

For Immediate Release

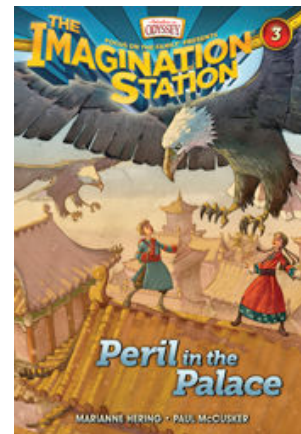
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Calling All Adventure-Seeking Kids! ***Imagination Station* Travels to 1271 China and the War of the Roses**

Following the successful launch in March of the first two titles in the *Imagination Station* series, Adventures in Odyssey's Mr. Whittaker and his two young friends return for all-new adventures in *Peril in the Palace* and *Revenge of the Red Knight*, both scheduled to release in May from Tyndale House Publishers and Focus on the Family.

Alongside cousins Patrick and Beth, young readers board the Imagination Station and travel back in time to China in 1271 where they come face-to-face with Marco Polo and step into the throne room of Kublai Khan, before finding themselves transported to 1450 England to witness a jousting battle they won't soon forget.

"In *Peril in the Palace*, the historical conversations between Kublai Khan, Marco Polo, and his father and uncle, are well documented," says Marianne Hering, who co-writes the series with Paul McCusker. "I really enjoyed giving readers a glimpse into the head of Kublai Khan. In *Revenge of the Red Knight*, the drama of the story arc is compelling. The plot is based more on fiction than the other books and full of surprises for the readers."



Written for ages seven and up, the series features the virtual reality device the Imagination Station, which is one of the major plot devices used in the Odyssey audio drama series. Nobody knows the inner workings of the mysterious device, invented by Mr. Whittaker, but with a push of a button, it launches users back in time to experience historical events in-person.



In *Peril in the Palace*, cousins Patrick and Beth are kidnapped by Mongol warriors. Saved from harm by fellow traveler Marco Polo, they are brought to the Mongol palace, where the Kublai Khan dislikes both their gifts and their message about Christianity. The adventures continue in *Revenge of the Red Knight*, where Patrick and Beth find themselves immersed in the War of the Roses in England, about to be locked away after being accused of stealing by the servants of Lord Darkthorn.

"While I am committed to books as a storytelling medium, I think all storytelling should not only entertain but also communicate truth," says Hering. "One of the taglines for this series is, 'The key to adventure lies within your imagination.' I'd like kids to read these books and have their imaginations revved up so that they become the next generation of storytellers."

Tyndale and Focus plan to release at least eight more titles in the series, including *Showdown with the Shepherd*, where Patrick and Beth find themselves in the Holy Land, and *Problems in Plymouth*, which takes kids on an adventure with the Pilgrims and Indians. Both books are due out in October.

Paul McCusker was given his first typewriter early in his childhood and hasn't stopped writing since. He has written over 300 half-hour audio episodes for Adventures in Odyssey and has served as both producer and executive producer. Paul is now Director of Creative Content at Focus on the Family. **Marianne Hering** has written ten children's fiction books and more than 40 Bible phonics readers. Now a general book editor for Focus on the Family, she is passionate about developing a series for beginning readers.

Peril in the Palace, 5 ½ x 8 ½, \$4.99, ISBN: 978-1-58997-629-0
Revenge of the Red Knight, 5 ½ x 8 ½, \$4.99, ISBN: 978-1-58997-630-6

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Meet Paul McCusker

Paul McCusker received his first typewriter early in his childhood and hasn't stopped writing since. From plays and novels to audio dramas, musicals, and lyrics, McCusker has built a portfolio of award-winning, critically-acclaimed work.

He is perhaps best-known for his work on the nationally-syndicated radio drama series, *Adventures in Odyssey*. McCusker has written more than 300 half-hour episodes for the series, as well as 18 tie-in novels and two screenplays. Along with his writing work, McCusker served as producer of the series for four years and later as executive producer.

His other major work in recent years includes developing, writing, and directing numerous Focus on the Family Radio Theatre productions, including the Peabody Award-winning *Bonhoeffer: The Cost of Freedom*, the Audie-winning *Life of Jesus*, Jan Karon's *At Home in Mitford*, the popular *Father Gilbert Mysteries*, and all seven books in C.S. Lewis' *Chronicles of Narnia* series.

While his success with *Adventures in Odyssey* and Focus' Radio Theatre has helped make him a known name, he has also written extensively for the stage. Several of his drama collections have been published by the prestigious Baker's Plays, including *Sketches of Harvest*, *Souvenirs*, and *Batteries Not Included*. He also received a Dove Award nomination for his musical, *A Time for Christmas*, with music and lyrics by David Clydesdale, Steve Amerson, and Lowell Alexander, and as a lyricist, has worked with composers Michael W. Smith and David Maddux to create songs for *First Call* and *Cynthia Clawson*.

His novels include *The Mill House*, *A Season of Shadows*, *TSI: The Gabon Virus* with Dr. Walt Larimore, *You Say Tomato* with best-selling British writer Adrian Plass, and *Epiphany* which received an ECPA Gold Medallion nomination.

Today, Paul serves as Creative Director at Focus on the Family, which means he thinks up stuff and then writes it. He and his wife Elizabeth live in Colorado Springs with their two children.



Meet Marianne Hering

Marianne Hering discovered her passion for writing more than twenty years ago when she joined the periodicals department at Focus on the Family as an editorial assistant. Spurred on by mentors who taught her the craft of writing, she rose through the ranks to become editor of *Clubhouse* children's magazine.

Today, Hering is a prolific writer and general book editor, having written hundreds of articles and a number of books for children and parents. Her first solo authoring efforts led to the *Lights, Camera, Action* series for girls ages 10-12, followed by a three-book historical fiction series set at the White House, both published by David C. Cook. She co-authored the Rocket Readers Bible phonics series and joined together with Jim Weidman for her first parenting book, *The Power of Teachable Moments*. Her latest historical fiction series for early readers, *The Imagination Station* written with Paul McCusker, releases in March 2011.

A self-proclaimed "fairly nerdy bookworm," Hering often can be found reading, watching her kids play soccer, cooking quick meals, deciphering mystery shows on television, hiking, and training her golden retriever. A highly curious person, she is currently researching the history and political climate of Russia as well as modern warfare, both to help better understand activities her family and friends are involved in. She also enjoys reaching out to teens and hosting them in her home, and is continually amazed that you can give teens gourmet food and yet they will still choose Skittles, pizza, and cola.

Hering graduated from Biola University with a degree in psychology and has continued her education with courses in writing and editing. She lives with her husband, Doug, college-aged daughter, Danielle, and twin middle school sons, Justin and Kendrick, in Colorado.

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What Readers are Saying

A Peek at My Bookshelf:

These books are engaging, filled with just the right amount of adventure and mystery, but also with important historical detail.

Just Short of Crazy:

This new series does not disappoint. The books take children through time and history in a way that is entertaining and engaging. The characters face challenges and moral dilemmas which encourage problem solving. I really enjoyed reading these books and I think they would be a perfect gift to share with your child.

Publix Coupon Queen:

I was slightly hesitant to read these with my daughter, Rachel, because they are geared towards first grade and up and she is only 4 but she thoroughly enjoyed these books. They were a welcome change in our routine of nightly story time. I can't complain about a series that leaves my 4 year old discussing Vikings and monks. I highly recommend these books for your young reader.

Christy's Book Blog:

Mia and I have read several in the Magic Tree House series, to which this is certain to be compared, but Imagination Station is far superior. The writing doesn't talk down to readers, the plots are thoroughly engaging while using historical characters. They give kids a good view of what life was like at the time, because Patrick and Beth are treated like children of the era. ... This is one series that I don't dread reading aloud with my daughter each night.

From Mia, age 6: I liked everything about this book, especially being able to go to the past. My favorite part was the mysterious person who helped them open the church door. I loved the illustrations and the author is magnificent at his writing. I learned that God should forever be in your path. I really like that all of these books are Jesus books.

Karen in Mommyland:

This series has the potential to appeal to both boys and girls. I particularly like series which try to engage children of both genders. ... This series isn't dripping in history quite as much as the Magic Tree House series, but it has a nice healthy dose of it that carries the potential to spark an interest in history for young children. The book's Christian message is subtle. I have read other books for children where the religious message feels heavy handed and forced. This is not the case with this series. The message is there, but it does not try to shove anything down the reader's throat.

My Buckling Bookshelf:

Mom and Dad, if you're looking for fun, engaging books to keep your child reading then look no further than these Imagination Station books from Adventures in Odyssey. They're fast paced and easy to read (with pictures, too), and have an air of mystery that will keep your child turning pages. Another bonus...they're exploring the annals of history with the element of faith! I really enjoyed seeing how the message of Christ was woven through each story.

My Memphis Mommy:

As a parent I love that the Web site is very family friendly and gives lots of great resources for engaging your child further with the story lines. My husband and I appreciate this series as it shares our biblical worldview and has value based lessons through out the story. We also love that it teaches her historical facts in an exciting and fun way! She literally could not put the books down and once she was finished reading it was all she talked about it.

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