

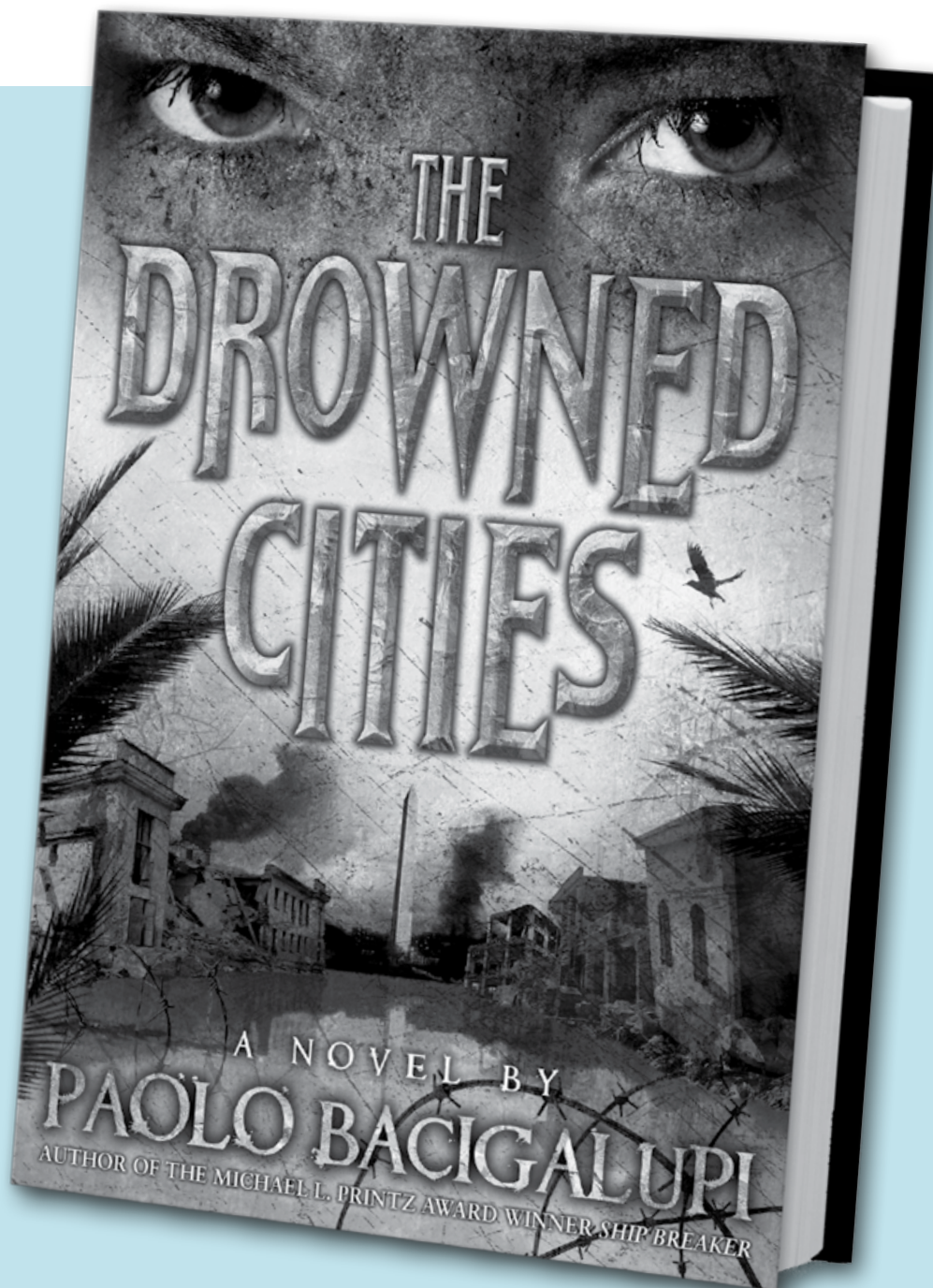
THE DROWNED CITIES

Curriculum connections

- ❖ Environmental Science
- ❖ Social Studies
- ❖ Language Arts

Ages 12 & up

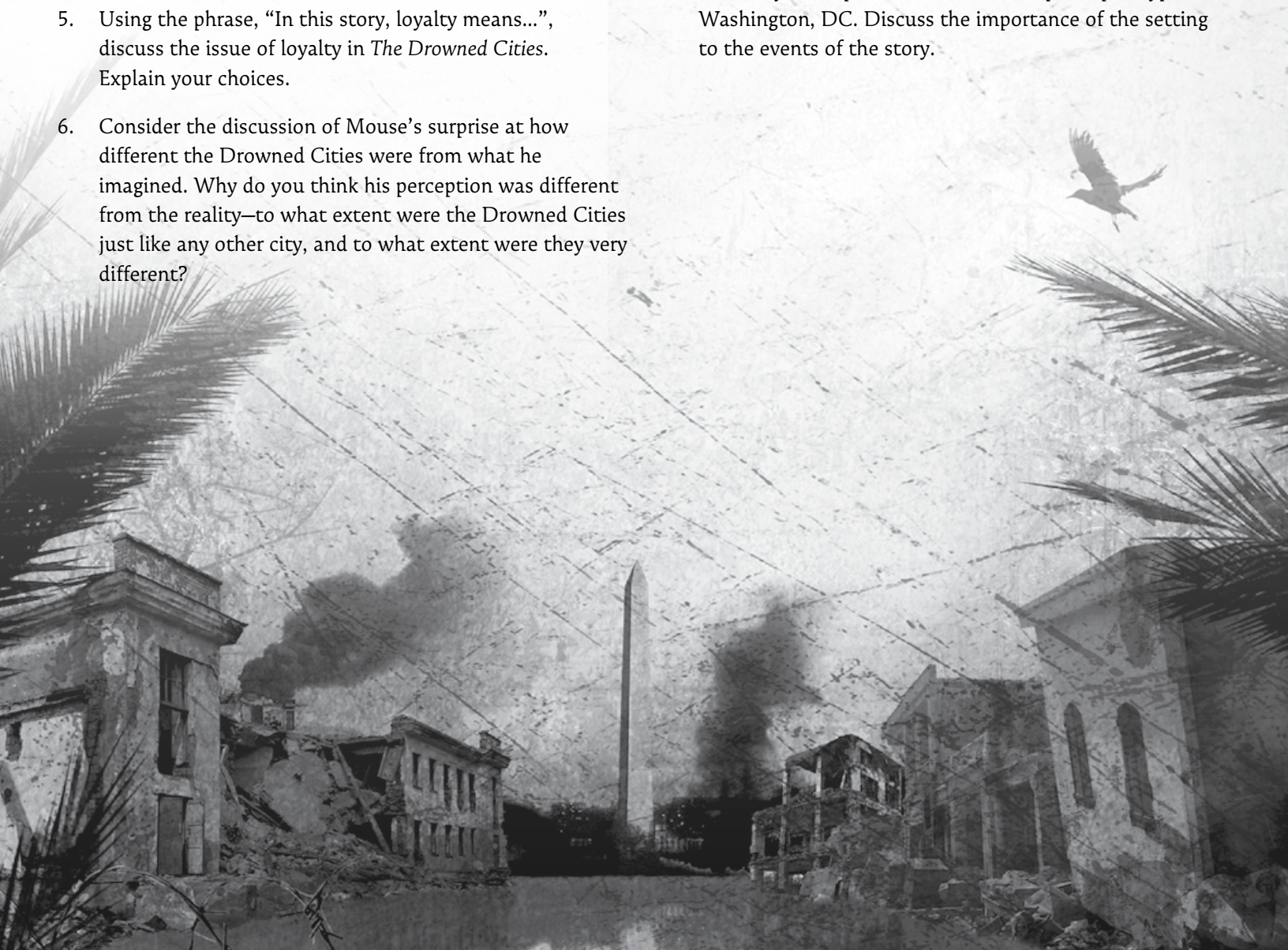
By
Paolo
Bacigalupi



THE DROWNED CITIES

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Use one or two descriptive terms to give meaning or context to the following characterizations in the early part of the story: *Dr. Mahfouz*, *Coywolv*, *UPF*, *Drowned Cities*, *Chinese peacekeepers*, *half-men*.
2. What does *survival* mean in the early part of the story? Consider how this concept varies in *Banyan Town*, in the *Drowned Cities*, for the paramilitary groups such as the *United Patriot Front*, for the *Chinese peacekeepers*, and for individual characters.
3. How would you assess the roles of *Mahlia* and *Tool* as “castoffs? Of *Sgt. Ocho* and *Mouse* as “warboys”?
4. Compare *Dr. Mahfouz* and *Mahlia’s* father as voices of peace in the midst of a terrible war.
5. Using the phrase, “In this story, loyalty means...”, discuss the issue of loyalty in *The Drowned Cities*. Explain your choices.
6. Consider the discussion of *Mouse’s* surprise at how different the *Drowned Cities* were from what he imagined. Why do you think his perception was different from the reality—to what extent were the *Drowned Cities* just like any other city, and to what extent were they very different?
7. References to family are woven in throughout the story. To what extent do the following relationships conform to or depart from your perception of family: *Mahlia & her parents*; *Mahlia, Mouse, & Dr. Mahfouz*; *Sayle, Ocho, & the warboys*; *Tool & his old platoon of half-men*; *Col. Glenn Stern & the UPF*.
8. Discuss *Tool’s* most significant contributions to the story. Is he, in fact, singularly a perfect machine of war?
9. Through the course of the novel, *Dr. Mahfouz* is variously disdained, scoffed at, ridiculed, and eventually blamed for his own death. What are your thoughts on this process?
10. To what extent are *Mouse* and *Ghost* separate characters?
11. The story takes place in and around a post-apocalyptic *Washington, DC*. Discuss the importance of the setting to the events of the story.



CONTEMPORARY CONNECTIONS ACTIVITIES

Though the setting for *The Drowned Cities* is a fictitious, post-apocalyptic America, many of the scenarios described in the story are all too real in other parts of the world. Use the following activities to not only enrich a study of the novel, but also to increase awareness and understanding of these issues in the world today or in the near future.

Child Soldiers & Militia/Paramilitary Groups

1. Create an “I AM” Poem

Purpose/Directions: The purpose of this strategy is to help students demonstrate knowledge of a character by following written prompts to complete a poem about one of the child soldiers in the novel, such as Ghost, Ocho, or Soa. If they do this well, they should demonstrate some understanding of the psychology used to turn young teens and boys into brutal killers. Students can be given the prompts to follow on a worksheet or alternatively, students may create an presentation using PowerPoint, MovieMaker, iMovie, Prezi, etc..

“I AM” POEM

FIRST STANZA:

I am (name the character)

I wonder (something the character is actually curious about)

I hear (an imaginary sound the character might hear)

I see (an imaginary sight the character meet see)

I want (something the character truly desires)

SECOND STANZA:

I pretend (something the character actually pretends to do)

I feel (a feeling about something imaginary)

I touch (an imaginary touch)

I worry (something that really bothers the character)

I cry (something that makes the character very sad)

I am (the first line of the poem repeated)

THIRD STANZA:

I understand (something the character knows is true)

I say (something that the character believes in)

I dream (something the character might actually dream about)

I try (something the character really make an effort about)

I hope (something the character actually hopes for)

I am (the first line of the poem repeated)

For artistically-inclined students, assign them the task of illustrating the characters from the novel. They should obviously emphasize things such as the youth and the scars of war of the main characters. Though this activity primarily focuses on the theme of child soldiers, it should be extended to characters like Mahlia, Tool, Dr. Mahfouz, and Lt. Sayle.

2. The use of child soldiers in civil conflicts has received significant attention in recent years, particularly in war-torn areas of the Developing World. However, it is hardly a recent practice. Have students research the use of child soldiers in some of the following modern and historical conflicts, and then develop a posterboard/collage or online visual for their subjects. Typical web-based products might include web pages (Google Sites, Weebly, Wix, Tumblr, etc. are free of charge), a digital interactive poster on Glogster, a video or narrated slideshow (YouTube, Vocaroo, etc.), or a podcast.

Themes or questions to guide their research might include:

- Recruitment and means of establishing loyalty
- Effects of the use of child soldiers on their communities
- Factors preventing authorities from halting the use of child soldiers, or preventing child soldiers from leaving their units
- Efforts used to rescue or rehabilitate child soldiers

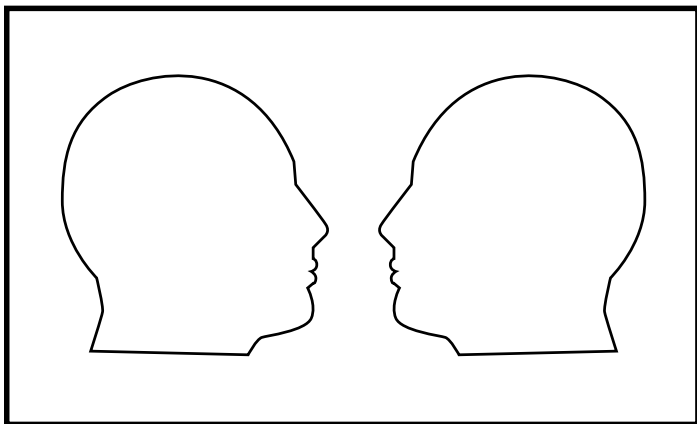
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3. Contemporary and historical conflicts in which child soldiers were used might include:

- Recent civil wars in Uganda, Somalia, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Cote d'Ivoire, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Iraq, and Afghanistan
- Former Yugoslav Republics (1990s)
- Colombia (1980s – Present)
- El Salvador (1980s)
- Angola (1980s)
- Cambodia (1970s – 80s)
- Vietnam (1960s – 70s)
- Resistance movements & homeland defense in World War II
- Russian Revolution & Civil War
- Mexican Revolution
- Drummer boys in American Civil War, Napoleonic Wars, American & French Revolutions, etc.

4. Militia and paramilitary groups are at the heart of any civil conflict. Their status is, by definition, highly controversial—are they freedom fighters committed to sacrifice lives for a cause greater than any individual, or lawless criminals engaged in brutal torture and murder?

- **Face-to-Face Activity:** Using reproducible copies, posterboards, whiteboards, or large sections of bulletin board paper, have student pairs/groups use images, key words, and symbols to fill in a “face-to-face” graphic similar to this:



- The subject of the graphic should be a character from the story, and the items used to fill in the heads should represent opposing perspectives on the character. Demonstrate for students using the UPF or the Chinese peacekeepers as examples.

Extend the activity by examining historical or contemporary militia or paramilitary groups:

- PLO in Israel/Lebanon/Jordan, Hezbollah in Lebanon, IRA in Ireland/UK, Red Army Faction in West Germany, Red Brigade in Italy, INC & Muslim League in India, Viet Cong in Vietnam, FLN in Algeria, ANC in South Africa, Nazi SA in Germany, Fascist Blackshirts in Italy
- FARC in Colombia, EZLN in Mexico, ETA in Spain, SDG in Yugoslavia, Shining Path in Peru, PKK in Turkey, Abu Sayyaf in the Philippines, Falun Gong in China, FLNC in Corsica
- Obviously, selections for this part of the activity should be chosen carefully, taking into account the student population in order to minimize emotional responses and maximize objective analysis.

Humanitarian Agencies and Peacemaking/Peacekeeping

The Drowned Cities is set in a place and time where humanitarian missions and peacekeeping endeavors have failed. However, the effects of their efforts certainly remain.

1. Have students create a table in which they list the actions or efforts of humanitarian/peacekeeping efforts in *The Drowned Cities* in one column, and their effects or legacies in the other. Discuss some of the challenges that would have been faced by the peacekeepers based on the descriptions in the novel.
2. Assign students or student groups to research the efforts of a few of the following humanitarian and peacekeeping missions, focusing in particular on the objectives of their missions, their specific efforts, the challenges they face, and the level of cooperation they get from those in the areas where they work. After sharing or presenting their findings, discuss challenges and potential means for overcoming them.

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- **Humanitarian Efforts:** International Red Cross/ Red Crescent, UNICEF, UNHCR, Doctors Without Borders, Invisible Children, Save the Children, Amnesty International, Oxfam International, USAID, WHO
- **Peacekeeping Missions:** UNMISS (South Sudan), MINURCAT (Central Africa), UNAMID (Darfur), MINUSTAH (Haiti), US Army ECC (Haiti), UNOCI (Cote d'Ivoire), UNMIK (Kosovo), EURFOR (Bosnia-Herzegovina), AMISOM (Somalia)

3. **Inner-Outer Circle Activity:** Following the research process, have students participate in a problem-based Inner-Outer Circle discussion. Potential discussion topics might be, 'What are the successes and legacies of humanitarian and peacekeeping efforts around the world today?', or 'At what point should a peacekeeping or humanitarian mission be considered a success or a failure?'

Economic Exploitation in War-Torn Regions

While still in Banyan Town, Mahlia's thoughts allude to a significant commerce still done in the Drowned Cities by peacekeeping organizations, international commercial interests, and the very paramilitary groups that drove them out. When both she and Mouse actually venture to the Drowned Cities, they are struck by just how much of this commerce is taking place...and how much of it hinges on labor enslaved by the UPF.

1. As a pre-reading activity, have students complete an anticipation guide structured in the following manner:

Instruct students to complete the guide by placing a "+" sign in the box next to the statements for which they agree, and a "0" next to those for which they disagree. They must commit to agreement or disagreement—there are no conditional responses. Students should be assured that there are no correct or incorrect positions. Once students have had the opportunity to complete the guide, the teacher reads each statement aloud and has students who agree show it by standing or raising their hands. Each student should be permitted to provide their rationale for agreeing if they wish.

Before Reading	After Reading	Statements
		The methods for procuring resources and manufacturing commodities are not consequential in a successful trade partnership.
		Political or social factors should be inconsequential in the establishment of an economic relationship.
		The value or benefit a trade relationship can provide outweighs any negative circumstances associated with it.
		International businesses have a responsibility to make certain their dealings don't involve civil rights, human rights, or environmental abuses.
		A business' or government's humanitarian efforts balance economic activity that may be questionable.

2. Instruct students to complete the guide by placing a "+" sign in the box next to the statements for which they agree, and a "0" next to those for which they disagree. They must commit to agreement or disagreement—there are no conditional responses. Students should be assured that there are no correct or incorrect positions. Once students have had the opportunity to complete the guide, the teacher reads each statement aloud and has students who agree show it by standing or raising their hands. Each student should be permitted to provide their rationale for agreeing if they wish.

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3. Mahlia's ticket out of the Drowned Cities (and perhaps to a better life) is the cache of American artifacts from her mother's secret warehouse that she uses to pay for passage for her and warboys aboard the clipper. Presumably these items will be taken abroad to be put into museums or sold on the open market. Have students design a poster or web page for a mock museum exhibit or auction for some of the items Mahlia smuggles out. Then have students write "pro & con" essays or editorials in which they either defend the preservation of these symbols of American history in museums or private collections abroad, or denounce the practice as a form of cultural hijacking. Consider having students investigate contemporary examples of this (e.g., Persian & Greek pieces in the British Museum, Egyptian pieces in France, art stolen by the Nazis now held in Russia, Austria, & France, etc.).
4. Contemporary examples of economic activity by the Developed World conducted in the Developing World under questionable circumstances abound—from conflict diamonds, to computer/laptop parts recycling, to Coltan mining, to (not coincidentally) shipbreaking. Have student groups research examples such as these and develop a presentation, video, podcast, web page, etc., evaluating the pros and cons of these economic relationships for both sides.
5. As multinational corporations from around the world and their consumers have become more aware of business relationships involving exploitative practices, they are making a concerted effort to either remove themselves from these relationships or to end the exploitation entirely. Assign student pairs or groups a multinational corporation to research for the purpose of identifying and assessing what they are doing to end exploitative practices in markets where they are involved. Remind students that this process is still relatively new, but should have a common objective: are their dealings in these economies providing fair employment and compensation practices in safe environments? Have groups present their findings.

Health/Medicine and Human Rights in Destabilized Areas

Dr. Mahfouz is the symbol of these issues in *The Drowned Cities*. Trained and equipped by Chinese peacekeepers, he tries

desperately not only to offer medical attention and service but also to encourage all around him to respect the dignity of their fellow men and women. His struggle in the text proves futile, but perhaps the lessons of his efforts will live on through Mahlia.

1. **Primary Source Analysis:** Assign students to read the Universal Declaration of Human Rights drafted and ratified by the United Nations in 1948. Versions of the document are readily available in social studies resources and online, and the full text of the document is available on the UN website at <http://www.un.org/en/documents/udhr/index.shtml>. Provide the students with some context, introducing the document as a response to the horrors and hardships that World War II placed on societies around the globe. Consider doing this as a "flipped classroom" activity by producing a short slideshow or podcast that students can view or listen to as homework.

Discuss some of the most poignant mandates of the Declaration:

- Do you notice any prior documents or mandates that served as inspirations for this one? (They will likely readily associate it with the American Declaration of Independence or the French Declaration of the Rights of Man & Citizen. Prod them to consider inspirations for those documents, or to consider the myriad of documents that they inspired).
- In general, what are the things that the Declaration considers the most essential human rights?
- How attainable are the rights identified in the Declaration? Consider this not just for developed states, but also for those who are among the poorest in the world and are also signatories.
- How ambiguous or interpretive are the mandates identified in the Declaration?
- To what extent are the mandates in the Declaration able to be enforced? Who is responsible for that? To what degree (i.e., is enforcement still implied to be obligatory even if there is significant resistance to it?)?

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- How might the Declaration apply to the world of *The Drowned Cities*? Where are there clear violations? Attempts to uphold the tenets of the Declaration? If we assume the Chinese peacekeepers were attempting to enforce the Declaration, how should we assess that effort?

2. As a service learning activity, assign students to investigate projects or programs that attempt to address human rights issues, and to organize a campaign to raise awareness and support for one that they feel strongly about addressing.

- Ideally, this effort would focus on local issues and needs. Students may be more engaged and find the project more dynamic if the focus of attention and action is placed on local homeless shelters, programs to provide school supplies to needy children, Angel Tree activities during the holidays, clothing drives, mentoring programs such as Big Brothers/Big Sisters clubs, and so forth.
- International human rights watches and relief programs abound:
 - Invisible Children's efforts to halt the conscription of child soldiers in Central Africa and Sudan
 - Efforts by UNICEF and the EU human rights commission to end human trafficking.
 - Red Cross programs that focus on hunger relief and medical care.
 - Education efforts undertaken by USAID, the Hewlett Foundation, and Save the Children.
 - Efforts by Water is Basic and The Water Project to provide potable drinking water in developing countries.
 - Programs organized by the HALO Trust to clear land mines from areas utilized by civilians in former war-torn regions.

3. Have students or pairs do a media search in which they investigate five credible stories from media outlets that illustrate the challenges and successes of training

caregivers and providing medical care in the Developing World. Students should focus on gathering well-researched stories from credible sources. Many media outlets provide streaming video and audio stories on topics such as these (e.g., NPR, BBC, CNN), so encourage them to go beyond print sources.

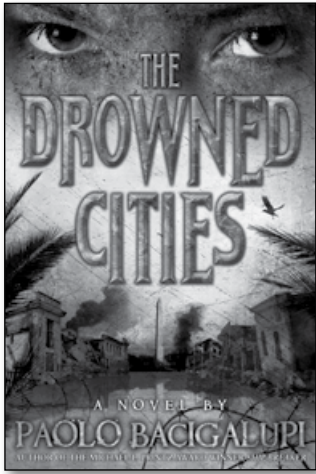
Genetic Engineering

Tool is one of the more compelling characters in *The Drowned Cities*. A member of a species genetically engineered to be a perfect (and obedient) machine of war, he alternately burns to unleash his genetic predispositions to kill and fiercely resists being compelled to return to servitude. Is Tool a miracle of modern science, or is he a warning about nature's ability to take even our manipulations in another direction?

1. **Examining Alternative Literary Genres:** With the assistance of your librarian or media specialist, collect samples of comic books and/or graphic novels that involve superheroes with some kind of mutation or scientifically-altered identity (e.g., the X-Men, Captain America, Spider-Man, the Hulk). Assign students to do a comparison/contrast of these characters with Tool and the half-men. Then have them write an essay addressing the question, 'What does the creation of 'superfighters' in fiction, and our attraction to them as readers, tell us about ourselves?' Encourage them to address the interplay between the efforts of science to perfect these warriors, only to have them be flawed in some respect.
2. Assign student groups to research current efforts in research and development to protect/perfect soldiers at war, civilian populations, vital equipment or technology, and so forth. The use of drones rather than manned aircraft, the development of "armored skin", explosive insects, and guided bullets are examples of possible topics. Require students to address both the advantages and disadvantages of these efforts. Present to the class using multimedia resources.

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about the book

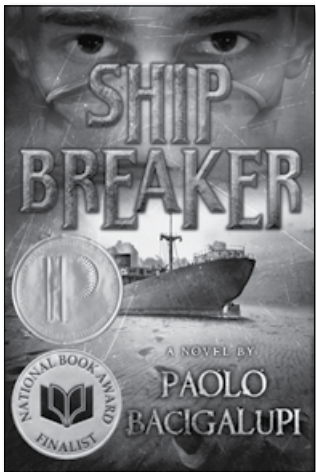


THE DROWNED CITIES by Paolo Bacigalupi

978-0-316-05624-3

Once a proud, mighty country, America been destroyed by the excesses of the Accelerated Age. Warlords and their fanatically loyal child militias are engaged in endless conflict terrorizing communities in their path. Even international peacekeeping forces have been unable to stop the violence. The tiny settlement of Banyan Town has been able to avoid being swept up in the violence, and war orphans Mahlia and Mouse are able to think back often on earlier times when they and their families were whole. A discovery in a nearby swamp changes all of that, and though Mahlia sees an opportunity to escape across the border, the arrival of brutal United Patriotic Front troops instead brings the war to her very doorstep. The consequences will take the pair to the very heart of the war in the Drowned Cities, and will challenge everything they believe about friendship, loyalty, and humanity.

also by Paolo Bacigalupi



SHIP BREAKER

978-0-316-05619-9 PB

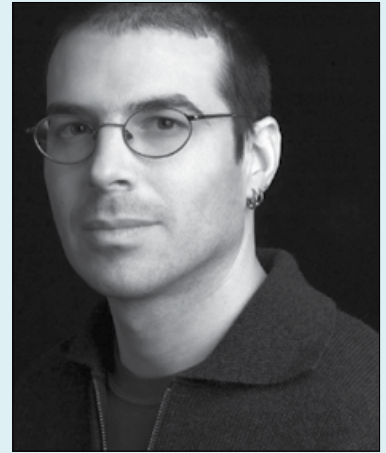
**2011
Printz Award
winner!**

**National
Book Award
finalist!**

In America's Gulf Coast region, grounded oil tankers are being broken down for parts by crews of young people. Nailer, a teenage boy, works the light crew, scavenging for copper wiring just to make quota-and hopefully live to see another day. But when, by luck or by chance, he discovers an exquisite clipper ship beached during a recent hurricane, Nailer faces the most important decision of his life: Strip the ship for all it's worth or rescue its lone survivor, a beautiful and wealthy girl who could lead him to a better life...

In this powerful novel, Paolo Bacigalupi delivers a thrilling, fast-paced adventure set in a vivid and raw, uncertain future.

about the author



Paolo Bacigalupi is the author of *Ship Breaker*, a Michael L. Printz award winner and a National Book Award finalist. He is also the author of *The Windup Girl* and *Pump Six and Other Stories*, and a Hugo, Nebula, Locus, Compton Crook, John W. Campbell Memorial, and Theodore Sturgeon Award winner. He lives in western Colorado with his wife and son.



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This guide was created by Rose Brock, a school librarian and doctoral candidate at Texas Woman's University, specializing in children's and young adult literature, and Michael Brock, an AP European History and IB History of the Americans HL teacher at Coppell High School in Coppell, Texas.