in equal measure to their children.					

**Pre-reading Activity:**

Good readers make predictions about a book before beginning it and the entire time they’re constructing the world in their minds.

**Before reading:**

Study the cover and read the description on the back of the book. Make ten predictions about what you think will happen as the story unfolds. Keep the list and see what does and does not happen. Remember, just making predictions improves your comprehension; it doesn’t matter if any of them are correct. It’s actually more fun when you’re completely off base (who really wants to know how a book ends after all).

**Read “The Legend of the Second Guard”**

**In small groups or pairs answer these questions:**

1. What was happening to the tribes surrounding Tequende?
2. Why were these great civilizations falling?
3. Where did Queen Four seek answers?

4. Summarize the advice of the Diosa to the Queen.

Then, make a list of at least five predictions you have about the plot of the novel.

**Discussion guide:**

1. How would you describe Tali? Do you think you would be friends with her or not? Why?
2. Does Tali see her service to the realm as a sacrifice or an honor?
3. Would you like to see Tequende for yourself? How do you imagine it?
4. How do you know if a character like Zarif will be important in a story? What are his key characteristics?
5. Have you ever had such an awkward encounter as Tali did with Brindl on their first meeting? Are these inevitable in life or are they avoidable?
6. Explain why is it difficult for the pledges of the Second Guard to shed their loyalty to their original Guilds. Is there anything similar in your own upbringing?
7. Which Guild appeals most to you? Why? Are the Guilds equal in Tequende? Is true equality possible in any human society? What makes you believe this?
8. Which of the centurios (instructors/leaders) do you find most impressive? Why? Compare and contrast their leadership and instructional styles.
9. Who are Tali's allies and enemies? In fiction, what characteristics make the best of both of these types of characters?
10. Tali is conflicted by two opposing forces: her loyalty to her family and guild and that to her country. How do these conflicts affect her decisions? Which alliance pulls her the strongest? How is loyalty developed in a person? To what or whom are you most loyal? Why?
11. Describe Tali's relationship to her sister and father. How would you characterize it? How much influence do siblings have in people's lives? Your own?
12. Cite evidence which leads Tali to believe that there is corruption inside Tequende. Put a star next to the piece of evidence that you find most compelling. Be prepared to defend your choice.
13. What mistakes does Tali make as she tries to uncover the truth about her country? Are we, as people, more defined by our mistakes or by our successes? Why?
14. There is a large cast of minor characters in the novel. Who is your favorite? Why?

15. If you had to make an alliance with Tali, Zarif, or Chey who would you most want beside you? Why?
16. The novel has several settings: the Magda River on the tradeboat, the Alcazar, Porto Sol, the tunnels, Zipa, Clash of Warriors outside of Fugaza. Which would you most like to visit? Why? How does the setting influence the plot?
17. Describe Saavedra. List the advice and lessons he teaches the young pledges and then rank them from most important to least.
18. What scene in the book is your favorite? Why? Are the characters in that scene also your favorite?
19. What surprised you most during the battle and its aftermath? What did you learn about the main characters when they were put through this ultimate test of their courage?
20. Predict what you think will happen next to Tali, Chey, Zarif and Brindl. What will their lives be like in a year? What do you hope happens next?

## Common Core aligned Projects/Activities:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.1

Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

Cite key quotes that reveal the most important information on the following topics from the novel:

Topic:	Key Quote:	WHY this quote is KEY to understanding the novel:
History of Tequende		
The Guilds		
The Second Guard warriors		

The religion/beliefs of Tequende's people		
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CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.2

Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze in detail its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text.

### Summary:

Summarization is a key skill for comprehension, it's that simple. If you can simplify a text down to its most important components then you obviously understand it. The act of summarizing can help you remember key details and it's a great study skill to boot. At the end of each chapter, write a one sentence summary on a sticky note. Consider not just WHAT happened but WHY it matters. This will also help you discuss the theme. Be sure to mark the chapter number on the sticky note in the upper right hand corner.

### EXAMPLE: The Legend of the Second Guard

The tribes surrounding Tequende have fallen to war and chaos as they fight foreign invaders, and themselves to save them the queen created the second guard to protect her realm as a spiritual leader advised.

Then, sort the sticky notes into the following chart where they best belong. Compare your choices to that of a reading partner or small group for discussion:

The protagonist discovers a conflict bigger than she imagined:	The protagonist's goal/dream is threatened by others/events:	The protagonist makes allies and builds skills to reach her goals:	The protagonist makes a choice which shows a change/growth:
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## Second Guard: Theme Exploration

**Theme-** a universal truth about life embedded in a piece of literature, most often unstated.

Consider the following literary elements as they apply to The Second Guard before beginning brainstorming on possible themes.

<b>Title:</b>	Why do you think the author titled it this?	
<b>Characters:</b>	What did the main characters learn? How did they grow/change?	
<b>Setting:</b>	How important was the setting to the story?	
<b>Conflict:</b>	What was the internal conflict of the protagonist? What was the external conflict? How did they relate to each other?	
<b>Language:</b>	What did the author spend time describing/developing? Which scenes were most descriptive/filled with imagery?	

## Thematic Statements:

After carefully considering the literary elements above, next brainstorm a list of important TOPICS or ISSUES that the author addresses within the text:

1.	<b>Ex: Courage</b>
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	
6.	

Circle or highlight the topic you think is most important in the story. Next, brainstorm for a moment the lessons learned about this topic. Consider what the author wants the reader to know or realize about this topic by what happened in the story.

<b>Ex: Courage</b>	<b>Your TOPIC:</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There are lots of different types</li> <li>• When things are the worst you often see courage in action.</li> <li>• Anyone can show courage.</li> <li>• It looks different with each person.</li> </ul>	

**Craft a thematic statement based on your brainstorm. But, remember:**

1. Thematic statements are often poetic so they usually take some revision.
2. The statement must appear true both in the world of the book & in the real world.
3. It should be able to be defended with evidence and examples from the text.

**Thematic Statement:**

<b>TOPIC:</b>	<b>Thematic Statement:</b>	<b>Key Quote that supports theme:</b>
Ex: Courage	It takes courage to defy expectations and meet challenges even when little hope of success exists.	“For Tequende!” Drayvon yelled, fearlessly leading the charge.

## Character Motivation:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.3

Analyze how complex characters (e.g., those with multiple or conflicting motivations) develop over the course of a text, interact with other characters, and advance the plot or develop the theme.

**Character motivation:** the reason why a character act, thinks, speaks or feels the way they do.

It's often tied to their deepest desires or fears

**Conflicting motivation:** When a character's wants and desires are not simple, often complicated by relationships and decisions that could impact others.

Fill out the following chart and discuss the following questions: Which characters change the most over the course of the novel? How do these characters show that they're conflicted? Which character is the most compelling to you? Why? How do authors develop sympathy for a character? Which do you think is more important in a novel: character or plot? How does one impact the other?

<b>Character:</b>	<b>Primary motivation:</b>	<b>Conflicting motivation:</b>	<b>How these characters interact/change each other:</b>	<b>Is the PLOT or the THEME most impacted by this character? Why?</b>
Tali				
Zarif				
Chey				

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.5

Analyze how an author's choices concerning how to structure a text, order events within it (e.g., parallel plots), and manipulate time (e.g., pacing, flashbacks) create such effects as mystery, tension, or surprise.

## Structure:

Authors manipulate time for many reasons: reveal character motivations, increase conflict and mystery, create a sense of surprise. Fill out the following chart after reading the novel to discuss the structure of the novel. This is to prepare for discussion; there are no right answers as long as you can logically defend your ideas.

Scene:	Motivation	Mystery	Tension	Surprise
Tali helps rescue Paulo and family				
Flashback: Tali says goodbye to her father				
Tali & Drayvon trade insults at first meal				
Tali surprised by Jaden in the training theater at night				
The visit to the Diosa				
Tali visits her family in Zipa				

Which of these scenes do you think was most effective in its purpose? Which element of pacing is most important to you: motivation (character), mystery, tension or surprise? Why?