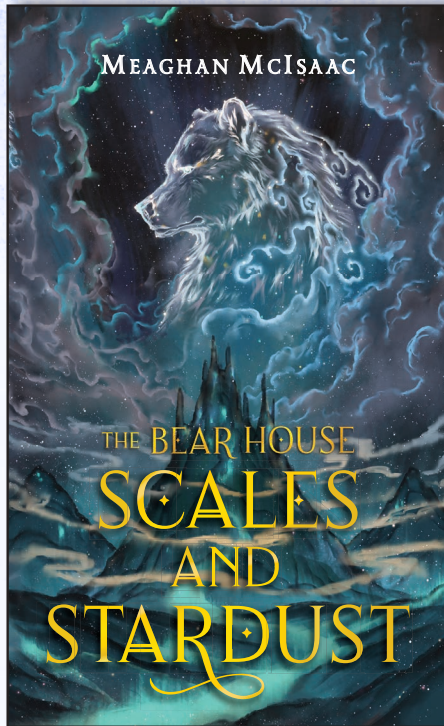


HOLIDAY HOUSE

EDUCATOR'S GUIDE



The Bear House: Scales and Stardust by Meaghan McIssac

Second in the Series!

A Junior Library Guild Gold Standard Selection

ABOUT THE BOOK

Return to the gritty medieval world of the Bear Highen in this thrilling high fantasy follow-up to *The Bear House*.

The war in the Bear Highen is over. Aster, at thirteen, has defeated her uncle and become the High Queen. Peace is good, but things are still difficult: political

challenges confront her, personal challenges stymie her, and the massive Hemoth Bear, symbol of the House of the Bear, is beginning to resist her control. When, during a royal hunt, Aster stumbles on a living star in the form of a young girl living in a nest of dragons, matters become even more complex. There is no shortage of those who want to use her cosmic powers for their own ends—rival kings, rival friends, and even three deadly sisters from the plane of demons, one of whom has an offer for Aster she may find it difficult to refuse . . .

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Discuss why the book opens with the story of three sisters—Faith, Hope, and Mercy. How do they become the Terror Maids—Despair, Avarice, and Malice?
- Why is so little known about them? How does Bernadine know so much about them? Explain their role in the story.
- Discuss the conflict between Aster and her mother, Lady Lourdes. Why isn't Aster interested in the subject of marriage? Why does her mother say that Ursula, Aster's older sister, "is not in a fix for suitors" (p. 17)? How are the courting etiquette and requirements different for Aster?
- Ursula is courting Arthur Conri, the Hound King. Describe Aster's reaction to this courtship. Why does Dev say that the manor would be lonely without Ursula?
- How is it obvious at the end of the novel that Aster's conflict with her mother about the issue of marriage isn't over?
- Discuss why Aster, Ursula, and their mother make the journey to Felisbrook. What is Aster's opinion of Aunt Leona? What is Queen Iris and the Great Lynx's responsibility at Felisbrook?



- Explain why Aster thinks that Iris looks “uncomfortable and caged” (p. 41). At what point does Iris become more comfortable with her role?
- Felisbrook is a divided kingdom. What is the reason for this division? Leona, the older sister of Lady Lourdes, was passed over by the Great Lynx at the Northern Crowning. What was her life like at Thorn Manor?
- Explain the following simile: “Luella Lourdes’ formidable sister ran Thorn Manor as a captain would a frigate” (p. 102). Why is Iris so sure that Leona is loyal to her? Explain why Lady Lourdes warns Aster not to bring up “the past” while at Felisbrook. Has Felisbrook become more united by the end of the book?
- Bernadine Lourdes, Head of the House of the White Bear, chooses not to attend the affair at Felisbrook. What shame keeps her from attending? Bernadine also experiences many fears. At what point does she confront her fears and decide to go to Felisbrook?
- Bernadine feels she needs to warn Aster. What necessitates this warning? What is her role in saving Aster from evil forces?
- How does Leona seem intent on making Queen Iris a legitimate queen? Explain what this has to do with power. Lady Lourdes has no power. How does she seek it through Aster?
- Aster rules through her father. Is she afraid of power? How does Dev remind her that she cannot continue ruling under the shadow of her father? How does finally making decisions for herself give her a newfound power?
- Discuss the four types of Nightlocks. Identify the type that is known as the most wicked. Who are the other evil characters in the novel?
- Why doesn’t the Star Writ discuss the Nightlocks? How does this contribute to Dev’s lack of knowledge about these creatures?
- Who are the Dust Dragons? What is their role in the story? Why are the people of Dracogart so determined to learn more about them? What is the purpose of the Shadow Plum and the Starhound?
- Who is Seren, the girl with the silver hair? How would you explain her role?
- What is the purpose of the venture into Deadwood? Why is Iris sure that Aster would want to wait until the King of Dracogart could go along? Describe Deadwood. While in Deadwood, Aster disappears. What and who cause this disappearance?
- How does Dev feel guilty for telling Aster that he “felt stuck with her”? Explain Aster’s plight to unravel the mysteries of the Moon Door. What role does Keeper Kalamity have in her mission? Malice is looking for a star. Explain why Ursula, Iris, and Bernadine offer to become a star. How does this save Aster?
- Malice tells Aster that there are truths in the world that she must discover for herself. What are the truths that Aster must learn? Debate whether she learns them after the venture into Deadwood. How do these truths change her?

Guide created by Pat Scales, retired school librarian and independent consultant, Greenville, South Carolina.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Meaghan McIsaac is the author of several books for young readers, including *The Boys of Fire and Ash*, which was shortlisted for the Manitoba Young Readers’ Choice Award; and *Movers*, which was a Shining Willow Finalist for the Saskatchewan Young Readers’ Choice Awards. *The Bear House* is the first book in an exciting new fantasy series. Meaghan lives in Toronto, Ontario, with her two dogs.

For a guide for the second book in the series, *The Bear House: Scales in Stardust*, visit HolidayHouse.com.

