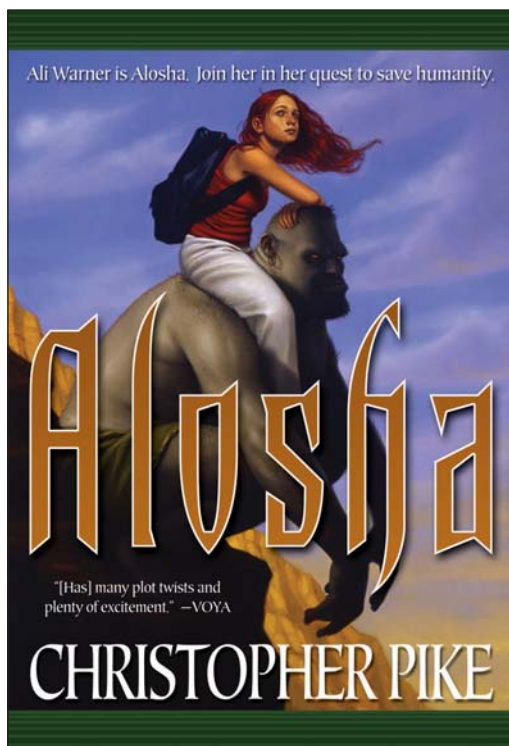




Christopher Pike

Alosha



“A fast-paced combination of intrigue and fantasy. Readers are sure to be captivated.”

—SCHOOL LIBRARY JOURNAL

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Christopher Pike is the author of numerous bestselling fantasy and horror novels. His critically-acclaimed books include *The Blind Mirror*, *The Season of Passage*, *Sati*, and *The Cold One*. He lives in Santa Barbara, California.

ABOUT ALOSHA

Ali Warner is not an ordinary girl but, at the beginning of her thirteenth summer, she doesn't know this yet. Ali's affinity for the forest is another thing she doesn't quite understand. She turned to the trees for comfort in the wake of her mother's death, but is the wilderness much more than a simple place of solace? This question becomes crucial when Ali hikes into the woods to protest the actions of loggers and is pursued by mysterious, non-human creatures. Joined by her friends, Cindy, Steve and Karl, she returns to the woods to discover the identity of her attackers and is soon battling a wild array of trolls and fairies from another dimension. Guided by a mysterious force called Nemi, Ali learns that she must stop the entry of these elemental creatures into her world by climbing to the mountaintop to close an inter-dimensional portal called the Yanti. Buried deep within Ali's memories and dreams is the reason she is called to this mission, along with other important truths about her concern for the forest, about the people she calls friends, about her mother's death, about the powers she wields and, most importantly, about her real identity. If Ali does not realize this final truth in time, her beloved forest, and the rest of the earth, may never be the same.

ABOUT THIS GUIDE

The information, activities and discussion questions which follow are intended to enhance your reading of *Alosha*. Please feel free to adapt these materials to suit your needs and interests.

WRITING AND RESEARCH ACTIVITIES

I. LEGENDARY CREATURES

A. The “elemental” characters in *Alosha* also exist in myths, folktales and legends. Go to the library or online to learn more about the concept of elementals. (Hint: Try researching Celtic folklore.) What are sprites? How do dwarves, trolls, fairies and leprechauns fit into the elemental lexicon? Based on your research, create a diagram defining these characters and showing their relationships to each other.

B. Paint or draw a mural featuring the elementals from *Alosha* on a large sheet of paper (at least 4' X 6'). Surround your images with definitions, descriptions, and the titles of folktales, myths, or contemporary stories about these creatures.

C. Find the definition of “leprechaun,” which derives from the Gaelic word *luprachán*. How does this definition help you to understand Paddy? Using your research, clues from the novel, and your imagination, write a short biography-style story entitled, “Understanding Paddy” or “Paddy Revealed” in which you help to clarify his character.

D. Who, what, or where is “Nemi”? Go to the library or online to research the answer to this question. Then write a short essay explaining why you think Christopher Pike chose this name for Ali’s advisor and what you believe to be the true identity of this character.

E. Find examples of stories, poems or plays about mischievous fairies, such as William Shakespeare’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* and the fairy tale *Rumplestiltskin*. Make a recommended reading list of fairy stories. Or, write your own short story involving a mischievous fairy disrupting human lives.

II. TREES AND MOUNTAINS

A. Ali, who feels a special affinity for the forest near her home, objects to the actions of the local logging company. Learn more about the logging industry, techniques for forest preservation, and the environmental organizations for which this matter is of concern. Find a recent news article—from a local paper, if possible—describing a conflict between industrialists, such as loggers, and environmentalists over the treatment of a forest or other wildlife area. Divide a group of classmates or friends into two groups to debate the positions of the industrialists and environmentalists regarding the conflict. Write a newspaper-style article reporting the results of your debate.

B. The elemental characters in *Alosha* are not happy with the way humans have treated the earth. Write an additional chapter for the novel in which the elementals discuss their anger with the humans. Before beginning your chapter, decide which characters will be present, where the discussion will take place, and how they will come to the decision to enter Ali’s dimension through the Yanti.

C. Farble calls Ali by another name, “Geea.” Go to the library or online to learn more about the mythological Greek character Gaea and/or James Lovelock’s Gaia theory of a living earth. Present your findings to friends or classmates. Although the spellings differ slightly, do you think Christopher Pike was thinking about mythology or Lovelock’s Gaia theory when he wrote this novel? If yes, how does this information affect your interpretation of the story of *Alosha* and of the battle she fights? Discuss your research and analysis with classmates or friends.

D. Giant redwood trees, such as those found in California, have been suggested as models for the Gaia theory mentioned in exercise IIC, above, because they are mostly dead matter with a slender ring of living, growing bark at the outermost edges. Do you think that the tree in which Nemi first appeared was a giant redwood? Why might this make sense? Go to the library or online to learn more about this special tree. Then, create an informative poster about the giant redwood.

III. NAMES AND IDENTITIES

A. Are the names of things important? In the play *Romeo and Juliet*, William Shakespeare wrote, “A rose by any other name would smell as sweet.” What does this statement mean to you? Do you think Ali would have been able to discover her special powers if she had not realized her secret names? In the character of Ali, write a paragraph in which you describe your frustration at not being able to realize your true identity, or a paragraph in which you explain the importance of your secret names.

B. Make a booklet or chart recording the human and/or elemental nature, personality traits and name(s) of the characters in *Alosha*. If desired, draw illustrations of the characters based on the descriptions found in the novel. Present your booklet or chart to classmates or friends.

C. Ali has more than one secret name. She also renames Farble and his friends. Look through the novel to find more examples of the importance of names and naming. Then, write a poem, song lyrics, or short essay in which you explore the relationship between names and identity.

D. Have you ever imagined that you were really someone else, perhaps a member of royalty or someone with some type of exceptional powers? Imagine you receive a mysterious letter from someone you have never met before explaining who you are, why you have your current identity, and what your future holds. Write that letter.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. In the first chapter of *Alosha*, Ali wants to go to the logging site not merely to protest but also “to say goodbye to some of her favorite trees.” What is unusual about Ali’s feelings for the forest? In what other ways does Ali seem extraordinary?
2. What important elemental character does Ali meet in the novel’s opening chapter? What does he do? At the outset of the story, do you think he is a good or evil character?
3. How does Ali escape the misadventure that befalls her in Chapter 2? What dream does she have at the close of Chapter 3? How do these experiences foreshadow later events in the novel?
4. Describe Ali’s relationships with her Dad and Cindy. How does she seem to have adjusted to the loss of her mother? Would you have adjusted similarly to such a loss? Explain your answer.
5. Who attacks Ali when she, Cindy, and Steve return to the forest in search of a “bigfoot”? What powers does Ali realize within herself from this experience?
6. What is Nemi? Why do you think one meaning of its name is “No One”? After being called “Alosha,” what does Ali mean when she tells Nemi, “I remember the name but don’t really remember it”? Have you ever had such a feeling about a memory? Explain.
7. What is important about the attack on Ted? How does Ali’s concern for Ted compare to her care for the forest?
8. What happens when Ali tells Karl about her experiences? How do Cindy and Steve react to Ali’s tale? Compare and contrast these reactions.
9. How do the friends prepare to return to the forest? What strikes you as odd about their preparations? Does Ali truly know what she is supposed to do? Why is she so committed to climbing to the mountaintop?
10. Does Ali trust Paddy? What does he teach her about the other elementals in the forest? Why does Ali trust Farble? How do Paddy and Farble help Ali realize who she should trust? When does Ali truly understand their signals?

11. In the midst of chapter 10, Ali recalls the night her mother died. What important clues about Ali’s true identity and current situation are revealed through this memory?
12. What new powers does Ali discover when the dark fairies attack? What happens to her friends during this attack?
13. Describe the seven tests Ali must endure. Why do you think she must face these tests?
14. What happens to time when Ali travels through the red door? What does she learn from her encounter with Radrine? What must Ali do to save her friends? Is the yellow door the “right” door?
15. As their adventure proceeds, Cindy and Steve object to Ali’s bossiness. How does Ali feel about this? Have you ever felt that you ought to make important decisions for others in your group? Describe the situation and your actions.
16. As she travels forward again in time to save her friends, why does Ali call her “bad” self Alison? What does this reveal about the importance of names in the story? What is the significance and meaning of Ali’s other name(s)?
17. What is Karl’s true name and identity? Who is Lord Vak? What are Ali’s relationships to these two characters? How are they the opposite of what they initially seemed?
18. What are the Yanti, the Shaktra, and Nemi? How, if at all, are these forces related to each other?
19. Why doesn’t Ali close the Yanti in time to stop Vak’s army from coming through? Is this a good decision? Does Ali largely make good or bad decisions in the course of the story? Is the difference between a good and a bad decision always obvious? Why or why not?
20. Do you think human beings, in general, treat their natural surroundings well or poorly? Explain your answer.
21. Does Ali succeed in protecting earth’s human dimension? Does she solve the problem of the elementals’ anger about human treatment of the earth?
22. How has Ali changed at the end of the story? What has she learned? How do you think her life will be different now that she has realized she is a queen?
23. Do you have a nickname, middle name, or pet name that only some people know or by which only a few people call you? How does this name make you feel? What is your relationship to the people who know or call you this name? How does reflecting on your own special name affect your reading of *Alosha*?

24. Do you think another cast of characters, such as elementals, could inhabit earth in another dimension? In *Gaia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1979), James Lovelock writes, “Is it too much to suggest that we may recognize...the beauty and fittingness of an environment created by an assembly of creatures?” In the context of the world depicted by Christopher Pike in *Alosha*, answer Lovelock’s question.