

Taming the Thames: Self-actualisation through Liminality in the *Infernal Devices* series

Young Adult literature is obsessed with liminality. Not only are adolescents stuck in a liminal space between childhood and adulthood they are often stuck between failure and success, hope and resignation and fantasy and reality. A liminal space is also created when the fantasy world of Young Adult literature intersects with real places. With this in mind, the river Thames in London is a location that is simultaneously magical and non-magical, real and imagined and provides a liminality to its adolescent protagonists. It not only bisects the city but also provides a crossing that can be either metaphorical, physical or both, that can lead a protagonist towards a new beginning, an ending, or become a passage towards death or apotheosis. *The Infernal Devices* series by Cassandra Clare features both the Thames and a Downworld: a mirror version of London where young protagonists encounter danger and magic while discovering their own abilities. For my paper, I propose to investigate the transformative role of the Thames in *The Infernal Devices* series. Further, I argue that the Thames takes on a mythical quality like that of the river Lethe and that its very presence within key scenes in the series points to moments of particular character development and growth. The convergence of the real and unreal is particularly important to the series and leads readers to question the importance of the world of fantasy within real places. Liminal spaces, usually borders or crossings, often feature water. The Thames and its well-known bridges provides readers with a map to London which they too can follow. The traversing of water in ancient mythology often led to forgetfulness in order for a hero to be reborn. By using a comparison to ancient Greek mythology, I aim to explore the function of the river Thames on the protagonists of the *Infernal Devices* series. Just as the crossing of the river Lethe to the Underworld and surviving the return was a key step towards heroism in ancient Greek myth so too does this encounter with the Thames propel Will, Jem and Tessa towards their own versions of heroism.