



— EDUCATOR'S GUIDE —

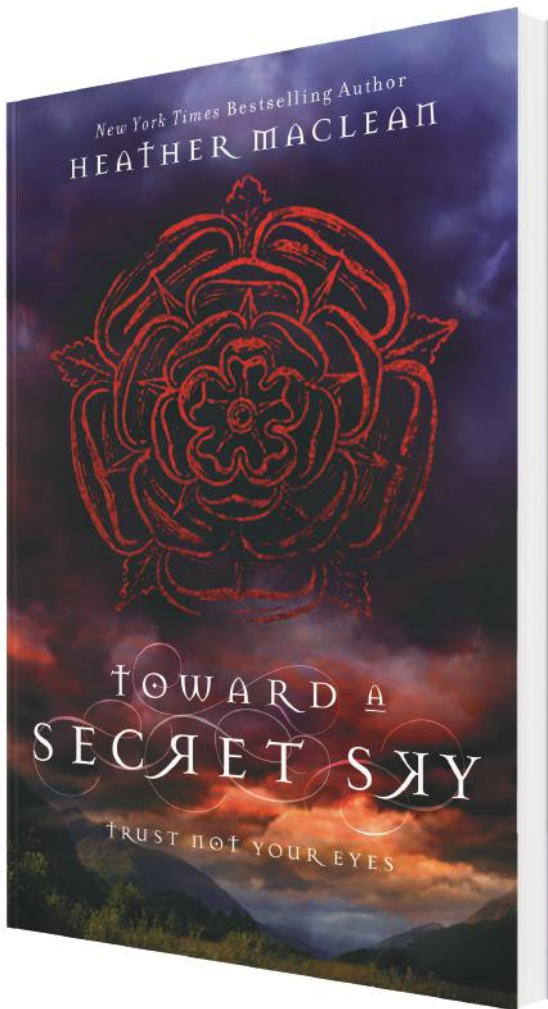
TOWARD A SECRET SKY

By Heather Maclean



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Toward a Secret Sky by New York Times bestselling author Heather Maclean is a new breed of YA novel: an intelligent adventure-quest crossed with a sweeping, forbidden love story. A mix of reality and possibility, this fast-paced thriller will appeal to fans of Stephenie Meyer and Dan Brown as it leads the reader on a breathless flight through the highlands of Scotland, the secret city under London, and history itself.

Shortly after 17-year-old Maren Hamilton is orphaned and sent to live with grandparents she's never met in Scotland, she receives an encrypted journal from her dead mother that makes her and everyone around her a target. It confirms that her parents were employed by a secret, international organization that's now intent on recruiting her.

As Maren works to unravel the clues left behind by her mother, a murderous madness sweeps through the local population, terrorizing her small town. Maren must decide if she'll continue her parents' fight or stay behind to save her friends.

With the help of Gavin, an otherworldly mercenary she's not supposed to fall in love with, and Graham, a charming aristocrat who is entranced with her, Maren races against the clock and around the country from palatial estates with twisted labyrinths to famous cathedrals with booby-trapped subterranean crypts to stay ahead of the enemy and find a cure. Along the way, she discovers the great truth of love: that laying down your life for another isn't as hard as watching them sacrifice everything for you.

<http://www.heather-maclean.com/>



Heather Maclean is a *New York Times* bestselling author and editor of 15 books. She has appeared on *Good Morning America*, the *CBS Early Show*, *Fox Business Network*, *ParentsTV* and *Sirius'* "Dr. Radio."

After graduating from Princeton University, she began her career at Entertainment Weekly. Her work has appeared in *Conde Nast Traveler*, *Pregnancy* magazine, *NY Metro Parents* magazine, as well as newspapers around the country.

Named one of the "16 Best Entrepreneurs in America" by Sir Richard Branson, she accompanied the adventurous business legend on a 50,000-mile trip around the world, alternately helping improve the lives of others (designing sustainable development initiatives in South African villages) and fearing for her own (rappelling out of a Black helicopter in a Moroccan sandstorm). She was also the first civilian mom to experience zero gravity aboard a "space plane," an experience she will never, ever repeat. Their journey, titled *The Rebel Billionaire*, was televised on *Fox TV* in 2005 for an audience of 8 million viewers.

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PRE-READING QUESTIONS

Before reading the novel, discuss these questions with your students. It may be helpful to have your students record their thoughts in order to allow them to reflect when they finish reading the novel.

1. Research and discuss the idea of nature versus nurture when raising children.

• [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.1; SL.9-10.4]

2. Describe the separation of good and evil in literature, as well as in your life. Give examples.

• [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.1; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.1]

3. Research and explain the reasons some people believe dreams foreshadow upcoming events.

• [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.1; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.1; SL.9-10.4]

4. Discuss what elements of a novel create tone.

• [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.4; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.1; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.9-10.4]

5. Describe the imagery typically used to portray good and evil.

• [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.1; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.1; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.9-10.5]

POST-READING QUESTIONS

After reading the novel, discuss these questions with your students. If you had your students record their responses to the pre-reading questions, then have them review their responses and respond to the following post-reading questions on the same sheet of paper.

1. Consider the symbolism in the descriptions of the angels and demons. Give examples from the novel.

• [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.1; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.1; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.1; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.9-10.5]

2. Discuss how the tone of the novel shifts as Maren learns more about The Abbey.

• [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.1; RL.9-10.4; RL.9-10.5; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.1; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.9-10.5]

3. Describe Maren's maturation over the course of the story.

• [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.1; RL.9-10.3; RL.9-10.5; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.1; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.1]

4. Consider how Maren's dreams clearly foreshadow events in the story. Glancing back through the text, pick the moment when you knew her dreams were more than figments of her subconscious.

• [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.1; RL.9-10.5; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.1; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.1; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.9-10.5]

5. Discuss the reasons why Gavin may have chosen not to unveil the entire truth concerning Graham and his family.

• [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.1; RL.9-10.3; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.1]

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Guide created by Kathryn Elise Barnett, a high school English teacher with a BA of English from the University of Georgia and a MA of Secondary English Education from Piedmont College.

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6. Debate whether Maren would have entered Campbell Hall if she had known the entire history of the Campbell family.

• [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.1; RL.9-10.3; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.1; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.1]

7. Decide whether it was necessary for Jo to die. Explain your position, and give evidence from the text.

• [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.1; RL.9-10.5; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.1; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.1]

8. Discuss why Gavin knowingly chooses to enter Campbell Hall even though he knows it is an irreversible decision.

• [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.1; RL.9-10.3; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.1]

9. Describe the contrast between Maren's perspective of herself to the perception others have of her in the novel.

• [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.1; RL.9-10.3; RL.9-10.6; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.1; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.1]

10. Consider why Maren chooses to join the Abbey in the end.

• [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.1; RL.9-10.3; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.1; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.1]

ACTIVITIES

Students may complete the following activities while reading or after reading the novel.

1. Debating Nature versus Nurture: Are people born with their personalities or are elements of their beings nurtured by their environments? Separate students in pairs. Assign each student a side to defend: Nature or Nurture. Students will find evidence from the novel to use in the debate with their partner. Give each side one uninterrupted minute to describe why their side of the argument is correct, then allow students two minutes to argue back and forth.

• [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.1; RL.9-10.3; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.1; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.1; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.4]

2. Create a collage to symbolically represent Campbell Hall. When building the collage, consider events that took place in the Hall, colors to represent the space, words that could be applied to the space, etc.

• [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.1; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.9-10.4; L.9-10.5]

3. Write a spin-off following Gia through her activities for the Abbey.

• [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.1; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.3; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.9-10.1]

4. Find a song that represents the tone of the novel. Give examples from the song and the novel comparing the two.

• [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.1; RL.9-10.4; RL.9-10.7; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.1; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.9-10.1]

5. Research word puzzles. Then, create your own including an answer key.

• [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.9-10.1; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.9-10.1]

