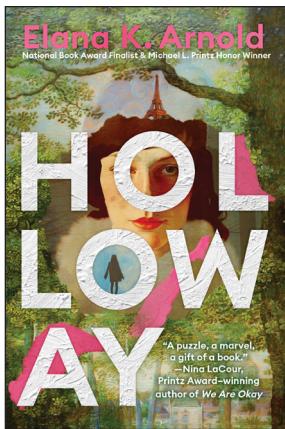


Teen Book Club Guide



Includes discussion questions, information about the authors, and helpful tips for organizing and running your teen book club!



About the Book

Left alone in the world after her mother, Gillian, dies, autistic teen Nora travels to Paris with the last of her cash and Gillian's ashes. Nora plans to scatter them in a park depicted in a Seurat painting that Gillian loved, but finding that spot underwhelming, and unwilling to let go of her mother's memory, she travels the French countryside searching for another location. When Nora is unexpectedly attacked, she flees through a forest . . . and when she emerges, it is in another time and place—one that, like Nora, is dealing with the aftermath of a devastating loss.

Questions to Get the Conversation Started

1. Nora thinks, "I chose to come here to Paris alone, but I didn't choose the why of this aloneness" (p. 24). Why is Nora alone? How has being autistic contributed to her sense of aloneness?
2. Of all the ways that a character might die in a novel, why do you think the author chose a meteorite to strike Nora's grandmother? How does the meteorite strike connect to other themes in the novel?
3. Nora's first-person narrative of the pandemic recalls a traumatic time in our shared history. How do her experiences compare or contrast to yours? How might Nora's story change the way you think about having lived through that period?
4. Nora is fascinated by the masks worn by World War I veterans with facial injuries. Why do they wear masks? Why is Nora so interested in their masks? Do you ever feel like you're wearing a mask? How can wearing a mask protect someone? What are the costs?
5. How does Nora first react to hearing that she's now in the year 1946? How does her reaction differ from other characters in time travel novels you've read or movies or TV shows you've seen?
6. Sometimes Nora sees her mother as helping her live in the world, while at other times she recognizes that Gillian hurt her deeply. How would you assess Gillian's parenting after Big Nora's death? How did reading the book change your view of your own parents or guardians?
7. How does looking at paintings help Nora cope with the world around her? What object or activity helps you get by in difficult times, and why do you find it so helpful?
8. Nora thinks, "Little Nora will grow . . . into a person who isn't led by fear" (p. 316). How did fear contribute to the person Gillian became during the pandemic? Why does fear often lead to extremist beliefs and actions? Can you think of other examples from your own life or from events you've read about?
9. Why do you think Nora makes the decision she makes when she returns to the holloway? If you were her, would you have made the same decision she did? Why or why not?

About the Author

Elana K. Arnold is the award-winning author of many books for children and teens, including the Sydney Taylor and National Jewish Book Award winner *The Blood Years*, the Printz Honor winner *Damsel*, the National Book Award finalist *What Girls Are Made Of*, and the Global Read Aloud selection *A Boy Called Bat*. She lives in Long Beach, California, with her husband, two children, and a menagerie of animals. You can find her online at elanakarnold.com.



Guide prepared by Lyn Miller-Lachmann, MLIS, MFA, author of historical fiction, translator, and educator.



About the Book

Ojibwe teenager Bryce has faced numerous challenges as a young person: the death of his father, his mother's countless abusive boyfriends, and no real place to call home. When his mother violates probation and ends up back in jail, Bryce finds his way back to his grandparents on the Wolf Creek Reservation, where he reconnects with old friends and family. As summer before junior year progresses, Bryce seeks consistency and agency through skateboarding while navigating loss and change. Through resilience and determination, Bryce finds his own path by falling off that skateboard and getting back up again.

Questions to Get the Conversation Started

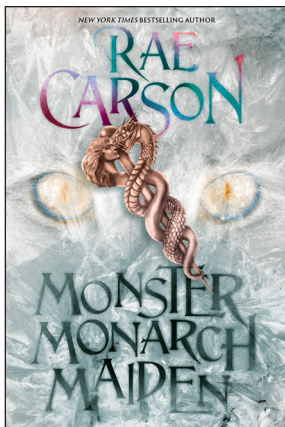
1. Skateboarding is a way that Bryce finds power and escapes the reality of life's complexities. What hobby or activity helps you manage the pressures you face in life? How does focusing on that activity make you feel? How does skateboarding help improve Bryce's self-esteem?
2. As Bryce's troubles grow, how does he manage his feelings of hopelessness and anger? What are some of the positive ways he manages it? What are some of the not-so-positive ways?
3. The medicine wheel plays an important role in this story, from its title to the imagery on the skateboard and beaded medallion of Bryce's late father. What is the medicine wheel? Describe its importance for Indigenous people. How does the author use this symbol in the story?
4. What is the significance of Bryce's close relationship to his grandparents? How do Indigenous people navigate familial relationships? What role do elders play in the lives of young people?
5. Bryce's friends and extended community rally around him when his grandfather dies. How do they show support? Indigenous communities are often small and deeply connected. Do you see any similarities between the members of the Wolf Creek Reservation and your own family and friend networks? What are they? Are there differences?
6. Explain the pipeline protest in *Medicine Wheels*. How does the outcome affect the story? How do friendship and community come into play during the protest?
7. The author uses many Ojibwe words in the story and provides a glossary of terms at the end. Why are these words used? Do they enhance the story in some way? How?

About the Author

Byron Graves is Ojibwe and Lakota and was born and raised on the Red Lake Indian Reservation in Minnesota, where they played high school basketball. When they aren't writing, they can be found playing retro video games, spending time with their family, or skateboarding. *Rez Ball* was their debut novel; *Medicine Wheels* is their second book.



Guide prepared by Jenna Wolf. Jenna is tribally enrolled in Mvskoke Nation of Oklahoma and the library director at The Cambridge School of Weston. She regularly gives talks on decolonizing practices in libraries and libraries that are curated by students for students.



About the Book

Seventeen-year-old Bria doesn't think of herself as special. In a world where the gods grant everyone a magical Gift, Bria is just an ordinary villager, an innkeeper's daughter, and a devoted big sister. When tragedy forces Bria into the path of a handsome, mysterious young man on a quest with unimaginable stakes, her eyes are opened to her own power, the power of community, and the power of love.

Questions to Get the Conversation Started

1. After using their Gifts, humans become Gift-starved. If Gifts are to be used to make the world better, why limit humans' capacity to use them? Are people in the novel using their gifts to make the world better?
2. After Titus tells Bria that he faces dangers she can't even dream of, Bria comments, "I think it takes being a woman to know true fear" (p. 64). What do you think Bria means by this? Is she right?
3. Cerastes tells Bria she's nothing but a complication in Titus's story (p. 246), and Bria replies that she has her own story. Why do you think this story is told by the "trusty sidekick," rather than the "chosen one"?
4. Bria explains that sharing your magical Gift is "a very personal choice" (p. 61). Much to their mother's dismay, Anja shares her Gift freely, and Bria finds herself sharing her Gift with many strangers along the way. Are Dama Angarsold's attitudes about magical Gifts old-fashioned, wise, or somewhere in between?
5. Humans and monsters are different, but Bria points out, "Men can be monsters too" (p. 389). What are some examples from her life that make her think this?
6. Bria learns, "It turns out that sometimes the best way to get someone to talk is to truly listen" (p. 452). When have you felt this to be true in your own life?
7. To Sway is perhaps the most powerful of the Gifts—the gods even give Titus and Bria amulets to ward it off. Could Sway be used in an ethical way, and how would you know?
8. Titus declares men be innkeepers, good neighbors, blacksmiths, ferrymen, bakers, tailors, healers, and husbands—not gods or kings. What does this mean? How does this reflect Bria's conclusion that "the least important people in the city saved it" (p. 455)? Is this true in the real world?
9. Although serious in its subject matter, this book is often very funny. How would you describe the novel's sense of humor? What scene or character or line do you find particularly reflects a humorous tone?
10. "Finding family" means many things in Bria and Titus's world. What are some of the ways we see the theme of "finding family" explored in the novel?

About the Author

Rae Carson is the author of award-winning trilogies, as well as the acclaimed stand-alone novels *Any Sign of Life* and *The Empire of Dreams*. Her debut, *The Girl of Fire and Thorns*, was named a William C. Morris Award finalist and an Andre Norton Award finalist. *Walk on Earth a Stranger* was longlisted for the National Book Award and won the Western Writers of America Spur Award. Originally from California, Rae Carson now lives in Ohio with her husband.



Photo courtesy of the author

Guide prepared by Jennifer Miskec, professor of English (children's and young adult literature) at Longwood University in Farmville, Virginia.



About the Book

Siya Kumar joins her school's mock trial team because she wants to be a lawyer like her mom, who spent her life fighting for justice. But soon rumors from a team trip start spreading, her relationship with the co-captain gets messy, and Siya's practice case begins to echo something unsettling: the circumstances of her mother's death. Was it really just an accident?

Questions to Get the Conversation Started

1. If you had to join a school club like Siya does with mock trial, what would you choose: mock trial, debate, art club, theater, or something else? Why?
2. Through her experience as a mock trial attorney, Siya learns more about her mother and the people closest to her. How does she navigate these new, sometimes painful truths? Does what she learns change how she sees herself?
3. Siya's mom says she wanted to be a lawyer because "no one in her family, no one she had ever known, had gone into law, but she knew she wanted to help people protect their rights and find justice" (p. 215). How does Siya work toward justice for herself and others? What do you think justice means to her? What does justice mean to you?
4. Siya is trying to figure out what kind of person she wants to become. Is there a job, cause, or issue you care about enough to build a career around?
5. What cultural traditions and celebrations do Siya's family and friends share? Why do you think those moments matter? What traditions are important in your own family, and where do they come from?
6. Siya turns to art making into a way to better understand Sita, her namesake. Why do you think art helps her see things from a different perspective? Have you ever used creativity to process something complicated?
7. Do you think Raj and Siya "make a great team"? (p. 145). Raj tells Siya, "I'm sorry that being with me exposes you to all this" (p. 178). How does being in a relationship with Raj affect Siya's life and choices?
8. "Something happened that wasn't her fault, but she's the one who was blamed for it" (p. 253). Siya's story mirrors Sita's from the *Ramayana*, making it a modern retelling. What similarities do you see between their experiences? When are moments where Siya is blamed, disbelieved, or forced to defend herself, and how does she respond?
9. How do Siya's friends and family show up for her when she is struggling? Why are those relationships important? Who are the people in your life who show up for you?
10. How do you think the title *Such Great Heights* connects to Siya's story? Does the idea of "great heights" change for her over the course of the book?

About the Author

Rajani LaRocca was born in India, raised in Kentucky, and now lives in Massachusetts, where she practices medicine and writes award-winning books for young readers, including the Newbery Honor-winning novel in verse *Red, White, and Whole*. She's always been an omnivorous reader, and now she is an omnivorous writer of novels and picture books, fiction and nonfiction, in prose and poetry. A graduate of Harvard College and Harvard Medical School, she lives outside Boston with her family. Visit her at rajanilarocca.com.



Guide prepared by Amanda Torres, M.Ed., MFA, writer, educator, and arts administrator (amandatorreswrites.com).

Tips for Organizing a Book Club for Teens

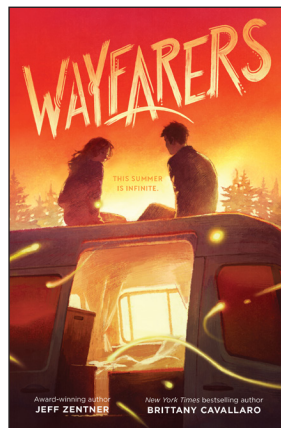
- Give your book club a **memorable name** that will attract attention. The more humorous the better!
- **Market your book club** everywhere that you can. Design eye-catching graphics that illustrate your book club's brand, with a logo that's consistent so that it's easily identifiable. Use your graphics to make flyers and bookmarks to distribute during events and programs at local schools and public libraries. Create social media accounts with your book club's name, and post content there as well.
- **Remind your audience of upcoming meetings.** Teens are busy, and it can be easy to forget when meetings are planned. Share updates on social media before each meeting so that teens know when one is coming up.
- Think about how technology can **increase accessibility.** Offer a virtual option for those who may not be able to attend in person by setting up a device and allowing them to connect digitally. While many teens prefer reading physical books, selecting titles that have an e-book or audiobook increases accessibility.
- **Choose books that teens will want to read,** and if you're not sure what those may be, ask for input from teens. Design a survey online asking questions about teen reading preferences, and ask teachers to share it with their classes. Ask teens questions about what books they are reading and what upcoming titles they are excited about.
- If you have funds available, consider arranging **virtual author visits.** The opportunity to meet an author can create enthusiasm for your book club. Find more resources about author visits on <https://www.harperstacks.com/author-visits/> or email schoollandlibrary@harpercollins.com.

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