

A Reading Group Guide to

Queen of Air and Darkness

By Cassandra Clare

About This Book

Emma and Julian were certain that bringing Annabel to testify in Council Hall would solve all their problems. But now Robert Lightwood and Livvy Blackthorn are dead, Annabel and the Black Volume have been spirited away by the Unseelie King, and the members of the Cohort are using the entire incident as justification for taking over the government. Overwhelmed by their grief, the Blackthorns' relationships begin to splinter. Julian's grief, combined with his fear for his love of Emma, proves to be too much; he convinces Magnus to remove his emotions and his connection to his family. Horace Dearborn, in an effort to rid the Cohort of opposition, sends Emma and Julian on a hopeless mission to Faerie. Ty pushes his family away while focusing all his time and energy on the black magic required to bring Livvy back, allowing only Kit to know what he plans. Mark decides to accompany Kieran and Cristina on a rescue mission to Faerie, leaving Helen to find her place in a family she no longer knows while keeping the Institute up and running. With Dru feeling like no one values her, and Tavvy too young to fully participate in family decisions, the Blackthorns are falling apart. Is the resistance strong enough and clever enough to defeat the Cohort? How much blood will be spilled before one side prevails?

Discussion Questions

1. The book begins with another poem by Edgar Allan Poe, titled "City in the Sea." How does this poem compare to "Annabel Lee," which figured heavily in *Lady Midnight*, and "Dream-Land," which was featured in the beginning of *Lord of Shadows*? Why do you think Cassandra Clare chose to include it? What place can you compare to the city in Poe's poem?
2. Emma is not allowed to accompany Livvy's body into the Silent City because she is not part of the Blackthorn family. Though she is not related by blood, would you argue that she is a part of their family? Explain your answer. Are there any Blackthorns who don't fit into the family as well as Emma does? Why doesn't Emma insist upon going with Julian?
3. How does each member of the Blackthorn family grieve Livvy's death? Why do you think their reactions are so different? How does this loss compare to losing their father? Explain your answer.

4. Why does Julian ask Magnus to remove his emotions? Why does Magnus hesitate? What are the unintended consequences for Julian and Emma? Does the spell solve any of Julian's problems? Why does Julian decide to have Magnus remove the spell?

5. Kieran tells Diego, "You decide you will find a solution when the time comes, but when the worst happens, you find yourself unprepared." Can you find other examples of Diego handling situations this way? Is this an effective method for him? Does Diego change his strategy?

6. When Horace calls Emma and Julian's mission to Faerie a "mutually beneficial solution," Julian tells him, "Solutions aren't usually mutually beneficial when one party has all the power." Do you think this is true? Explain your reasoning. Would Emma and Julian's trip to Faerie provide any benefits for them? Can you find examples in the story of an unequal power dynamic between the two groups? Can you find examples where they are equal? Are any of the solutions in these examples mutually beneficial?

7. Why do Zara and the others bring Kieran to the Hollow Place? Does the experience end up being worse for him, or for Samantha? What do you think is the difference between the two?

8. Whenever someone is lamenting the Cohort's fast-paced rise to power, Diana and Helen assert that hatred and bigotry have been part of the Shadowhunter world for a long time. Why are these two characters so attuned to the brewing hatred? Why are the others so slow to recognize it? What could the Clave have done to stop this sort of troubling behavior, and why didn't they do it?

9. Were you expecting Emma to be the one to try to break the *parabatai* rune? Why does Julian stop her? Why are they both so frightened by the consequences of their love?

10. Does the Seelie Queen find the changes Magnus's spell brought about in Julian to be a good thing? Why does she bring up the Faerie proverb? Is it true that Julian is in a cage? Explain your answers.

11. After touching the water in the hollow place, whose forgiveness does Kieran feel like he needs to seek? Does anyone believe Kieran must make up for what he's done to them?

12. Discuss Emma's relationship to Cortana. Why is the sword so important to Emma? Why does Durendal come to her as she fights her way into the Unseelie tower? What does it mean that Zara took Cortana?

13. When Kieran is upset about hurting those he loves, Cristina tells him, "This is the nature of having a soul . . . and a heart. We all stumble around in the dark and we cause each other pain and we try to make up for it the best we can. We are all confused." Is this really true of the other characters, or does Cristina say this just to make him feel better? Why didn't Kieran have these feelings of guilt before? Explain your answers.

14. Do the Seelie Queen and the Unseelie King accept Julian's copy of the Black Volume of the Dead as a real version? Is Ty's version more or less real? Are the people in Thule somehow less real than the versions of themselves in our world? What about the Thule versions of the Mortal Sword and Mortal Cup? How does this make you feel about the idea of identity?

15. Why don't the Unseelie people torture Kieran as he's brought into the tower? Do you think they are justified in their perception that Kieran is kind? What other characters choose to use their power as leaders to be kind to others?

16. Part Two, or Thule, begins with lines from "Darkness," a poem by Lord Byron. Why do you think Cassandra Clare chose to use this poem instead of another one by Edgar Allan Poe? What does this poem tell you about Thule and what Julian and Emma find there?

17. How is Thule different from our world? What place do mundanes have in this society? Is this what Sebastian Morgenstern was trying to create in our world, before he was killed?

18. Why won't Livvy help Julian decide if he should make the deal with Annabel to get out of Thule? Why does she ultimately decide to stay in Thule? How does getting to spend time with this version of Livvy help Julian and Emma? Why doesn't her note help Ty?

19. What does Manuel believe in, and what is he trying to gain from his membership in the Cohort? Who is more dangerous: Manuel or Horace?

20. Was Clary right to think that she had won her fight after the Dark War? Will the Shadowhunters ever be finished fighting? What might life look like for this group if they did? Explain your answers.

21. Why is Ty so intent on bringing Livvy back? Why doesn't Kit tell him that this is a bad idea? Why can't Ty see the possible consequences? Do you think this is what Livvy would want? Why are Dru and Kit the only people who see how lost Ty is?

22. Do you think Cristina kills Oban in the heat of battle, or are there larger reasons for her actions? Did Oban think she would succeed? What does his death mean for the battle, and for Cristina's future? Explain your answers.

23. Why doesn't Emma kill Zara? Has she shown anyone else this kind of mercy? Do others share her views on mercy and vengeance? Do you think there are some characters who deserve to die?

24. What is the catalyst for Julian and Emma turning into Nephilim? How are they able to come back to their human forms? Did the *parabatai* sickness end up being a blessing or a curse?

25. Why does Kit decide to live with Tess and Jem? How does the news of his Faerie heritage affect him? How do you think Ty will cope with Kit being gone?
26. Is there anyone looking out for Ash's best interests? What does he want for himself? Why is he so important? Would his value change if the fey folk knew about Kit?
27. Why is the warlock sickness so devastating to the Shadowhunters, particularly at this time? What makes Tessa able to recover from it?
28. The title of this book comes from the A. E. Housman poem that kicks off the third part of the book. How does this poem signal what will happen in this last section? Who is the Queen of Air and Darkness? Why do you think this section is called "Lady Vengeance"?

Extension Activities

1. Diego notices that "The Cohort constantly changed the rules of the game when they were trying to make a point. They didn't care too much whether their evidence was accurate." Research the idea of "fake news," which is a similar phenomenon happening in our world. Create a cheat sheet that tells you how to figure out if a source is legitimate, and share it with your friends and classmates. What might happen if too many people start to believe "fake news"?
2. When Magnus takes away his emotions, Julian finds that he can no longer express himself through drawing and painting. Freed from the spell in Thule, he finds himself frantically drawing his family and loved ones. Find a visual art form that allows you to express your emotions, whether it be painting, drawing, quilting, collage, or more, and create a work of art based on your favorite person. What qualities do you most admire? How does this person encourage you?
3. Julian must call on all his allies in the confrontation with Horace and the Cohort, as is common in times of war. Choose a war that the United States was involved in, and research our allies during the conflict. Write a short essay covering why the alliance was formed, and what each party received as a result of their cooperation. Include which partnerships were formed by our enemies as well.
4. Ash is powerful and Kit is in danger because of their bloodlines. Trace your family tree as far back as you can, and see if there are any traits that have been passed down from one generation to the next. What sorts of things did these traits lead your family to do or believe in? How are you similar or different from your family?
5. Cristina has a dream in which she stands on the roof of the Mexico City Institute, looking at all the city's landmarks. Draw a map of your hometown that includes its important landmarks. Be sure to include the places you'd miss most if you weren't there.

What might someone new to your town think about it? What information might you share with them about your town's history?

6. After Livvy is killed, Simon gives Mark a Hebrew blessing. Are you familiar with any traditional blessings or inspirational quotes? In a small group, present your favorite blessing or quote, including information on the origin, meaning, when you would use it, and why you like it.

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