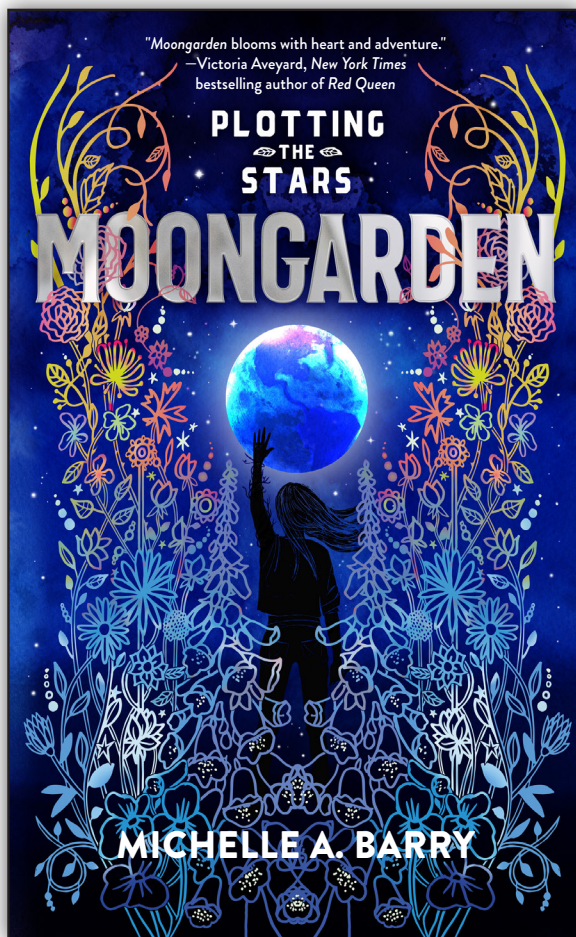


# HOLIDAY HOUSE INK

## READING GROUP GUIDE



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## Plotting the Stars 1: Moongarden

by Michelle A. Barry

★“Marvelous, magical.”—*Booklist*

### ABOUT THE BOOK

“*Moongarden* blooms with heart and adventure. A stellar update of *The Secret Garden*, woven with a little science fiction, a lot of magic, a vibrant heroine, and a plucky robot sidekick to rival R2-D2.”—Victoria Aveyard, *New York Times* bestselling author of *Red Queen*

Failed climate change policy, an intergalactic conspiracy, and the magical, unlikely heroine who could unearth it all. An explosive STEAM-inspired series starter perfect for young change makers.

Centuries ago, Earth’s plants turned deadly, and humanity took to space to cultivate new homes. Myra Hodger is in her first year at an elite school on the Moon, and she’s crumbling under the pressure. She doesn’t fit in, and, worse, the tattoos that signal her Number Whisperer magic aren’t developing. In her heart, she knows she doesn’t have a Creer, and soon everyone else will, too.

Wandering the halls while cutting class, she discovers a secret lab hidden behind one of the unused classrooms and, beyond that, a secret garden overflowing with plants. Dangerous, toxic plants. As she learns more about the garden, Myra begins to wonder if she does have a Creer after all—one that died out when the Earth did. One that could help solve the food shortages the government doesn’t want anyone to know about.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Discuss the relationship between science fiction and fantasy. Why does this novel belong to the science fiction genre? What are the elements of fantasy in the novel? Many science fiction novels ponder the following question: What goes wrong for individuals when science and technology fail? Debate what goes wrong in the realm of science and technology in this novel. How does it affect Myra Hodger, the main character?
- Myra Hodger attends the Scientific Lunar Academy of Magic (S.L.A.M.). Describe the educational curriculum of the school. What is the importance of the Practical Magic Test? How did Myra qualify for the school? In what way is Myra bored with S.L.A.M.? Why does she think she may be expelled?

- Discuss the cliques at S.L.A.M. How are they formed? Explain why Myra has trouble communicating with her classmates. She has three roommates. How do they ignore her? At what point does Lila befriend Myra? What prompts Lila to teach Myra about friendship? When does Canter Weathers, the Director’s son, start to notice Myra? How do Myra, Lila, and Canter become a “group”?
- What is a Creer? Explain what Director Weathers means when he says, “Our Creers know us better than we know ourselves” (p. 351). Discuss Myra’s parents’ attitude toward non-Creers. What are Incriptions? Describe the normal path for Incriptions to form. Debate whether Incriptions are like a coming-of-age ritual. Why does Lila draw Incriptions on Myra’s arm? Canter Weathers reveals that his mother was a non-Creer. Why does he feel the need to share this fact with Myra?
- Myra’s parents are Number Whisperers. Explain what a Number Whisperer does. How do they pressure Myra to follow in their footsteps? At what point does Myra realize that she doesn’t want to be a Number Whisperer? Why does she postpone telling her parents? How do they react when they finally learn Myra’s path?
- Myra overhears a conversation between Director Weathers and Jake Melfin, the Chemic representative on the Governing Council. What does Myra learn about Director Weathers from the conversation? How does she use the information to her benefit? Debate whether Director Weathers is intimidated by Myra’s father, who is also on the Governing Council. At what point does Myra tell Canter Weathers about the conversation? Discuss his reaction.
- How does Myra discover the garden? What is her initial impression of the garden? Explain the mystery surrounding the garden. Who warns Myra about the garden? Why doesn’t she heed the warning? Who is Bernie, and why is he in the garden? Describe the magic of the garden. What is significant about the faint Incriptions that form on Myra’s arm? Explain why a Botan Incription puts Myra in danger.
- Canter believes that his mother, Fiona Weathers, died in an accident. What is the first hint that Fiona isn’t dead? How are Ms. Curie and Ms. Goble connected to the plant conspiracy involving Fiona Weathers? Why did Director Weathers lie to Canter about his mother? What happens when Canter confronts his dad about Fiona? Explain what the plant conspiracy reveals about Director Weathers’s character.
- Explain why the ancestors had to leave the old world. Debate whether this shaped the attitude of the moon settlers toward gardens and plants. Why is Fiona considered a plant offender? How is this a crime? How could Myra, Lila, and Canter be at risk if they continue with the moon garden? Describe their determination to move forward with another garden. Explain how they manage to conceal the garden.

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



**Michelle A. Barry** was born and raised in Springfield, Massachusetts, though she was later cajoled over the border into Connecticut by her future husband and has happily resided there for many years. She holds a degree in communications from Salve Regina University and has worked as a newspaper reporter, freelance writer and editor, and marketing professional. She currently lives in Connecticut with her charming husband and their two delightful children. She is the author of the Plotting the Stars series. Visit her online at [michellebarrybooks.com](http://michellebarrybooks.com) or follow her on Instagram @michellebarrybooks and X @michelleabarry.