

# Educator Discussion Guide

## THREE DARK CROWNS (BOOK 1)

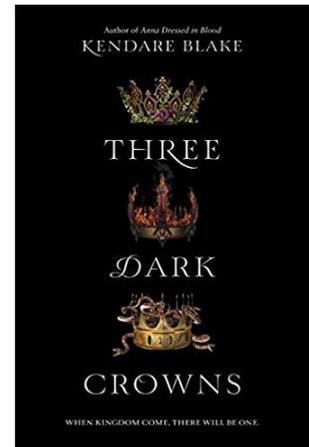
by Kendare Blake

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

*Submitted by Amy Duplessis and Amy Martin-Klumpp, Students  
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### ABOUT THE BOOK

Every generation on the mystical island of Fennbirn, the Queen gives birth to a triplet set of girls. Each sister must prove her worth at their sixteenth birthday celebrations. In preparation, each sister develops her magic talents separately. Katharine learns to endure consuming deadly poisons; Arsinoe attempts to find and control an animal counterpart; and Mirabella adeptly governs natural elements. Once the sisters cross paths, unexpected twists and turns drive the plot of this dark fantasy. *Three Dark Crowns* features magic, self-harm, backstabbing, a love triangle, and many life-threatening obstacles. The reader is left spellbound, constantly wondering who will reign over all.



### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Adopted from South Korea as an infant, Kendare Blake earned a Bachelor's degree from Ithaca College and a Master's degree in Writing from Middlesex University. She is known for writing dark fantasy young adult series. Some of her works include *Anna Dressed in Blood*, *Goddess War* series, and *Sleepwalk Society*. She currently resides in Kent, Washington with her husband and animals.

Biographical information taken from the author's website at <http://kendareblake.com/about/> (Accessed 29 September 2017) and from Teen Reads at <http://www.teenreads.com/authors/kendare-blake> (Accessed 29 September 2017).

### BOOK AWARDS

Chicago Public Library Best Book of 2016  
*Kirkus* Best Books of 2016  
*New York Times* Bestseller  
New York Public Library Best Book of 2016

## **OTHER TITLES IN SERIES**

*One Dark Throne (Book 2)* (2017)

*Young Queens (A Novella)* (2017)

*The Oracle Queen (A Novella)* (2018)

According to her blog <http://kendareblake.com/tag/three-dark-crowns/>, Blake plans on writing Books 3 and 4 as a continuation of the series.

## **PREREADING ACTIVITIES**

### **Competition**

Open with a discussion of competition and what that means. Address questions like: How do you determine who is the best? Who can be a champion? Do you have what it takes to be a champion? Have a discussion about what it means to wear a crown and rule over all.

### **Elements**

Start by playing Earth, Wind, and Fire's song "Shining Star." While the song is playing, ask students to write their names on the board next to a chosen element (earth, water, fire, or air). This will determine the groups and the battle of the elements will begin. Give 5 scenarios; a sample scenario in this game is you are stuck in a cave that has a boulder blocking the entrance. You can see sunlight through a couple of cracks, but the entrance is otherwise sealed. How would you use your element to free yourself? For each scenario, teams collaborate and answer as to how they will win the scenario based on their group element. An unbiased guest judge will decide who wins each scenario. The team with the most points at the end wins an elemental crown. After the crown is won, discuss what it means to wear a crown and rule over all.

### **Bizarre Foods**

Begin with a PowerPoint presentation on foods found in several regions. Then, students will watch a clip of *Bizarre Foods with Andrew Zimmern* found in one of the regions mentioned in the PowerPoint. Episodes can be found at: <http://www.travelchannel.com/shows/bizarre-foods/episodes>. After the clip or episode, students blind taste test jelly beans until they guess a wrong flavor. The student to guess the most jelly beans correctly wins a "Super Taster" crown. After the crown is won, discuss what it means to wear a crown and rule over all.

### **Spirit Animal**

Students will draw their spirit animal and write an essay explaining why they chose that animal as their spirit animal. Their essay should address why they identify with that animal and why that animal is better than others. Pictures and corresponding essays will be hung up on the wall in a gallery walk. While listening to "Colors of the Wind" from Disney's *Pocahontas*, students will award a sticker to their favorite spirit animal. The picture with the most stickers wins an animal crown. After the crown is won, discuss what it means to wear a crown and rule over all.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. The text is broken up by location rather than chapter numbers. How does each location (Wolf Spring, Rolanth, and Greavesdrake Manor) affect the queens' characters?
2. How is the government organized? Who has the most power (the queen, council, temple, goddess) based on the government organization? Is the organization of the government an effective way to run Fennbirn? Use evidence from the text to support your answer.
3. What strategies does each queen use to deal with the pressures of the upcoming Beltane festival? Which one is the most successful and why?
4. How do the characters' familiars reflect their owner's personality? For instance, how does Camden reflect Jules' nature?
5. What roles do biological mothers play in the lives of their daughters? Consider Sara and her daughter Bree and Madrigal and her daughter Jules.
6. What is the parenting philosophy of each of the queen's adoptive mothers (Natalia, Luca, and Marigold)? Who makes the best adoptive mother and why?
7. Compare and contrast Luca, Natalia, and Elizabeth's beliefs about the Temple and the goddess. Do their beliefs correspond with Temple teachings?
8. How do biological sisters treat each other in the novel? Consider the three queens, Madrigal and Caragh, and Natalia and Genevieve.
9. How do the mainlanders view those on the island of Fennbirn? What causes them to think this way?
10. How are women viewed on the mainland and on Fennbirn? How do their views of women affect women's roles in society?
11. What are the negative consequences, if any, of Arsinoe and Marigold's use of low magic? Are there any positive outcomes to using low magic? Do the negative consequences outweigh the positive outcomes? Is low magic bad?
12. Who does Joseph care for more, Mirabella or Jules? What evidence from the text leads you to this decision?
13. Describe Pietyr's feelings for Katherine. Does he view her more as a means to an end or does he truly care for her?
14. How does each faction plan on making their queen the queen of Fennbirn? Do their methods justify the end result? Why or why not?
15. How do rumors affect each queen's preparation for Beltane? Are rumors a positive or negative thing in the novel?
16. How have Katherine, Arsinoe, and Mirabella emotionally and mentally changed since the beginning of the story? How are these changes reflected in their physical appearances?
17. What are the final breaking points that cause Katherine, Arsinoe, and Mirabella to be willing to kill each other? Are any of the events justified reasons for murder?
18. What events foreshadow that Arisone and Katherine were placed with the wrong family?
19. What qualities make the past queens of Fennbirn memorable? Do any of the current queens possess those traits?
20. Based on their magical abilities, personality, and other attributes, who do you think will become the Queen of Fennbirn? Why?

## **CLASSROOM CONNECTIONS**

### **Art:**

Each student will draw a location from the novel, such as the library in Greavesdrake Manor or a view from the harbor in Wolf Spring. Students should refer to the text for descriptions of the landscape and coloring and artistically incorporate the supporting quote(s) on the image.

### **Language Arts:**

Students will write a travel guide for Fennbirn. Each student should give an overview of one area/section of the island as well as sights to see and things to do. Where would students recommend travelers stay and why? What kind of food would they eat at certain locations? What items would you recommend they bring and what are the customs and religion? Students should anticipate what mainlanders need to know before visiting.

### **Science:**

- The poisoners have developed immunity to poison, thus giving them power. According to WebMD, 85% of the population are allergic to poison ivy, but 15% are naturally immune. Read more about natural immunity here: <https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2015/07/150701140859.htm>. Now, scientists have discovered a way to make those who are allergic to poison ivy immune. Discuss if any of the students or people they know have natural immunity or have learned to grow immune to certain objects, diseases, or situations. Discuss the scientific process of learning to become immune. Further discussions could include how vaccines work to develop immunity and antibiotic resistance.
- While there is no such thing as a love potion such as the one crafted by Jules' mother for her daughter and Joseph, some have argued that wearing pheromones or enhancing their natural scent can attract a partner. Watch the following scientific experiment on pheromones and identify the scientific process involved: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oXBB\\_jVrQ-Q](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oXBB_jVrQ-Q). Are there any problems with how they conducted their research? Are the results valid? After critiquing their process, consult the article <http://www.sciencemag.org/news/2017/03/do-human-pheromones-actually-exist>. Do the two claims support each other? Why or why not?

### **Social Studies:**

- Psychology: Dreams affect Mirabella's attitude towards her sisters. Have students record their own dreams each night for a week. Tips for keeping a journal and remembering dreams can be found at: <https://sites.google.com/a/sduhsd.net/ap-psych-cdoerrer/dream-journal-activity>. Then follow the instructions from the following activity: <https://sites.google.com/a/sduhsd.net/ap-psych-cdoerrer/dream-log-activity>.
- Psychology: Introduce the concept of parenting styles to students. The four recognized are: authoritative, neglectful, permissive, and authoritarian. Using each of the sisters' or other characters' families as case studies, identify what parenting strategy each foster parent uses and provide evidence. Which parenting strategy is the best? Why? Which one is the worst and why?
- Fennbirn is a monarchy. Have students identify and research different types of monarchy, such as elective, constitutional, theocratic, hereditary, etc. Which one does

Fennbirn most closely resemble? What are the advantages and disadvantages to each?  
Would the students like living in any type of monarchy? Why or why not?

**Vocabulary:**

Bustling	Encampment	Ominous
Consort	Fissure	Perilous
Delegation	Fortified	Unobscured
Disembarking	Laments	
Disheveled	Languorously	

**RELATED WEBSITES**

**An Excerpt from *One Dark Throne* (Book 2)**

<http://ew.com/books/2017/04/05/read-an-exclusive-excerpt-from-the-sequel-to-three-dark-crowns-by-kendare-blake/>

Explore the first few pages of the sequel to *Three Dark Crowns*.

**Evil Queens**

<https://www.hypable.com/kendare-blake-three-dark-crowns-guest-post/>

Author Kendare Blake discusses why some queens in popular culture are considered evil.

**Find your Familiar Quiz**

<http://www.epicreads.com/blog/three-dark-crowns-familiar/>

Take a quiz to find out what animal best fits your personality.

**Which Queen Should You Support? Quiz**

<http://www.epicreads.com/blog/three-dark-crowns-queen-support/>

Take a quiz to find out which queen from *Three Dark Crowns* you should support based on your personality.