

# WANTED

## READERS

WITH A DISCERNING  
SENSE OF HUMOUR AND  
A LOVE OF ADVENTURE,  
WONDER AND SUSPENSE

**REWARD**  
THE CHRONICLES  
OF THE **FEARLESS**  
**OUTLAWS** AND THEIR  
INFAMOUS DEEDS

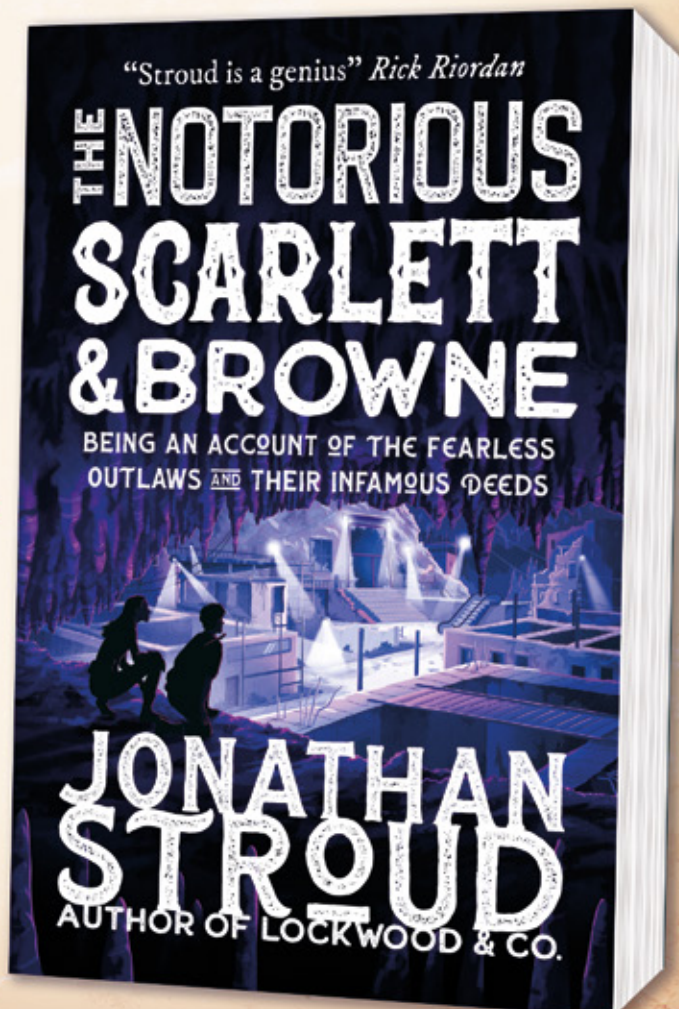
Praise for *The Outlaws Scarlett and Browne*

“You won’t be able to put this  
down. A classic in the making.”

Eoin Colfer

“Phenomenal, unputdownable  
storytelling of the highest order.”

Piers Torday



WALKER BOOKS

#ScarlettandBrowne

@JonathanAStroud

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# THE NOTORIOUS SCARLETT AND BROWNE

## JONATHAN STROUD

### DISCUSSION GUIDE FOR WALKER BOOKS

#### ABOUT THE BOOK

The second novel in Stroud's Scarlett & Browne series picks up with the same exuberant brilliance, six months after the end of the first. Now an established partnership, the outlaws have gained a solid reputation, with the price on their heads ever growing, and a daring raid planned on a Faith House. All seems well, until a strangely unnerving Faith House operative arrives. With Scarlett and Albert both increasingly haunted by their pasts, suddenly their lives, and the lives of their friends, are on the line again.

#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Jonathan Stroud** wrote his first novel – *Buried Fire* – while working as an editor at Walker Books. He is the author of two internationally bestselling series: the award-winning *Bartimaeus* sequence, which has been published in 36 languages worldwide, and the critically acclaimed *Lockwood & Co*, which is currently being adapted by Netflix. His other novels include *The Leap*, *The Last Siege* and *Heroes of the Valley*. Jonathan lives in Hertfordshire with his wife and three children.

#### GENERAL INTRODUCTION:

Much like the first book, this novel defies categorisation and refuses to patronise the reader, through complexity of both plot and language. It is a rich source of themes for discussion, and like the first book may evoke strong feelings from group members. Look out for discussion relating to familial loss, abandonment, or other subjects that may prove sensitive for members of the group. Beyond this, the book gives a great opportunity to dive into the craft of writing, as well as plotting and narrative, or you can explore at an easier level, looking at specific elements and events, comparing and contrasting and eliciting opinions on the various characters and themes within.

#### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

##### Getting started:

First, check understanding of the first book in the series – if any members have not read the book, agree together on whether to share spoilers from this novel. Once established, open discussion of this second novel by asking what anyone thought of the book. What did members like about it? Was it what anyone expected? How does it compare to book one?

## 1. Developing relationships

'And what was his secret? Focus! Focus and concentration!

"Jesus, Albert, you've drifted off again." - p.50

How has Scarlett and Albert's relationship developed since the first book? What has changed? What stayed the same? Who can say why they make a good team? Is it purely practical – Albert's ability and Scarlett's skills? Or if more than this, what is it that makes them work? For a good example, read through the conversation on page 393 together. Are they always honest with one another? Why do they behave like this? How do they really feel about each other?

## 2. Becoming

'The girl went with a steady rhythm, pigtails bouncing against the back of her neck.' - p.72

Look at the early flashback scenes depicted in the novel. Why is Scarlett referred to as 'the girl'? What is Stroud trying to achieve here? Why does the reader get glimpses of the past, before Scarlett tells Albert what happened? How do these scenes affect the reader's impression of Scarlett – how is younger Scarlett different from the present-day Scarlett? How the same?

## 3. Cataclysm

"What do you think *happened* in the cataclysm?" Albert asked.

"Gods know. Something very bad." - p.187

How does the reader's understanding of the cataclysm develop from book one to book two? Consider Albert's discovery on page 97 – does anyone think this relates to the cataclysm? What about the councillor's assertion on page 263? Is there a link between the cataclysm and the 'deviants'?

## 4. Mallory

'He was slight of frame, girlish and unmuscular. He looked as if a gust of wind might blow him down.' -p.82

How does the reader understand that Mallory is 'different'. What does the author do to create this contrast with other characters when he's introduced? Is it important that he isn't physically intimidating? Why? Compare and contrast Mallory with Albert – how are they the same? How different? You might want to look at the conversation from page 332.

## 5. The Wolf's Head

'Anyone breaking these RULES will be taken to the cellar.' - p.94

Look together at the description of the Wolf's Head from page 92. Discuss the 'covenant' – what does the Wolf's Head represent within the novel? What is significant about the phrase, 'the mask of friends'? Why does anyone think Albert loves it? What does it offer to him? Does it offer the same thing to Scarlett? How is order maintained in the Wolf's Head? How does this compare to other systems of law and order?

## 6. Navigating danger

"They were *never* my friends," she said. "But they *did* save my life a long time ago." - p.175

How do Scarlett and Albert cope with danger? What allows them to cope with the shifting dangers they face? Think about their attitude, e.g., Albert's ability to bounce back so happily from a narrow escape, or Scarlett's pragmatism in getting out of one problem, regardless of the next. How does this relate to the world Stroud has created?

## 7. Faith and charity

'He gestured at the girl and her brother, but still did not look at them. "It means we have some hard decisions."' - p.242

Discuss the 'Mentor' in the flashback from page 240. What is the Mentor's reason for not helping the young Scarlett and Thomas? Why does he not look at them? How does this scene affect the reader's understanding of the Faith Houses? Is there a justification for his behaviour? (To play devil's advocate, you could look at concepts like the greater good.) Does charity play a part in the Faith Houses? Are there any parallels or comparisons anyone can make with real-life examples?

## 8. Communities

“Shame Scarlett’s not here to enjoy this. Our very own pamphlet! Fancy!” - p.101

The action of the book takes place across communities tied together by trade, the Faith Houses, or even as sanctuaries for ‘outcasts’, all separated by the wilds, fens, or other dangerous terrain. What might it be like to live in one of these isolated communities? What effect would this have on the people living in them? How does this fit in with the ‘wild west’ theme, or the idea of outlaws (think ‘Robin Hood’). Why are there ballads written about them? What do these communities really want? Entertainment? Justice? Safety? Bloodlust? Can anyone compare this to periods of real history?

## 9. It’s the hope that kills you

“And that is my gift,” Teach said, “and my revenge upon you. There is nothing more to say.” - p.378

Consider the last exchange between Scarlett and Teach, from page 376. Why is this a ‘gift’ and a ‘revenge’? What does Teach mean? Compare this with Albert’s reaction to Scarlett’s statement, ‘He may be,’ on page 395. Why does this excite Albert so much?

## 10. The Ancients

“... several burned fragments of old books – because they’re after knowledge too – and, wait, what are *these* devices?” - p.208

Why does anyone think the Faith Houses are mining for ancient things, from before the cataclysm? Why did Soames and Teach want them? Who are the ‘Ancients’? Are they us? What might a post-apocalyptic world like the Seven Kingdoms find strange in what we find everyday and commonplace?