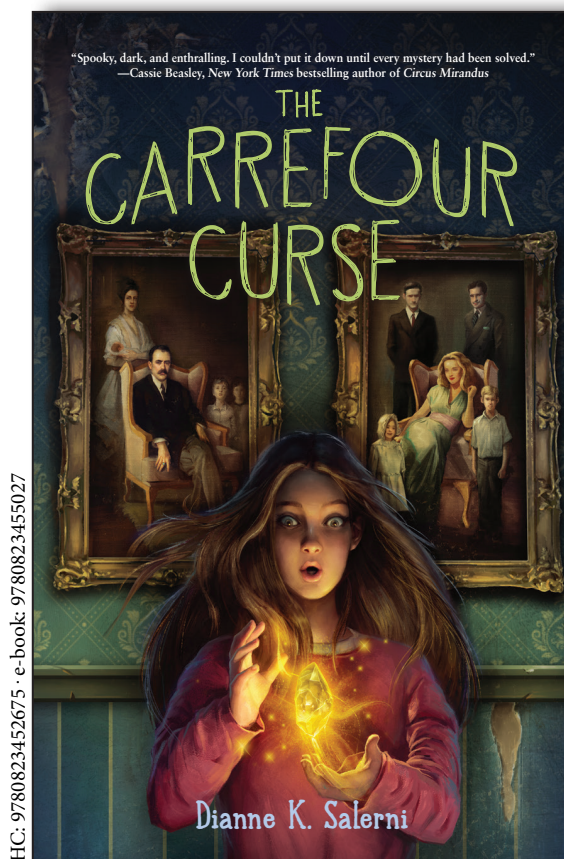


# HOLIDAY HOUSE

## READING GROUP

### GUIDE



## THE CARREFOUR CURSE

by Dianne K. Salerni

### ABOUT THE BOOK

*The Addams Family* meets *The Westing Game* in this exhilarating mystery about a modern magical dynasty trapped in the ruins of their once-grand, now-crumbling ancestral home.

Twelve-year-old Garnet regrets that she doesn't know her family. Her mother has done her best to keep it that way, living far from the rest of the magical Carrefour clan and their dark, dangerous mansion known as Crossroad House. But when Garnet finally gets summoned to the estate, it isn't quite what she hoped for. Then Garnet learns the family secret: their dying patriarch fights to retain his life by stealing power from others. Every accident that isn't an accident, every unexpected illness and unexplained disappearance grants Jasper Carrefour a little more time.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Garnet is twelve years old when she finally visits her mother's ancestral home, Crossroad House. Discuss the reasons why Emerald, Garnet's mother, was so intent on protecting her daughter from the family and the house. What was she afraid would happen?
- Describe Crossroad House. Argue the case that the house is a main character in the novel. Explain what Garnet means when she says "Information about Crossroad House is golden" (p. 5). How does Garnet get information about the house?
- Explain why Emerald is taking Garnet to the house now. At first Garnet feels like an outsider. At what point does she become an insider?
- Discuss what Garnet means by "Every step forward feels like one step closer to a trap" (p. 61). Chart the many traps Garnet encounters at Crossroad House. Emerald thinks that the house is different from what she knew as a child living there. How does she think it has changed?

- What is the purpose of the Family Book? How does it help Garnet sort out the mysteries and the magic of the Carrefours? Garnet is drawn to a family portrait. How does it help Garnet put all the pieces together?
- Who are the evil characters? Which characters use their magic for good?
- Note the title of each chapter. Why are the characters in the book named for gemstones? Read the magical properties of each gemstone.
- What is the connection between the gemstone and the character and event in each chapter? How do these gemstones help the reader navigate the plot?
- Jasper thinks that Emerald has a forceful personality. Analyze her character and discuss why Jasper thinks she is forceful.
- Emerald's brother, Mica, lives at Crossroad House. What is his contribution to the family? Why is he mute? How does his life change at the end of the novel?
- What is the Carrefour curse? How is Jasper, Garnet's great-grandfather, responsible? Discuss how the curse is broken.
- What is the importance of the year 1998? Who is Brand Kostopoulos? Why does he pose as David Castellano, Garnet's father?
- At what point does she realize that he is an imposter and a fraud? Explain what he means by "Sometimes it takes an outsider to see what everyone is overlooking" (p. 105). What is the family overlooking?
- Sarcasm is the use of irony to mock or convey contempt. For example, Emerald says, regarding Jasper, "Heaven forbid we keep his highness waiting" (p. 82). Find other examples of sarcasm in the novel. How is the use of sarcasm an effective way to reveal the characters' true feelings for one another?
- Review the definition of simile, metaphor, and personification. Explain the following metaphor: "But under the malignant gleam of Jasper's eyes, I am frozen. A rabbit pinned by the stare of a predator" (p. 113). Who is the rabbit, and who is the predator?
- Ash takes Garnet on a tour of the house and leads her over to a bench away from the house when he reveals certain information—"Like he doesn't want Crossroad House to eavesdrop" (p. 37). How is this a simile and personification? What are some other examples of these types of figurative language?
- Discuss the meaning of "the transition." What has happened in the past when a transition occurs? How does this explain why Emerald hasn't wanted to come home?
- How does her view of the house and family change after the transition occurs? Explain the process of choosing an heir. Why is Ash a good choice to lead the family? Discuss his reaction to the news. What is the symbolism of the ring?

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



**Dianne K. Salerni** has written many books for children and young adults, including state-award nominated series *The Eighth Day* and *Junior Library Guild Gold Standard Selections* *Eleanor*, *Alice*, and *the Roosevelt Ghosts* and *Jadie in Five Dimensions*. She attended the University of Delaware and the University of Pennsylvania before teaching fourth and fifth grades for many years. Now Dianne spends her time hanging around creepy cemeteries, climbing 2,000-year-old pyramids for book research, and volunteering at her local rescue animal shelter. She lives in Pennsylvania with her family. Visit her at [DianneSalerni.com](http://DianneSalerni.com).