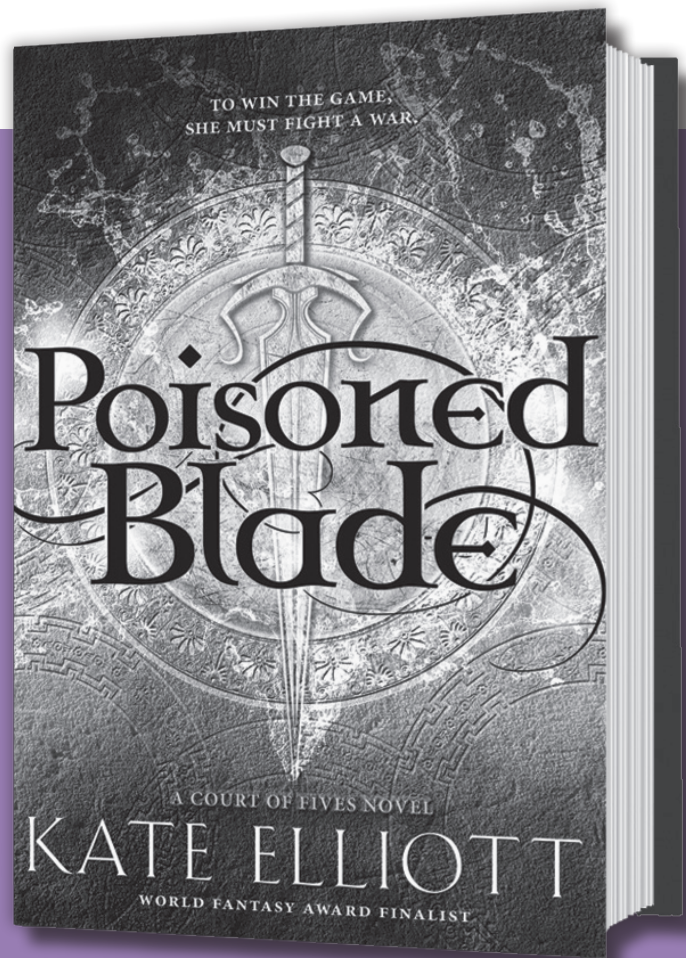
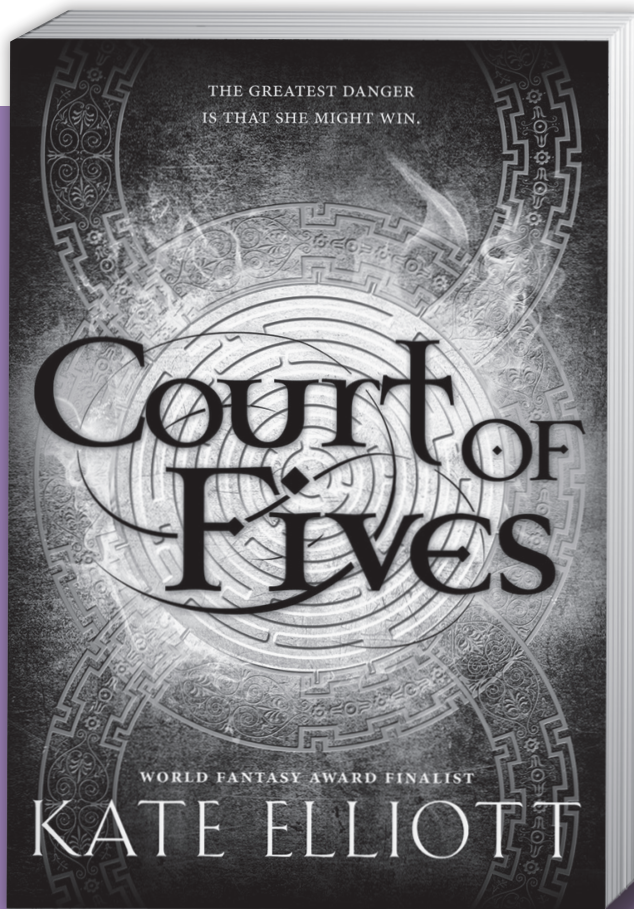


Court of Fives

Poisoned Blade



Curriculum connections

- ❖ Women's Studies
- ❖ Prejudice & Racism

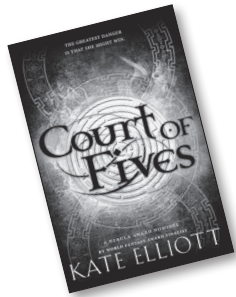
Ages 12 & up

SERIES ACTIVITIES & DISCUSSION PROMPTS

- The purpose of a book trailer (or movie trailer) is to spark interest in the book. When a book (or movie) is about a sequel, the trailer involves some of the backstory from the first installment and then leads into a theme or event that will spark the reading (or viewing) of the second. Create a book trailer (or a storyboard for one) for *Poisoned Blade*, incorporating some background from *Court of Fives*, but primarily focused on initiating interest in book 2. Typically, trailers last between a minute and a half and three minutes.
- Historically, when one group or race of people asserts power over another, the powerless (known here as lowborn/Commoners) are denied rights and privileges of the powerful (known here as highborn/Patrons). Compile a list of the ways the Patrons discriminate against the Commoners, including such slights from differences in physical appearance, language or speech patterns, and strictures such as limitations on marriage, seating at sports events, and living quarters. Compare the treatment of the Commoners by the Patrons to historical discrimination, such as slavery, Jim Crow laws, or the treatment of Native populations in the United States.
- It has been said that history is written by the victors. What does this phrase mean? How does it manifest itself in the customs, beliefs, religion, and plays of Efea over the course of the books?
- Read Robert Frost’s poem “Mending Wall,” paying particular attention to the lines “Before I built a wall I’d ask to know/What I was walling in or walling out.” The presence of masks, including those fashioned for the wearer, those assumed by individuals to hide their emotions, or the mask that covers the City of the Dead, beg a similar question: Are masks hiding the wearer/geography or the viewer? Is it the conqueror or conquered who gains the most from the masks?
- In the world of Efea, every body has 5 animating souls (p. 115 of *Court of Fives*): (1) the vital spark, (2) the shadow, (3) the self, (4) the name, and (5) the heart. Readers witness the transference of the vital spark (“the breath, which separates the living from the dead”) from one body to another on several occasions—in book 1 at Lord Ottonor’s funeral and in the buried ruins beneath the City of the Dead, and in book 2 when Prince Temnos suffers a seizure, when Cestas asks for the honor of serving after death, and in the battle field when Lord Kalliarkos stops breathing. Discuss how each of these transferences is similar and how they are different. Do they represent magic or science? Why?

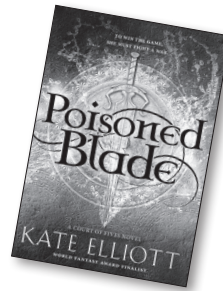
Court OF FIVES

Poisoned Blade



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR COURT OF FIVES

1. At the beginning of the novel, twin sisters Bettany and Jessamy are both rebellious spirits within their household, but they manifest their rebellions in different ways. How does each rebel against their family circumstances?
2. Create a family tree for the royal family, beginning with Kliatemnos the First and Queen Serenissima, showing the relationships (marriages and births) of their lineage. Why is Kalliarkos said to have a dual claim to the throne? What makes him different from his family of Patrons?
3. Reread the Oracle's prophecy at the beginning of the book. Discuss how this prophecy plays out during the course of the novel.
4. The number five is central to both novels, to the traditional beliefs of Efea, and now to the Patrons who rule the country. List the five souls of the body and what each soul represents. Then, list the five sections of the Fives Court and what each section represents. How do these elements intersect when Jessamy is leading her mother out of the tombs?
5. When Coriander and Jessamy are in the tomb, Coriander tells Jessamy: "Even the kindest Patron is cruel, Doma. They all walk on the bones of dead Efeans and never give it a thought" (p. 300). Do you agree with this statement? Explain your answer.

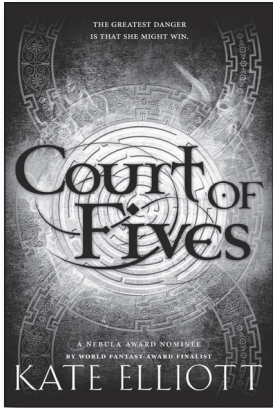


DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR POISONED BLADE

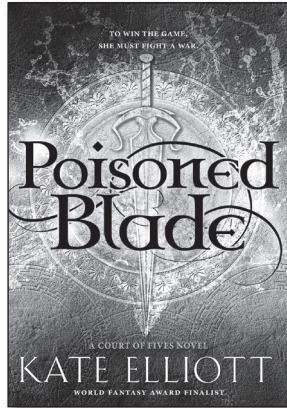
1. By the end of *Poisoned Blade*, Jessamy and Bettany are both leading their own rebellions. How do these protests differ? How are they alike?
2. In the first novel, Kalliarkos rejected all the practices, ideals, and methods of the royal family. But by the end of the second novel, is he completely divorced from all family members?
3. Code-switching is the practice of switching back and forth between two or more languages, or between two dialects of the same language. It can also refer to switching between "identities" in cultural and interpersonal situations. How is code-switching essential to Jessamy's survival? Cite specific examples from the book. Then consider how and when you use code-switching in your own life.
4. Saroese women and Efean women are treated differently within their individual social groups. How are those differences manifested? Why do you think such differences exist?
5. Like many athletes in our own world, Jessamy receives accolades and celebrity that cross social classes. How does she use that celebrity to her advantage? How does her training in running the Fives help her in her actions off the court?

Court of Fives ~ Poisoned Blade

about the series



COURT OF FIVES
HC 978-0-316-36419-5
PB 978-0-316-36430-0



POISONED BLADE
HC 978-0-316-34437-1

ALSO AVAILABLE IN AUDIOBOOK AND EBOOK FORMATS

★ “Jes will remind readers of fearless Katniss with her skill and strategy for games. But it’s the fascinating descriptions of traditions, royal interactions, and, of course, the intensities of the Fives that will enthrall readers most of all. Let the games continue!”

—Booklist

★ “With strong characters and vivid worldbuilding that refuses to oversimplify individuals, cultures, and the opposing forces they represent, this sequel to *Court of Fives* blends emotional intelligence, passionate idealism, and realpolitik in a plot ending at the cliff’s edge of revolutionary change. At once nuanced and thrilling.”

— Kirkus Reviews



April Quintanilla

about the author

Kate Elliott is the author of more than 25 novels, including her young adult debut *Court of Fives*, its prequel e-novella *Night Flower*, and *Black Wolves*. She has also written the Spiritwalker trilogy, the Novels of the Jaran, and the Crossroads trilogy. Two of her books have been finalists for the Nebula Award and the World Fantasy Award. Kate was born in Iowa, raised in Oregon, and now lives in Hawaii. Visit her website at kateelliott.com or follow her on Twitter @KateElliottSFF.



LITTLE, BROWN AND COMPANY
BOOKS FOR YOUNG READERS

LittleBrownLibrary.com

This educator’s guide was prepared by Betty Carter, an independent consultant and professor emerita of children’s and young adult literature at Texas Woman’s University.