

# Educator Discussion Guide

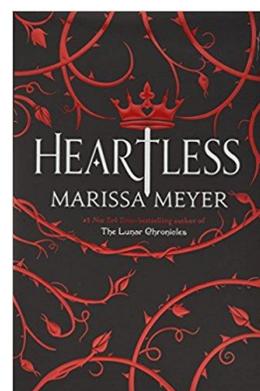
**HEARTLESS**  
by Marissa Meyer

**Louisiana Teen Readers' Choice Award Nominee 2018-2019**  
**Grade 9-12**

*Submitted by Charlene Barrett and Jessica Norris*  
*School of Library and Information Science, LSU, Baton Rouge*

## ABOUT THE BOOK

Lady Catherine Pinkerton, a young determined woman, dreams of opening a bakery with the help of her maid, Mary Ann. However, Lady Catherine is the most desired girl in Wonderland, and is preferred by the King of Hearts himself. Lady Catherine has no interest in marrying the King, but faces pressure from her parents to secure a socially acceptable status. Catherine soon finds herself falling for the handsome new court joker who seems to have some secrets of his own. Catherine and Jest begin a secret romance that would infuriate Catherine's mother and the King of Hearts. To make matters worse, Catherine lives in Wonderland, which has recently been attacked again by the murderous Jabberwocky. How does a young girl like Catherine, who only dreams of boys and bakeries, become the mad, screaming Queen of Hearts?



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Marissa Meyer has earned a Bachelor's degree in Creative Writing and Children's Literature from Pacific Lutheran University. She also attended Pace University and earned a Master's degree in Publishing. Marissa then went on to Seattle to be an editor and later a freelance typesetter and proofreader. She became a full-time writer and published her first novel *Cinder*, the first book in her well-known Lunar Chronicles series. In 2011 she was married and later adopted two twin daughters in 2015. Her favorite pastime is reading bedtime stories to her two daughters. Currently, she lives in Tacoma, Washington with her family.

Biographical information taken from the author's website at

<https://www.marissameyer.com>

Accessed 6 October 2017.

## BOOK AWARDS

2016 Goodreads Choice Awards Best Young Adult Fantasy & Science Fiction nominee

Winter 2016 Kids Indie Next List, Top 10

2017 YALSA Best Fiction for Young Adults

## **PREREADING ACTIVITIES**

### **Alice in Wonderland**

Ask the students if they have ever seen any movie adaptations of Alice in Wonderland. Ask them what they thought of the Queen of Hearts? Ask them if they have ever wondered how she became so heartless? Split the students in groups and have them brainstorm reasons why the Queen of Hearts turned out the way she did. Have each group read their top 3 reasons out loud and write them on the board to discuss as a class.

### **Dream Job**

Ask your students about their interests and dream jobs. Ask them if they have ever thought of opening a business. What would be their dream business? What would they want to sell or what services would they want to provide? Divide students into groups and have them share their dream businesses. Then ask students to share what things could stop them from opening their dream business. What are the difficulties of starting a business? Would anyone disapprove or stand in their way? Why do people give up on their dreams? Have students write down the obstacles to opening their dream businesses. Each group should present their dream jobs and the obstacles, and as a class discuss how some of these obstacles could be overcome.

## **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

1. Based on the book there are multiple individuals who are responsible for Catherine's transformation into the heartless Queen of Hearts. Name three of these individuals and tell why they are responsible with evidence from the book.
2. What are the positives and negatives of Catherine's decision to go back for her maid, Mary Ann? Do the positives outweigh the negatives?
3. If the King of Hearts wasn't such a weak King, could the story have gone in a different direction? Give examples from the book showing the King of Hearts being weak and explain why.
4. What are the advantages and disadvantages of the Kingdom of Hearts having a King that has a passive demeanor? How did Catherine exploit this weakness? Explain your answers with evidence from the book.
5. Catherine's personality gradually changed throughout the book. Name some of the highlights where character development was evident. What did Catherine do or say during these high points?
6. Was Sir Peter's execution justified? Who else was responsible for the death of Jest? What crimes did Catherine commit that were never brought to Justice? Explain your answers with evidence from the book.
7. Name several reasons why Catherine's dream of opening a bakery was never a possibility. What role did Jest play to make it impossible? Explain your answers with evidence from the book.
8. In the story Catherine's future was prophesied. What was specifically prophesied about Catherine, Jest, Raven and Hatta? Would it have made a difference if Catherine was unaware of the prophecies? Explain your answers with evidence from the book.
9. Based on what you have seen about the Queen of Hearts in movies and books, how do you think she compares with Lady Catherine? How is Lady Catherine similar to the other adaptations of the Queen of Hearts and how is she different?

10. Why was Catherine upset about Margaret and the Duke's relationship? Was her jealousy justified? How does their relationship compare to Catherine's romantic relationships?
11. What is the significance of the plants that grow in Catherine's room when she dreams? Choose two of these plants and explain what they symbolize for Catherine at that point in the story.
12. Why does Catherine choose to bake a key lime pie for the King of Hearts? What does the pie symbolize for her character development at this point?
13. What are some examples of foreshadowing that give the reader clues about who the Jabberwocky is? How did Mary Ann finally solve the mystery?
14. Do you think the Three Sisters are friends or villains in the story? Do they have any responsibility for Catherine's fate? How do the Sisters compare to other characters you may know about from mythology?
15. "It is better to have loved and lost than never to have loved at all." After reading *Heartless*, do you agree or disagree with this quote? How does Catherine's story affect your opinion?
16. Describe Catherine's relationship with her parents. How does this relationship affect the choices she makes throughout the novel? Give specific examples from the story.

## **CLASSROOM CONNECTIONS**

### **Art:**

- Throughout the story Catherine baked various desserts. Have the students find pictures and recipes of desserts that Catherine baked and other desserts that Catherine might have baked. The students can then design recipe cards that include the recipes and a picture of the dessert, either printed or drawn. An option that can go along with this activity is having students bake one of the desserts either from home or from the school's kitchen.
- Marissa Meyer includes a tremendous amount of detail about how the characters look and what they are wearing. Have students choose an important scene from the novel and draw a costume for one of the characters. They should take details from the story, but they can be creative with their own interpretation of the characters and how they would dress.

### **Math:**

Catherine's dream was to open a bakery with her wedding dowry. Divide the students into small groups and have them research how much it costs to open and maintain a bakery with U.S. currency. Then have them hypothetically create their own bakery and have them include the location, name, monthly expenses and budget of their bakery. The students should also include what baked goods they would like to sell and for how much.

### **Language Arts:**

- How would Catherine's future have changed if she did not go back for Mary Ann? Have the students write an alternative ending for Catherine if she went through the looking glass to Chess instead of going through the door leading to the pumpkin patch.
- Have students choose one of the scenes with the Jabberwocky and rewrite it from Lady Peter's perspective. Think about her thoughts and feelings as she changes into the Jabberwocky. What would be going through her mind throughout the scene? How much control does she have over the situation? Be sure to include details about the aftermath of the Jabberwocky attack as well.

### **Social Studies:**

Divide students into groups and have them research the lives of women in the Victorian Era. Students should make comparisons between actual women from the Victorian Era and Lady Catherine's experiences in *Heartless*. Students can then create a PowerPoint presentation showing these similarities and differences and present them to the class. Use the following lesson plan to aid students in their research of the Victorian Era: <http://www.firstladies.org/curriculum/curriculum.aspx?Curriculum=1373>

In the original novel by Lewis Carroll, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, there was a mad hatter. In this spin off novel, the character Hatter, behaves unpredictably, moody and rather "mad". Have students research and discuss the origins of phrase "mad as a hatter" and why hat makers may have gone mad.

### **Vocabulary:**

Blanched	Disconcerting	Gumption
Cliché	Dowry	Marquess
Courtship	Extricated	Marchioness
Coy	Exuberant	Scepter
Crestfallen	Gentry	Tyranny

### **RELATED WEBSITES**

#### **Goodreads**

[https://www.goodreads.com/interviews/show/1186.Marissa\\_Meyer](https://www.goodreads.com/interviews/show/1186.Marissa_Meyer)

A transcript of Goodreads interviewing Marissa Meyer about her book *Heartless* and what inspired her.

#### **Alice-in-Wonderland**

<http://www.alice-in-wonderland.net/>

Explore the story that *Heartless* was based on.

#### **Gender Roles in the 19th Century**

[www.bl.uk/romantics-and-victorians/articles/gender-roles-in-the-19th-century](http://www.bl.uk/romantics-and-victorians/articles/gender-roles-in-the-19th-century)

Learn about gender roles and women's rights in 19th century Britain.

#### **Lewis Carroll Society of North America**

<http://www.lewiscarroll.org/carroll/>

Learn more about the author of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and his far-reaching influence.