

# HOLIDAY HOUSE

## READING GROUP

### GUIDE



HC: 9780823450817 • e-book: 9780823452927

## *Goblin Market*

by Diane Zahler

★“Diane Zahler . . . spins a terrifically timeless upper-middle-grade story of sisterly love, goblin magic and overstepped boundaries. . . . [Her] lush language describes a fully realized fairy tale world. . . . Share this book with anyone who loves their stories located in far-off lands potentially inhabited by monsters.”—*Shelf Awareness*, Starred Review

### ABOUT THE BOOK

**One sister must save the other from a goblin prince in this rich, spooky, and delightfully dark fantasy!**

Lizzie and Minka are sisters, but they're nothing alike: Minka is outgoing and cheerful, while Lizzie is shy and sensitive. Nothing much ever happens in their sleepy village until one day, Minka meets a boy who gives her a plum to eat. He tells her that she's special. He tells her no one understands her like he does—not even Lizzie. Just like that, Minka has been bewitched and ensnared by a *zduze*—a goblin. His plum was poison, his words are poison, and strange things begin to happen. A terrible sickness descends on Minka, and deep in the woods, a wedding table has been laid. To save her sister, Lizzie will have to find courage she never knew she had—courage to confront the impossible—and enter a world of dreams, danger, and death.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Folklore is defined as beliefs, customs, and stories of a place or community passed by word of mouth through many generations. What role does folklore play in this novel?
- Polish folklore includes monstrous creatures, witches, evil spirits, and werewolves that live in mountains, forests, or swamps. Identify the monstrous creatures in the novel. How do these creatures and where they live establish the setting of the novel?
- Minka meets Emil at the town market in Elsa where she sells vegetables and bread. Why is she so entranced by him? Explain why she doesn't want her mother to know about him. What happens when Minka eats the fruit Emil is selling? What is the symbolism of the lock of hair that she gives Emil?

- Lizzie is afraid of everything. How does Minka encourage Lizzie to confront her fears? At what point does Lizzie agree to go to market? Describe her first trip there.
- Describe Lizzie’s first impression of Emil. How does he know who she is? Explain what she means when she says, “Emil’s words have no color” (p. 59). What does she see in Emil that Minka doesn’t see?
- What is Minka’s reaction when she learns that Emil wanted Lizzie to eat his fruit? Discuss why Lizzie and Jakob tell Mistress Klara about Minka’s illness and Emil.
- Lizzie tells Emil to stay away from Minka. Explain what Emil means by “She won’t want to stay away from me. Neither will you later” (p. 63). How is this a warning?
- What is the meaning of the cherry seed inside the locket that Emil sends to Minka? What happens when Minka eats the cherry? Discuss the role of the cherry tree in the story. What does Jakob notice about the tree? Why does Minka get upset when Lizzie tries to cut down the tree?
- Jakob and Stefan Nowak live on a nearby farm with their widowed father. How are the boys good friends to Minka and Lizzie? Explain why Minka and Lizzie’s mother feels sorry for the boys. Discuss why Jakob is so determined not to be like his father. How is Jakob protective of Stefan?
- How do Lizzie and Jacob figure out the source of Minka’s illness? Who leads them to Noc Forest? What gives them the courage to go there in search of Minka? What do they find when they get there? Describe Emil’s house. Jakob can’t see the figures sitting on the porch. Why can Lizzie see them?
- Explain how Lizzie convinces Minka that she should return home with them. Chart Lizzie, Jakob, and Minka’s escape from the goblins. What is Stefan’s role in bringing them to safety?
- Identify the central conflict of the novel. What is the conflict within Lizzie and Jakob? Debate whether Lizzie has completely conquered her fears. How does Jakob chart his own life’s course?

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Photo Credit: Ben Sicker

**Diane Zahler** is the author of many books for young readers, both fiction and nonfiction, including *The Thirteenth Princess*, *Princess of the Wild Swans*, and *Daughter of the White Rose*. Her books have been Junior Library Guild Gold Standard Selections, named a Mighty Girl Best Book of the Year, Golden Sower Award Nominees, and Bank Street Best Books of the Year. A full-time writer, she lives in New York with her husband.