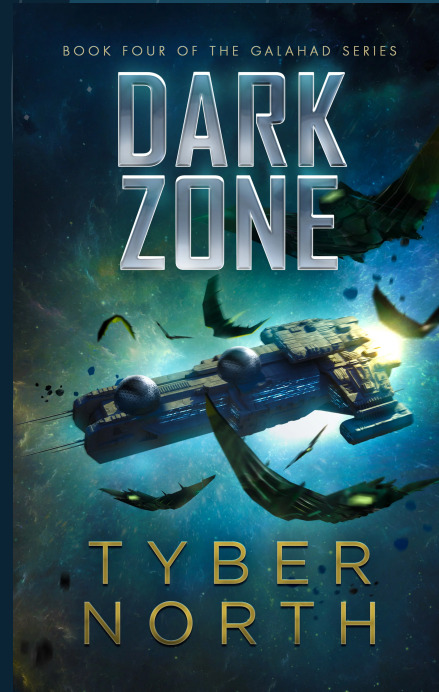


**THE GALAHAD SERIES / BOOK FOUR**

# Dark Zone

**STUDY GUIDE**

Writing activities,  
research projects, and  
discussion questions for  
teachers and students.



## WRITING + RESEARCH

# Activities

These projects are designed to deepen comprehension while inviting students to imagine themselves aboard Galahad.

## I. THE SAME, DIFFERENT

A

So much of Dark Zone is about change. How do you think you've changed in the past year? Divide a sheet of paper into two columns. Date the right-hand column with today's date and the left-hand column with the date one year ago. In the right column, jot down a few facts about yourself today, from appearance (hair color, height, style) to activities (sports, arts, volunteering) to relationships (home address, responsibilities around the house, best friends). Complete the left column, describing the status of your right-column entries on the earlier date.

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B

Write a brief essay commenting on the changes (or lack of changes) you demonstrated in exercise I.A, above. Compare and contrast your observations with those of friends or classmates.

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C

Put yourself into the character of Triana, Lita, Bon, Gap, Channy, Alexa, or Taresh and write a journal entry that begins: "I never expected to change in this way, but . . ."

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D

One of the key reasons the crew struggles to form a plan to deal with the mysterious vultures stems from the fact they can't determine whether the creatures are biological or technological, primitive or sophisticated, alive or not alive. Using graphics, models, PowerPoint or other presentation software, imagine you're a crew member giving a presentation to the Council (portrayed by classmates or friends). Explain the ways you perceive the vultures to be similar and/or different from humans, the Cassini, Roc, or other species or technologies of your choosing.

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## II. THE BRAIN-MIND MYSTERY

A

Conduct research on the brain-mind relationship. Create either an information poster or write a brief profile on one or two scientists or philosophers who've studied this relationship. Possible subjects could be René Descartes, Steven Pinker, Geoffrey Hinton, or Daniel Dennett.

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B

Many of the influential thinkers who have written on the brain-mind mystery have touched on the issue of logic versus emotion. We see this issue in the way Channy deals with her feelings for Taresh. Think of a time in your life when your heart may have interfered with your head and write a brief essay describing your experience. Or, write about a literary character who struggled with the same problem, and offer advice you would give to this character.

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C

Create an art piece (sculpture, collage, poem, musical composition) that depicts the struggles that teenagers cope with because of this brainmind mystery.

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## III. DARK AND LIGHT

A

Imagine you're the Galahad crew member assigned to oversee the funeral service for Alexa. Create an outline of events, speakers, and other elements of the service. As you put this program together, keep in mind this may not be the last death aboard Galahad and that in some ways you're establishing a new tradition of grieving. How will that affect your program?

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B

Dr. Zimmer and the designers of Galahad understood the Domes would become a popular location for crew members to relax and reflect. Use artwork (paint, chalk, colored pencils, or other visual media) to create a picture of this spot, with or without the frightening image of a vulture attached to the outside. Write a brief essay, poem, or song that details how the arrival of the vultures disturbed the peacefulness of the place.

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C

Either in the library or online, conduct research on dark energy, wormholes, or black holes. Then create a poster illustrating the interesting facts you've uncovered and share this with classmates or friends.

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D

Along with a friend or classmate, role-play a conversation between Roc and Triana, debating her decision to plunge into the wormhole. You may use some of the information you gleaned from III.C, above. Then, in the character of Triana, write two paragraphs explaining why you've chosen to leave Galahad and explore the wormhole.

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E

Triana's decision clearly impacts everyone on Galahad. In the voice of Bon, Lita, Gap, or Channy, write a journal entry describing your feelings about her decision and your thoughts about how this affects the Council.

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## READ + REFLECT

# Questions for Discussion

Use these questions for classroom discussion, small-group work, written responses, or independent study.

1

In the introduction to Dark Zone, Roc poses the question of the differences between the brain and the mind. How would you describe those differences?

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2

How is the opening scene of the novel important? Throughout the course of the book, do you believe Alexa made the right choices about sharing her dreams? Do you see similarities between her handling of the dream crisis with the way Channy dealt with her romantic troubles? Explain your answer.

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3

As they move closer to the one-year anniversary of their departure from Earth, the crew has faced a variety of challenges, both technologically and emotionally. Have you ever faced similar challenges, whether it's in your home life, your time at school, or in some other relationship? Describe how they might be similar and the solutions you (or someone else) employed to deal with them.

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4

In chapter 2, Taresh says, "The path we've all taken is a part of who we are. How can you appreciate what you have if you have nothing to compare it to?" In this instance, he's referring to historical events. But how does Taresh apply this belief on a personal level? Do you agree with him? What advice would you offer Taresh in terms of his relationship with Channy?

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5

Why do you think Triana initially chooses to not warn the crew about the vultures? Do you think this was wise? In what other instances in the book does she withhold information about a situation? Could these decisions relate to the tension between the brain and the mind?

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6

Throughout Dark Zone, which characters struggle with relationship issues, romantically or otherwise. What effect do these internal crises have on the characters' abilities to do their jobs and to focus on the problems at hand? Do you think it's inevitable that humans will always struggle with this balance?

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7

Describe the impact of Alexa's death on the crew, particularly on the individual Council members. For whom do you think this death hit the hardest? How has Alexa's passing changed the Council members in terms of their outlook on Galahad's mission?

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8

Early in the novel, Triana notes that "Every horror movie fan knew that the terror didn't come when the monster jumped out at you; no, the real panic lurked in the shadows, torturing you with what might be there." Do you find this to be true? Does this apply only to the vultures or to the Galahad mission in general? Given that the entire journey involves encountering one unknown after another, what impact might this have on the crew emotionally?

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9

By the end of the book, what opinions have you formed regarding the vultures? Do you believe they are independent creatures, or do you think they're somehow connected to another galactic life-form? Are they friend, foe, or something else? Do you agree with Triana's decision to prevent Lita from performing an autopsy on the dead vulture and instead to send it back through the wormhole?

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10

In chapter 27, Bon attempts to explain his relationship with Alexa to Triana: "It wasn't the freakish experiences that we had. It was the fact that those experiences meant that we, more than anyone else, needed a real, human connection. We needed to connect with someone on a basic level, maybe more than anyone else on this ship. We needed to reassure ourselves that we were still human, that we weren't freaks." Do you think these words hit home with Triana? Could Bon's feelings resonate with people who have exceptional intellect or unusual talents?

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11

Do you feel that Triana made the right decision to go alone into the wormhole? Is it possible that her emotional state may have affected her decision? Can you make a rational argument for her actions? Do you think she'll find her way back to Galahad? Explain your answers.

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