



The Patron Thief of Bread

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Tome Society Book Award

Discussion Guide



Pre-reading questions

1. The Patron Thief of Bread takes place around an unfinished cathedral. Do you know of any famous medieval cathedrals across the world? How long did it take to complete the building on these structures?
2. Bread is an integral part of the novel, The Patron Thief of Bread, have you ever baked bread before? What ingredients are needed to make bread? Do some quick research to locate some recipes for bread, does it sound easy or hard to make? Are there any terms you don't know?
3. What does the concept of "family" mean to you? How do you think family dynamics might be different for someone who is homeless or an orphan?

Post-reading questions

1. Why is Duck thankful of Gnat but at the same time wary of him? Why do you think her feelings towards him are so complex? In turn, Gnat doesn't seem too fond of Duck, why do you think this is?
2. Bread is a recurring symbol in the story. What does bread represent for Duck and for the different communities she is a part of?
3. How does rosemary fit into the story? Have you noticed anything particular about when the scent appears in the story? Do you have a favorite scent? Does it remind you of a place or person?
4. Discuss this quote, "Family is more than just blood. It's who you break your bread with." Do you have anyone you call family even though they may not be explicitly related to you? What makes them family?
5. Life for Duck is arguably better at the bakers. A roof over her head and plenty of food to eat. However, she often wishes she was back with the Crowns. Why do you think this is? Do you think the Crowns wish to be in Duck's place?
6. Duck doesn't know how to read at the beginning of the novel, however, as she begins to learn, she states that her world came alive with letters and that she saw them everywhere. Imagine not being able to read, what would you be missing out on? What important information would you not be able to understand in your daily life?
7. Discuss how Duck's feeling about her mission to play the baker's apprentice in order to steal bread and coin for the Crowns changes throughout the course of the story. How and when does Duck's feelings begin to change? Use specific examples from the book.
8. What does our unnamed narrator claim is the purpose of gargoyles? How does the narrator fail and succeed at its purpose? Why do you think the author included the gargoyle's point of view? What did it add to the story?
9. Discuss this quote at the end of the novel, "No one got to choose where they came from. But everyone got to decide where they were going."

Post-reading activities

1. What name would you give to our unnamed gargoyle narrator? Explain your choice.
2. Create an artistic rendition of what you think the gargoyles on the roof of the cathedral look like. Pay special attention to their faces and poses in order to portray their personalities. Submit your completed project to the Tome Society Fan Art competition.

3. Gnat was known for tying knots. Using this website and a short length of rope or cord. Try your hand and tying knots. What could some of these skills be useful for? <https://www.animatedknots.com/basic-knots>
4. Inspired by the themes of the book, organize a bread or food drive in your community. Reflect on the importance of helping others, especially those in need. Take a look at the Chapter Service Project Newsletter to learn how you can include this activity in their competition submission.

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