



## STUDENT GUIDE

### SEA SERPENT'S HEIR BOOK ONE: PIRATE'S DAUGHTER

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**Overview:** For Aella, life on Kinamen Isle is one of boredom. Spending her days fishing and minding her aunts, she dreams of life beyond the horizon. Everything changes, however, when she awakens an ancient evil within herself as it's revealed that she's the reincarnation of Xir, the serpent that almost destroyed the world. Worse yet, a fanatical religious organization has arrived on Kinamen Isle in search of Xir. As Aella is forced to fight for her life, she'll discover that her entire world is not what it seems. Her aunts know more than they let on and what exactly does the infamous Pirate Queen want with Aella?

#### IMPORTANT SETTINGS

- Kinamen Isle
- The Blackfin's Tail
- The Bastion
- Cor Manishin

#### NOTABLE CHARACTERS

- Aella
- Xir
- Mirena Cor'wys
- Nix
- Kiana
- Zuri
- Ryanna/the Queen of Mercy
- Captain Oren
- Bashir
- Uncle Garret
- Jaspreet

#### KEY THEMES

- Destiny and free will
- Fairy tales and legends
- Wanderlust
- The sea
- Faith
- Secrets
- Family and legacy
- Betrayal
- Vengeance



## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Aella longs for adventure, and begins the book by saying “Nothing ever happens on Kinamen Isle.” However, it turns out that a lot more is happening under the surface of Kinamen Isle than it appears, and that some of the people she’s known her whole life are harboring deep secrets. What do you think the book is trying to say about appearance versus reality? Does going on an adventure require leaving home?
2. This story takes some traditional aspects from fairy tales - a “princess” “rescued” by a “knight in shining armor” - and turns them on their heads. In what ways is Aella’s story like other tales of princesses that you’ve read? In what ways does it differ?
3. When the members of the Church of the First Light arrive at the Blackfin’s Tail, how would you describe their behavior? How do the locals react to them? What does this suggest about the Church of the First Light?
4. When the frenzy demons escape from Aella, she expects them to kill because they “live for carnage.” Instead, they follow her will and her commands. What is the significance of this? What might the book be saying about our own “demons”?
5. According to legend, Aella is a “monster who will devour the world.” But her mother tells her “I know what it means to have your fate decided for you . . . Maybe you are a sea demon reborn. Maybe not. But either way your fate should be your choice.” What does this exchange suggest about free will vs. destiny?
6. Discuss the role of betrayal in the story. Aella believes herself to be betrayed by her mother because she was never told of her true identity. Later, Xir is unleashed when Aella and Bashir are betrayed by the Church of the First Light. In this respect, do you think it is significant that the demon Xir “does not forget . . . does not forgive”?
7. Bashir believes that the Church of the First Light can be redeemed, that with Aella’s help he can bring “true light” to the world. Aella says that the “message of Thenas is blood and suffering” and that the Church of the First Light deserves to die. Do you think Bashir is noble or naive? Is Aella justified in her rage, or is Xir working through her? Justify your answers with examples from the text or images.
8. This story blurs the lines between “heroes” and “villains” - all of the characters have reasons for their



- actions and feel justified in their way of seeing the world. Which characters do you find the most, and the least, sympathetic?
9. Aella's decision to "choose the demon" was driven by a desire to save her mother and the rest of her family. In her situation, what would you have done? Could you resist the urge for power, even for a noble cause, if you knew it might lead to violence?
  10. There is an old saying: "Before you embark on a journey of revenge, dig two graves." Xir craves vengeance, and by the end of the story, so does Aella. Where do you think this desire for revenge is going to lead Aella and the crew of the Bastion? Do you think in choosing vengeance she is using free will, or following her destiny to become a "demon reborn"?
  3. In a group discussion, determine which roles you would all play on a "pirate ship." Who is the captain? The security officer? The navigator? Draw up a short list of "titles" and "duties."
  4. There is a rhyme/song that continually pops up throughout the story that features the love between the sea and the moon and the creation of Xir. Write your own rhyme or poem telling of an epic legend that needs to be told. What instruments and musical style might you use?

## **ACTIVITY IDEAS**

1. Do you, like Aella, long for adventure and travel? If so, where would you like to go, how would you like to get there, and what would you like to see and experience once you arrive? Write a one-page essay or draw a one-to-two page comic about your dream trip.
2. Aella's family members have some unique magical skills. If your family members (or "friend-family") had magical powers, based on their personalities, what do you think they would be? Write or draw a few examples.



# TEACHER'S KEY

Reading/Interest Level: Grades 8-12

## **Common Core Aligned Pre-Reading**

### Key Ideas and Details

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.1

Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.2

Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.

### Text Types and Purposes

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.1

Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.

### Production and Distribution of Writing

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.4

Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

### Comprehension and Collaboration

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.1

Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

## Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.4

Present information, findings, and supporting evidence such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

## ACTIVITY GUIDE

1. This book handles some heavy themes: feelings of parental abandonment, betrayal, loss, and revenge. Be prepared to offer content warnings and lead some difficult discussions.
2. Have students write short papers or draw comics about travels they would like to take one day. Give them the opportunity to share what they've written. Lead a class discussion about travel and adventures that students have had or would like to have.
3. When students are brainstorming "magic skills" for family and friends, give lots of leeway as to whom they can include. Family relationships differ and many may prefer to use friends.
4. Students may wish to present their "pirate crews" to the class, and/or dress as their chosen piratical profession for the day.
5. Students can get creative with creating their own rhyme or song. Provide them with some examples of sea shanties, blues, rap, country, pop, and other music types. Find easy to use software for creation of tunes.



## RECOMMENDED TITLES FOR FURTHER READING

- *Stardust* by Neil Gaiman, illustrated by Charles Vess. Vertigo, 2019.
- *Mad Kestrel* by Misty Massey. TOR Books, 2008.
- *The Witch Boy* Trilogy by Molly Knox Ostertag. Graphix, 2017.

