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# *Artemis Fowl*

by

**Eoin Colfer**

**2001**



MonkeyNotes Study Guide by Ray Mescallado

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## KEY LITERARY ELEMENTS

### SETTING

The story takes place primarily in Fowl Manor in Ireland and the underground land of The People - that is, the underworld realm the fairies fled to when humans took over the Earth. However, there are.....

### LIST OF CHARACTERS

#### Major Characters

**Artemis Fowl the Second** - This human is a legendary criminal mastermind to the Fairy people; in this novel we encounter him at twelve years old performing his first major heist.

**Butler** - Following a tradition between his family and the Fowls, he is Artemis' personal servant, a bodyguard trained in combat and stealth.

**Captain Holly Short** - The first female officer of the Lower Elements Police Recon unit (i.e., LEPrecon or "leprechaun"), she is kidnapped by Artemis Fowl and held for ransom.....

Many additional major and minor characters are identified in the complete study guide.

### CONFLICT

**Protagonist** - Artemis Fowl, a criminal genius mastermind at twelve years old, intent on.....

**Antagonist** - Captain Holly Short, abducted by Artemis Fowl and held for ransom at.....

**Climax** - Captain Short frees herself and works with Butler to subdue a troll attacking Fowl Manor. Artemis threatens to leave Holly in the castle to die from the bio-bomb the fairies intend to.....

**Outcome** - The ransom is paid, Captain Short is freed, and Fowl Manor is bombed. Artemis Fowl escapes, however, and in doing so is allowed to keep the ransom money. However, he.....

### SHORT PLOT / CHAPTER SUMMARY (Synopsis)

Though young Artemis Fowl the Second comes from a legendary family of criminals, the Fowls had lost a great deal of their fortune when his father Artemis Senior was apparently killed in the Arctic while carrying out a business scheme. Artemis' mother, Angeline, has gone insane from the grief of losing her husband. Determined to restore the Fowl fortune and establish his own reputation as an evil genius mastermind, Artemis – aided by his bodyguard / enforcer, Butler, as well as Butler's sister (and Angeline's servant) Juliet – hatches a plan to steal fairy gold.

In Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, Artemis strikes a bargain with a drunken fairy: he cures her of her alcoholism and restore her magic in exchange for a look at her copy of The Book, the guide that all fairy carry of the rules and rituals of their people. Making electronic copies of The Book, Artemis returns to Fowl Manor in Ireland and decodes it, making the secrets of the fairy people his own.

In the underground world of The People – as fairies call themselves, the same way they call humans Mud People – Captain Holly Short is the first female officer of the Lower Elements Police recon unit, better known as the LEPrecon, the true organization behind the leprechaun myth. She feels the pressure of.....

## THEMES

### Major Themes

**The struggle of good versus evil** is the most obvious theme, though it's given a light touch in this novel due to the sympathetic portrayal of the titular arch-villain, Artemis Fowl. Fowl fancies himself an evil genius, a criminal mastermind, but the reality isn't as simple as this image leads readers to believe. A related theme is that of the trickster figure, one of the major archetypes in many mythologies. Another related major theme is the issue of faith and loyalty: how far should a person believe in another person? What happens when one has conflicting loyalties or beliefs? There is also the issue of reality versus perception: how often do appearances deceive? In what ways can they deceive, and to what purpose?

An important major theme is that of **racial struggle** - perhaps better described as species struggle - between the humans and fairies. Having been driven underground by the so-called Mud People, the.....

Much more discussion of the themes is included in the complete study guide.

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION - BIOGRAPHY

Eoin Colfer was born in May 14, 1965, in Wexford, Ireland. His desire to write was always a part of his personality and is no doubt influenced by his parents: his father is an artist and medieval historian, while his mother is a playwright who has also taught drama.

Though he has lived much of his life in Wexford, an extended visit to Tunisia inspired his first published book. A school teacher by profession, Colfer was back in Ireland teaching at Coolcotts National School when *Benny and Omar*, a story about a Wexford boy who moves to Tunisia, was published in 1998; its sequel *Benny and Babe* followed the next year. This was followed by the ghost story *The Wish List* in 2000. In 2001, .....

## LITERARY / HISTORICAL INFORMATION

The Artemis Fowl series is often linked with other recent fantasy series that have won wide readerships among both young readers and adults. The most notable of these series is J.K. Rowling's Harry Potter series, while another is Christopher Paolini's Inheritance trilogy. In the same manner that the Harry Potter books combine the classic English boarding school novel with fantasy elements to create something new and appealing to modern audiences, Colfer combines fantasy elements with the tone and plotting of the espionage / thriller novel.

While there are many examples of this genre in popular culture, in literature it is perhaps best known by Ian Fleming's classic James Bond stories and Tom Clancy's more contemporary work. More .....

## CHAPTER SUMMARIES WITH NOTES / ANALYSIS

### PROLOGUE

#### Summary

"How does one describe Artemis Fowl?" He foils attempts to study him by medical reminds, and indeed has made some of the psychiatrists study them require mental care of their own. He is a child prodigy clearly, but why does he devote himself to crime? The best way to understand this villain is to consider his first adventure, built from interviews with those involved. The events take place at the start of the twenty-first century when Fowl was twelve years old.

#### Notes

As we learn from the Epilogue, this Prologue is written by Doctor J Argon, a minor character in the novel who has apparently devoted himself to studying Artemis Fowl. This prologue gives a sense of the notoriety Fowl will achieve in his life, affirming that young Artemis would indeed succeed in his quest to become a criminal mastermind. The scientific nature of the prologue's inquiry emphasizes the curiosity he engenders in those

aware of his deeds, a desire to understand someone that the prologue's author considers impossible to understand.

The prologue also serves a more subtle function: by plainly labeling Fowl in such negative - if awestruck - terms, the reader wonders if the writer of this prologue is too blinded by his opinions of Fowl to admit there may be a positive side to this legendary figure. This becomes clearer in the Epilogue, when readers know Artemis better and he becomes a sympathetic character.

## **CHAPTER 1: The Book**

### **Summary**

At a cafe in Ho Chi Minh City in summertime, Artemis Fowl is waiting with Butler, his loyal butler and bodyguard, for a lead. Fowl is worried that, like Butler's tip to Cairo, this is a wild goose chase. Butler, however, insists the lead is good. They are approached by a waiter who Fowl immediately knows is Nguyen Xuan, the man they were supposed to meet. Xuan is spooked by being so easily detected, as well as by the presence of the very large and well-armed Butler. Nervous, Xuan tells Fowl that he knows where to find what Fowl's looking for, showing a Polaroid of a drunken healer woman who lives near Tu Do Street. Fowl asks Xuan to take him and Butler to the woman and doesn't allow the informant to refuse. Entering the healer woman's darkened residence, Fowl puts on night-vision goggles and makes a proposition to the woman, who in turn asks for wine. Butler provides a pint of Irish whiskey, which the woman drinks greedily, showing the same green hand from Xuan's Polaroid. Xuan is finally sent off, fully paid, with firm instructions to keep quiet.

Artemis then speaks with the woman again, demanding her Book. When she pretends not to understand, he tells her he knows she's a fairy and he wants the Book all fairies carry. She threatens to harm him with magic; he knows she has no such power anymore and tells her if she doesn't hand over the Book, she will die within a day: the whiskey was spiked with holy water. If she hands over the Book for only thirty minutes, he will return her magic to her. Fowl has two vials: one with water from a fairy well below Tara which will counteract the holy water, the other a virus that feeds on alcohol and cure the fairy woman of her drinking problem, which in turn will restore her magic. The woman agrees to this: she is given a shot for the first vial, and in turn hands over the tiny Book to Fowl. Butler takes digital photos of every page and backs up those files. After the Book is returned, the woman has the second shot administered to her by Butler. Fowl and Butler take their leave now, as Fowl does not need to see the pains the woman will undergo in recovering from a hundred years of alcoholism.

The Butler family has been serving the Fowl family for centuries, each Butler trained from the age of ten and assigned to a specific Fowl. Butler has been with Artemis Fowl since birth and they share a close relationship. On their return flight, Butler asks why the sprite wasn't simply left to die; Fowl says that a corpse is evidence and that the sprite won't ever admit to what she did. Further, he included an amnesiac in the second injection that will leave the past week a blur to her. Butler is reassured by Fowl's ability to always think two steps ahead.

### **Notes**

The exotic setting of Ho Chi Minh City helps establish the mood of an international thriller. Nguyen Xuan's reaction to Artemis Fowl and Butler help the reader understand that the two already wield some notoriety in the criminal underworld.

The use of a digital camera to record pages from the Book show how Artemis plans to use technology against the People. The decision to spare the healer woman - to improve her life, even - is explained as a strategic move by Artemis. However, readers already suspect that there is some goodness in him - or at least, a refusal to cross certain moral lines, such as murder. Further, he shows that he is a person who values language and will use it to his advantage: that is, he will always stay within the letter of the law (what something or someone actually says or writes) even if he'll defy the spirit (the actual intention, whether or not it's clearly stated in the actual writing).....

## OVERALL ANALYSES

### CHARACTER ANALYSIS

Several of the characters in the novel are types often found in thrillers and espionage stories. For example, Captain Holly Short is the reckless rookie who has to prove her worth but has a knack for getting into trouble, while Commander Root is the curmudgeonly veteran who prefers the old way of handling things but still can get the job done. However, the main characters - those most involved in the battle between humans and fairy - go beyond their stereotypes and emerge as more complex personalities.

**Artemis Fowl** - Artemis Fowl goes through an interesting transformation as the title character of the book and series. With the intimidating Prologue and the opening scene in Ho Chi Minh City, Artemis' image is established as a young criminal mastermind, a heartless manipulator and scientific genius who accounts for every contingency. At the end of the novel he is not sure of the status of his criminal career, even though his master plan has succeeded as planned. Restoring his mother's sanity gives him personal happiness, but.....

**Captain Holly Short** - She is the most traditional character in terms of type and development. She has an unusual status, being the first female LEP recon officer. She is also a raw, reckless, unsure rookie: this lack of experience and even common sense is due to a good heart, but also why she gets caught by Artemis and Butler. If she had kept her magic abilities at reasonable levels and been careful during her.....

**Commander Julius Root** - He is the stereotypical veteran who's been away from the battlefield for a long time but forced back into action when someone he cares for is endangered - in this case, Captain Short. Rejuvenated by being back in the field, he also develops a strong bond with Holly, who he looks out for as he thinks she is the future of the LEP recon squad. Indeed, over the course of the novel Root ends up.....

### PLOT STRUCTURE ANALYSIS

The book's plot is straightforward, albeit highly detailed and quite intricate. To keep the plot moving quickly, there are often surprising reversals for the characters as their plans do not run as smoothly as they'd predict. The key plot twists often depend on a seeming factual minutiae being exploited by a particular character. Like a fair play mystery, Colfer gives the reader all the details to figure out what will happen next, but still manages to surprise the readers because these details are initially overlooked. Reading the novel a second time, the importance of these details stand out and become more obvious.

The point of view of the novel jumps frequently from one key figure to another. This helps.....

### THEMES - THEME ANALYSIS

The development of the theme of **good versus evil** seems obvious at first, as the evil Artemis Fowl has triumphed over the good Fairy People. The book seems to delight in the way a villain such as Artemis is able to outwit and manipulate Commander Root and his crack squad of LEP officers. This ties into the belief that villains are often much more interesting to an audience than heroes: while heroes have a purity and moral rectitude that can be unrealistic in the face of temptation, villains indulge in the less admirable qualities of human nature that all people feel and sometimes wish to pursue despite the rules of society. Heroes are what we're expected to be, while villains are what we are really like sometimes, and do things we'd often want to do despite wrongness of such actions.

However, Artemis isn't an entirely evil figure: he shows sympathy for the environment, is averse to killing, and even gives up half the ransom to restore his mother's mental health. Further, the other supposed villains of the story are all given redeeming traits: Butler is an honorable man who respects Holly Short's wish to not kill the troll, while Juliet is a good-natured young woman who softens Artemis' mood. The complications of the good

versus evil theme is played out in how this over-arching theme ties into other related themes, both major and minor.

As pointed out, while Artemis does fancy himself an evil mastermind, he is of a particular sort: the trickster figure. The trickster is seen in various mythologies and literature: Loki in Norse.....

A great deal of discussion and analysis of the themes is included in the complete study guide.

## **AUTHOR'S STYLE**

Written primarily in the style of a thriller, *Artemis Fowl* indulges fewer expository impulses than the traditional work of fantasy. Fantasy worlds are often elaborately designed and well-detailed, and the pleasure of reading them is in learning the various customs, histories, and biographies that create an otherworldly sense of wonder. This novel has that sense of another hidden world, but presents it in a less meditative, cohesive manner.

The typical techniques for the thriller genre is more allusive and much more propulsive. Where a fantasy often asks a reader to understand the intricacies of its fictional world in great detail, the thriller will inundate the reader with details that are absorbed only in passing as they hurtle towards completing a deadline-oriented mission. The genre is thus written to stylistically reflect such a pace, and such a method of.....

## **GENRE**

Fantasy / espionage thriller

## **POINT OF VIEW**

This novel is told largely by a third-person omniscient narrator in the past tense.

## **IMPORTANT QUOTATIONS - QUOTES AND ANALYSIS**

1.) The novel begins with this description:

Ho Chi Minh City in the summer. Sweltering by anyone's standards. Needless to say, Artemis Fowl would not have been willing to put up with such discomfort if something extremely important had not been at stake. Important to the plan.

Sun did not suit Artemis. He did not look well in it. Long hours indoors in front of a computer screen had bleached the glow from his skin. He was white as a vampire and almost as testy in the light of day. (3)

Notice that three of the first four sentences are clipped, incomplete sentences. This is a style that conveys urgency and efficiency, the kind of precision associated with stock figures in a thriller story: soldiers, assassins, tactical geniuses, and so on. The second paragraph creates a sense of menace with Artemis's presence: his skin is compared to that of a vampire, and indeed he sees himself as a kind of evil predator on the Fairy people. However, it also shows his vulnerability: he does not like being in the sunlight, which kills vampires according to legend, but suffers this inconvenience to get what he needs.

2.) Further, readers find out the reaction that Artemis and Butler provoke, even among other denizens of the international underworld:

Nguyen was by now thoroughly spooked. Artemis generally had that effect on people. A pale adolescent speaking with the authority and vocabulary of a powerful adult. Nguyen had heard the name Fowl before - who hadn't in the international underworld? - but he'd assumed he'd be dealing with Artemis senior, not this boy. Though the word "boy" hardly seemed to do this gaunt individual justice. And the giant, Butler. It was obvious that he could snap a man's backbone like a twig with those mammoth hands. (5)

Nguyen's reaction helps to further reinforce the notion that the pair are very dangerous. Despite being a child, Nguyen is afraid of Artemis' precocious behavior. Further, his knowledge of the Fowl family shows the rich history the Fowls have as master criminals. The fear of Butler is blunter and more obvious: Butler's size and demeanor is a clear physical threat. The contrast between Artemis and Butler is.....

Twenty-three additional quotations are examined in the complete study guide.

## **SYMBOLISM / MOTIFS/ IMAGARY / SYMBOLS**

The most important motif in the novel is the contrast between the People - that is, Fairy - and the Mud People - that is, humans. This reflects the way people of all kinds are seen, not as individuals that can be communicated with one another intimately and personally, but as members of communities who can be objectified and made less human (or less fairy) in that manner. Thematically, this contrast is reconciled to some extent, but the sense of "us versus them" nevertheless remains throughout the novel, a reminder that differences are often more powerful between people than similarities.

A related motif to the Fairy / Mud People distinction is magic and science, which represents the theme of primitivism versus rationalism / reason. Magic is supernatural, but in being so is also an extension of nature itself in the world of *Artemis Fowl* - it belongs to the fairy people. Science is an extension of rational thinking, and technology for modern-day humans has a power and reach comparable to the magic of the fairies. However, humans such as Artemis have lost a part of themselves by being too scientific, too rational. They have lost the "magic" of their being, the spontaneity of life and harmony with nature, the latter being a.....

Many additional items are identified and discussed in the complete study guide

## **IMPORTANT / KEY FACTS SUMMARY**

**Title:** *Artemis Fowl*

**Author:** Eoin Colfer

**Date Published:** 2001

**Meaning of Title:** The name of the main character, a twelve-year-old criminal genius

**Setting:** Around the world but primarily in Fowl Manor, Ireland

**Genre:** Fantasy / espionage thriller

**Protagonist:** Artemis Fowl

**Antagonist:** The Fairy people in general, Captain Holly Short in particular

**Mood:** Urgent, erudite, and light-hearted.....

## **STUDY QUESTIONS - MULTIPLE CHOICE QUIZ**

1. What is the true identity of the healer in Ho Chi Minh city?
  - a. A spy for the fairy people underground.
  - b. A fairy that lost its magic abilities.
  - c. A dwarf exiled for stealing from humans.
  - d. A human who had previously dealt with fairies.
  
2. What reason does Artemis give for leaving the fairy alive?
  - a. Butler should not waste bullets.
  - b. It is illegal and immoral to kill somebody in such a manner.
  - c. He did not want to leave behind evidence that would warn The People.
  - d. He gives no reason to Butler, who apologizes for being too inquisitive.....

### Answer Key

- 1.) b 2.) c 3.) c 4.) b 5.) d 6.) c 7.) c 8.) a 9.) b 10.) c 11.) c 12.) b 13.) c 14.) d 15.) c  
2.)

### ESSAY TOPICS - BOOK REPORT IDEAS

1.) What qualities about Artemis Fowl make him a compelling protagonist? Is it simply being a criminal mastermind, or is there more to it than that? What if he was more heroic - for example, what if Artemis Fowl comes from a family of spies that serve the Irish government? What is lost, what is gained? If Artemis was more villainous, was more of an evil figure, would he be as interesting a protagonist? Why or why not?

2.) What do we learn about The People over the course of the novel? In what ways are their community similar to human communities, in what ways are they different? Is there any significance in these choices, perhaps as a commentary on human values and beliefs? Compare the stereotypes humans hold about The People and the attitude The People hold about The Mud People. How are the tensions played out in the course of the novel? How does each side underestimate or misunderstand the other side, and how does this further the story in terms of plot and theme?.....

### ***END OF SAMPLE MONKEYNOTES EXCERPTS***

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