

# THE ATHERTON TRILOGY



## Curriculum connections

- ❖ Trust
- ❖ Friendship
- ❖ Family
- ❖ Power
- ❖ Self-Sacrifice

Ages 8 – 12

By  
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## ATHERTON: SERIES ACTIVITIES

### The Creations of Dr. Maximus Harding

Dr. Maximus Harding creates many machines, technologies, and creatures throughout the series of Atherton. Ask students to select at least one of Dr. Harding’s creations from one of the books and identify it in the following way:

**Name and Category:**

**Reason or Purpose for Existence:**

**Habitat:**

**Success or Failure? Explanation:**

**Illustration:**

All items should be completed on one half of a poster board. The poster boards should be posted as part of a gallery—Dr. Maximus Harding’s Magnificent Creations. (Visual/Spatial and Naturalist)

### Thematic Threads

Ask students to brainstorm a list of five themes that run throughout the series, such as friendship, trust, power, self-sacrifice, and family. Then divide the students into five groups and assign each group one of the themes. Ask the students to create a visual; such as a timeline, flow chart or mural to show how their theme threads its way throughout the series, using examples from each of the books. (Mathematical/Logical and Verbal/Linguistic)

### Atherton: The Play

After Dr. Kincaid and Vincent return to Atherton from the Dark Planet, Dr. Kincaid says that for Dr. Harding, “saving the Dark Planet was a story that had to be told, not a problem that needed to be solved” (page 344, Book 3). Divide students into three groups and assign each group one of the books from which to write a script. Students should plan how best to

accomplish their task by subdividing their group into smaller groups to achieve their goal. Each group should then prepare, practice, and then perform their part of the series. (Bodily/Kinesthetic and Verbal/Linguistic)

### Space around the Dark Planet

Draw or create a scaled model of the Dark Planet in relation to Atherton. In addition to the Dark Planet and Atherton, have students use details from the books and their imagination to add other planets and celestial bodies in scale proportion. Include orbital paths and label all entries. Expand this activity by holding a discussion of gravity in terms of Atherton’s rotation around the Dark Planet. (Visual-Spatial)



## Atherton: House of Power

### SOCIAL STUDIES CENTER

When Mr. Ratikan plans to poison the people in Tabletop, he uses a natural poison from the older fig trees. Ask students to investigate poisonous plants that can be dangerous to animals and pets. This web site might be a helpful place to begin: <http://www.ansci.cornell.edu/plants/comlist.html> After identifying three or four poisonous plants, students can make a brochure, identifying the plant along with a picture and instructions to follow if the plant is ingested. Brochures can be posted in the library. (Naturalist)

Next to water, figs are the life's blood on Atherton. They make everything taste sweeter, and they were used for negotiations, food, weapons, fuel, and bargaining chips. Ask students to make a chart of the life cycle of the fig from sapling to the third harvest. List the benefits and the detriment of each cycle and discuss the problems of the harvesting process in Atherton. Ask students to devise a more efficient and equitable plan of distributing the figs so that people in Tabletop will receive some of the benefits of their labor. Ask students to justify their plan based on numerical calculations. Students should be prepared to discuss and defend their plan. (Logical-Mathematical)

On page 26 in *River of Fire* the author states, "Friends can feel things in times of peril, as if a long, thin string holds them carefully together, tugging at one another through the open space of a dangerous world." This is true for Samuel, Isabel, and Edgar throughout the story, but it is also true for other friends, both new and old, in the story. Working with a partner, ask students to divide a sheet of paper in half and on one side of the paper list the friends that have this bond. Then on the other half of the paper write the dangerous situation they shared, held together by a sense of togetherness. Have students work with their partners to role play the situation being careful to include specifics of the situation and conveying the emotional bond between the friends. (Intrapersonal)

### SCIENCE CENTER

Dr. Kincaid tries to explain the creation of Atherton to Edgar on page 224 in *The House of Power*, but the terms make no sense to him. Have students define and explain the following words: micro-science, biomechanics, DNA, gravity, orbit, and ecosystem. As a class, discuss how all of these are relevant to the novel. Have students work with a partner to rewrite the exchange between Dr. Kincaid and Edgar explaining the terms in kid-friendly language so that Edgar understands the terms. (Verbal-Linguistic)

The Dark Planet is Earth in the year 2105. Dr. Kincaid talks about three waves of advancement—agricultural, industrial machines, and the rise of information—all of which overwhelm the planet's natural resources. Working with a partner, ask students to investigate programs available in their community, state, and country to help save the planet. Each pair should prepare a newspaper, magazine, television, or Internet public service announcement calling for public action and including appropriate media specific effects. Each pair should present the announcement to the class and be prepared to display it throughout the school for a greater awareness of recycling and the Earth's preservation. (Interpersonal)

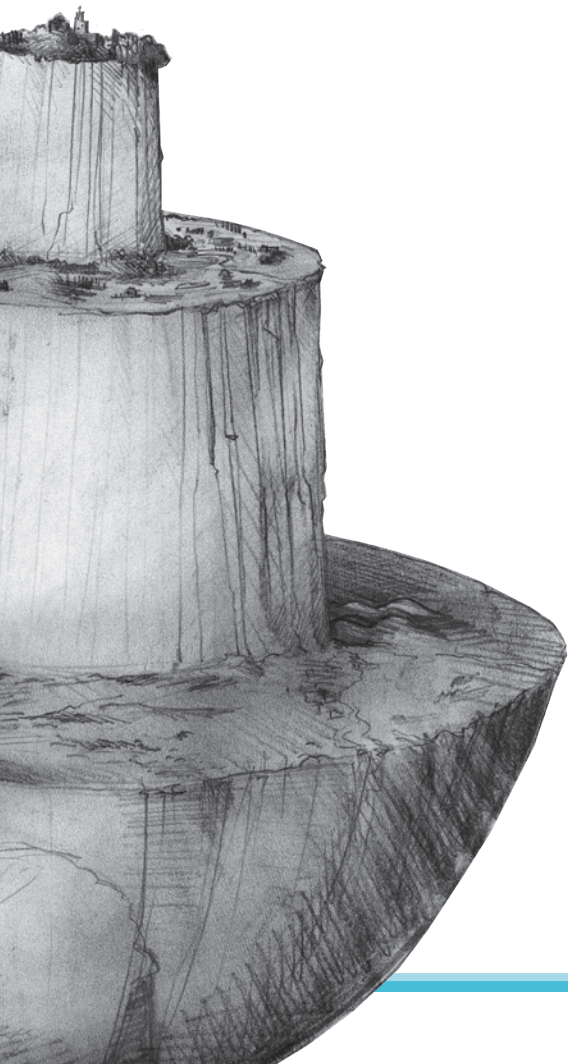
### ART & VISUAL CENTER

Go to the Atherton Series web site [www.hachettebookgroup.com/features/athertonseries/](http://www.hachettebookgroup.com/features/athertonseries/) and enter the Educator section of the web page. Select "Writing Atherton," and then under the heading "A System of Writing," show students both five-minute video clips. Ask the students to listen carefully for Mr. Carmen's suggestions on how to build a model of a new world. After the clips, ask students to select a partner and give them time to design their model of Atherton or the new Atherton. Once they have committed their design to paper, give them time outside of class to gather the construction materials they will need to complete their model in addition to class time to build their models. The completed models should be displayed in the classroom or the school's library. (Bodily-Kinesthetic)

## READING & WRITING CENTER

After Isabel leaves with Samuel to find the water supply, “Isabel wished with all her heart that she could write and her parents could read” (page 310, *The House of Power*). Ask students to assume Isabel’s voice and write a letter to her parents expressing her feelings about leaving them behind. (Intrapersonal)

Edgar has never seen a horse before and is fascinated, albeit apprehensive about his encounter. Have students read the description of the animal on page 88 in *The House of Power*, making a note that the author never reveals the kind of animal. Then ask students to write about an animal or object that is common to us from the viewpoint of an alien visiting from another world. Remind students to use descriptive words and phrases, similes, and metaphors without revealing the type of animal or object. Ask students to share their pieces with the rest of the class, as they try to guess what others have described. (Verbal-Linguistic)



## MUSIC & DRAMATIC CENTER

To ease his loneliness, Edgar makes a rhyme about himself (page 209, *The House of Power*) Read it aloud to the class. Challenge students to write a poem about themselves or their families and to put it to music or rap. Then ask students to volunteer to perform their poem in front of the class. (Musical)

## GENERAL QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. In *The House of Power* many friendships are forged during the turmoil in Atherton. What are the qualities of a good friend? What is the difference between Edgar’s friendship with Samuel and the relationship between Dr. Kincaid and Vincent? How do the friendships forged in *The House of Power* change in *Rivers of Fire*? What new friendships develop?
2. In *The House of Power* the people of Tabletop are forced to serve the people in the Highlands. Lord Phineus abuses his control over the water, and Mr. Ratikan treats the workers cruelly. What do the people who live in Tabletop want? How do they go about getting what they want? How does Mr. Ratikan finally get what he deserves?
3. Besides the hiding place of the key to the water source, do you think Mead’s Head holds great significance in the story? What do you think Mead’s Head is modeled after?
4. Dr. Kincaid discusses how Atherton was populated and the notion of readiness training. Have students read the last paragraph on page 246 in *The House of Power*. Then ask them, “If you were presented with that scenario, would you go? Do you think you would be selected? Why or why not? What purpose would you have served in Atherton? To which level would you be relegated?”

# Atherton: Rivers of Fire

## SOCIAL STUDIES CENTER

Horace and Maude agree that their only chance for survival is uniting against their one foe—the Cleaners. After convincing Charles, the leader of the Village of the Grove, and Wallace, leader of the Village of the Sheep, the four leaders initiate a plan to fight the Cleaners. However, many men die as a result of their plan. In small groups, devise another plan to defeat the Cleaners, using all the resources available. Each group should first outline their plan and prioritize all the steps. Then each group can present their plan and the reasons for their decisions. Working toward a consensus, the class can select the plan they perceive to be the most effective. (Interpersonal)

Lord Acton, a British historian of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries said, “Power tends to corrupt; absolute power corrupts absolutely.” Examples of this in history are Adolf Hitler, Saddam Hussein, and David Koresh. Ask students to work in groups researching other infamous historical tyrants and personages to determine the choices they made as leaders that brought corruption to their country and shame to them personally. After group sharing and discussion of research findings, have the groups take a stance that Dr. Harding, aka Lord Phineus, either corrupted Atherton with his evil control of water and people, or regardless of his actions, Atherton was destined to fail. Have each group write and post their conclusions in the form of a public proclamation to his guilt or innocence. (Verbal-Linguistic)

## SCIENCE CENTER

In small groups, ask students to make a time line from page 1 to page 293 of the drastic changes that occur on Atherton. At each point in the time line, a brief explanation should be made to explain what event occurred at the point. Display the time lines on the walls in the class room. (Logical-Mathematical)

When Edgar gives the figs he has saved to one of the workers from the grove, the man walks off to begin planning for a new grove. Ask students to research how to start a grove with

three figs. They can draw their plan on poster board, showing how to harvest the fig seeds so they can be planted, then how to care for the saplings, then ultimately, how to plant the saplings. (Naturalist)

Dr. Harding makes several mistakes when he creates animals—Crats, Nubians, Cave Eels, Cleaners, and Fire Bugs to name a few. Each of the “mistakes” does have a purpose even though they are deadly to humans. Ask students to investigate other hybrid and mutant animals on the Internet and choose three or four that could serve a purpose in Atherton. After students make their selections, they should print or draw a picture, explain how the animal is created, and the purpose it would fulfill on the new Atherton. Students should make a presentation to the class. (Naturalist)

On page 255 and again on page 270, Dr. Kincaid tries to explain how the Fire Bugs and the Cave Eels work together to make electricity that runs Atherton. Ask students to research electricity by reading this website <http://www.eia.doe.gov/kids/energyfacts/sources/electricity.html> and others to gain a general understanding of how electricity works. Then draw a simple flow chart or diagram explaining how the Rivers of Fire, the eels, and the Fire Bugs generate electricity to run Atherton. Display the diagrams in the classroom. (Visual-Spatial)

## ART & VISUAL CENTER

Edgar, Dr. Kincaid, and Vincent feast on plates of black and green. Ask students to create a meal of black and green and/or paint an impressionist/abstract image of black and green. Have students name their culinary abstracts or creations and share them with the class. (Visual-Spatial)

Most of the illustrations in the *Rivers of Fire* are reproductions of Mr. Carman’s journal entries, but he has written numerous descriptive passages that evoke imagery. For example: on pages 65-66 when Edgar helps Vincent and Dr. Kincaid down the slippery slope into the highlands; a scene from Chapter 14 when Lord Phineus reunites with Dr. Kincaid and Samuel reunites with his father; from Chapter 30 when the Cleaners

attack the people trying to leave the Grove; pages 279-283 when Edgar rescues Charles, Eliza, and Adele. Ask students to select one of these passages or one of their own choosing and illustrate the scene using pen, ink, pastels, watercolors, or another medium. Display the art work in the classroom or in the school's library for other students to enjoy.

(Visual-Spatial)

## READING & WRITING CENTER

Chapter 23 in *River of Fire* conveys the depth of feeling between Wallace and Horace, men from diverse backgrounds who come together to fight for a common goal against a common foe. Ask students to reread this chapter, writing down words and phrases that capture the essence of the relationship and the meaning of life as experienced by each of the men. Then have the students arrange the words and phrases into a found poem to share with the class.

(Verbal-Linguistic)

Go to the Atherton Series website [www.hachettebookgroup.com/features/athertonseries/](http://www.hachettebookgroup.com/features/athertonseries/) and enter the Educator section of the web page. Select "Writing Atherton," and then under the heading "Developing Characters," show students both five-minute video clips. Ask students to select another character in the Atherton series and interview an expert in a similar field—for example: a soldier or guard, a person who works on a farm, or a scientist. Try to discover the expert's history and his or her feelings about what he or she does. Have students write a one page synopsis of their findings. (Verbal-Linguistic)

## MUSIC & DRAMATIC CENTER

In groups of three, ask students to write a skit depicting the planning of the new Atherton. The students will need to determine the following: Who will decide the location of the new villages? In what village will the survivors from the Highlands live? Who will maintain peace? How will the water be taken from the lake? After the skits are completed, ask students to perform them in front of the class.

(Bodily-Kinesthetic)

With a partner or in small groups, ask students to select the theme song from a popular television show, and using the tune from the song, write new lyrics based on an event that

occurs in *Rivers of Fire*. Students may want to write about the inversion of Atherton, the adventure through Mead's Hollow, the harrowing fight with the Cleaners, or the relationships that are built or destroyed in the story. Students should record their songs to play for the class or perform them live with a back-up tape. (Musical)

## GENERAL QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. In *Rivers of Fire* when Dr. Kincaid meets with Lord Phineus in Mead's Hollow, Lord Phineus, with some hesitation and fear, transforms to Dr. Harding (page 150). What power does Dr. Kincaid hold over Lord Phineus to force the transformation? What immediate changes occur in Lord Phineus?
2. Most of the lives lost in the battle against the Cleaners are men from the Highlands. What is ironic about the fact that they die to save the lives of people who lived on Tabletop? How do you think the surviving wives and children of the fallen men will be treated? In what villages will they choose to live?
3. Dr. Kincaid states that Dr. Harding has a brilliant young mind (page 234) and that he wants to please everyone. But in the end, he pleases no one because of the pressure. "There's a lesson in that, don't you think?" (page 235). What is the lesson? Who should have learned the lesson?
4. How does Edgar's self-image change when he learns he is not an orphan? How does knowing that Dr. Harding created him for Atherton give him purpose? At what point does Edgar step into his destiny to help save Atherton?
5. On page 297, Dr. Kincaid reflects, "The birth of Atherton had to include people, or it wouldn't have worked." What does he mean by this? Why couldn't people have been brought in after the inversion and been spared the nightmare of the Cleaners and the cataclysmic inversion that brought death to so many?

# Atherton: The Dark Planet

## SOCIAL STUDIES CENTER

On page 46, Vincent struggles with the decision of placing the needs of Atherton society above the safety of Edgar's life. Ask students to find an example of the sacrifice of one individual for the common greater good in their community, state, or country. Each student should write a brief explanation of the conflict to present in small group discussions including how the conflict was resolved and the persons involved in the resolution. Once groups have completed their discussions, they should be prepared to share the highlights with the entire class. (Interpersonal and Intrapersonal)

The children from the Silo are grateful to be on Atherton. Ask students to assume one of their voices and to write a letter of thanks and appreciation to Vincent, Dr. Kincaid, or the leaders of Atherton. They should include in their letters details of the specific trials they have had to endure while living in the Silo. (Verbal/Linguistic)

## SCIENCE CENTER

Even though dragons are mythical creatures, ask students to work with a partner to investigate and list the physical properties and characteristics generally attributed to most dragons. Then students should make a list of the physical properties and characteristics Gossamer possesses. Using a Venn diagram, ask students to compare and contrast both lists and to determine what makes Gossamer so special and his powers so great. Have students use information from the Venn diagram to create an Ode to Gossamer, immortalizing her special powers. (Naturalist and Verbal/Linguistic)

## ART & VISUAL CENTER

Many of the creatures, plants, and machines seen on the Dark Planet defy imagination even with Mr. Carman's descriptions. Ask students to select one of the items above and to make a model using clay, wire, paper mache, or another medium. Students should display their models in the school library with a brief description and the name of the object. (Visual/Spatial)

## MUSIC AND DRAMATIC CENTER

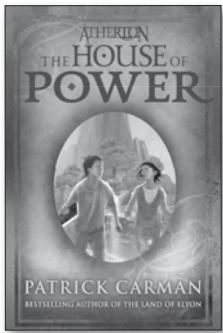
Ask students to work with a partner to write original theme music or to use computer-generated music for a specific reoccurring event throughout the novel. For example, when Red Eye and Socket appear, or when the Raven appears and disappears, or when Commander Judix arrives on the scene.

As a class presentation, have the students read one of the scenes that includes their reoccurring event and play their music at the appropriate points. (Musical/Rhythmic)

## GENERAL QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Why do you think so many of Dr. Harding's creations kill or maim others? What is his intent when he creates monsters and bugs that kill? Why do so many of his creations involve fire and lava?
2. What compels Edgar to leave Atherton to go to the Dark Planet knowing that he may not be able to return? Why does he leave without telling Samuel and Isabel? What is their reaction?
3. Dr. Harding leaves the Raven to Edgar with little instruction on how to operate it, but Dr. Harding tells Edgar that the Raven is alive, just like Atherton and just like him (page 96). How does this clue help Edgar figure out how to operate the Raven? What other "reminders" does Edgar have to help him?
4. When Edgar arrives on the Dark Planet, what mistakes does he make that land him in the Silo as a worker? What benefit does he gain from going to the Silo as a child worker?
5. Edgar notices that the Cleaners on the Dark Planet are different than those on Atherton. What are the differences? Why are they different? Why have the Cleaners continued to change?
6. While Edgar is on the Dark Planet, Samuel and Isabel are on Atherton on an adventure of their own. What mistakes do they make that cost them time and place them in danger?
7. As the Raven leaves the Dark Planet without Commander Judix, how is Aggie able to show empathy toward her, knowing how cruel the Commander has been to Aggie and her friends?
8. Edgar needs Hope's help to bring him the powder block. Why doesn't he offer to take her and the other children in the Raven with him back to Atherton? What are his future plans?
9. What does Dr. Kincaid mean when he says, "For Dr. Harding, saving the Dark Planet was a story that had to be told, not a problem that needed to be solved" (page 344).

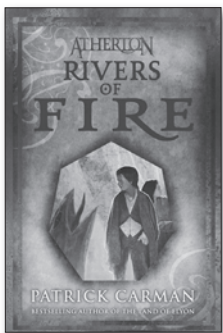
## about the books



A riveting adventure set in an extraordinary satellite world—created as a refuge from a dying Earth—that begins to collapse and forever change the lives of its inhabitants. Edgar, a gifted climber, is a lonely boy scaling the perilous cliffs that separate the three realms of Atherton: a humble fig grove; a mysterious highland world of untold beauty and sinister secrets; and a vast wasteland where he must confront an unspeakable danger that could destroy the people of Atherton. When Edgar discovers a book which contains the history of Atherton’s origins and ultimate apocalypse, his world—quite literally—begins to turn inside out.

### ***Atherton: The House of Power***

978-0-316-16670-6 HC • 978-0-316-16671-3 PB • AR 6.1, F&P U



The world of Atherton has collapsed, but the worst is yet to come. While Samuel and Isabel sneak into the House of Power in search of water, Edgar attempts to avoid the deadly Cleaners. He and his companions travel to Meads’ Hollow, a refuge at the heart of the sinking Highlands, as they look for the mysterious Dr. Harding. But this strange place holds more secrets than they had ever dreamed. With theme evocative of *Paradise Lost*, a spectacular flood that echoes Noah’s disaster, and a shocking revelation about Edgar’s past, *Rivers of Fire* delivers a tremendously satisfying conclusion that will tantalize imaginations for years to come.

### ***Atherton: Rivers of Fire***

978-0-316-16672-0 HC • 978-0-316-16673-7 PB • AR 6.2, F&P U



When Edgar discovers a way to leave the mysterious satellite world of Atherton, he couldn’t have imagined the gloom that awaited him on the Dark Planet, where the oceans are toxic, the forests are full of mutant monsters, and children toil in darkness, controlled by ruthless maniacs. Max Harding, an orphan of the Silo, the maker of Atherton, and the last hope of a dying world, left this place behind, and now Edgar is determined to complete the mad scientist’s spectacular plan, revealing Atherton’s true purpose.

### ***Atherton: The Dark Planet***

978-0-316-16674-4 HC • AR 6.2

## about the author

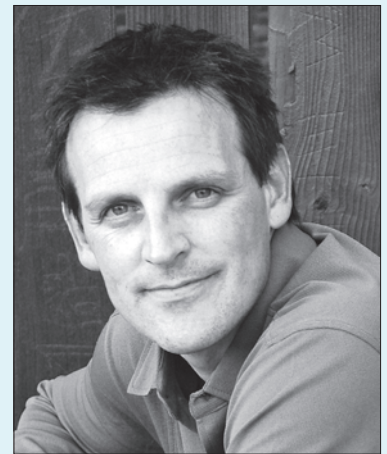


Photo by Matthew McKern

Patrick Carman, bestselling author of *The Land of Elyon* series (including *The Dark Hills Divide*, *Beyond the Valley of Thorns*, and *The Tenth City*), grew up in Salem, Oregon. When he’s not writing or speaking at schools, he can be found in (or near) Walla Walla, Washington: fly fishing, playing basketball, snowboarding, making videos, cheering for his kids at soccer games, strumming his guitar, surfing the Web, getting involved in local and international charities, and teaching tricks to his dog, Taffy. He also has been spotted in town reading *Frankenstein* by Mary Shelley and *The Turn of the Screw* by Henry James, two of the inspirations for the story of Atherton. Learn more about Patrick Carman on his web site at [www.patrickcarman.com](http://www.patrickcarman.com).

