



HEARTLESS

DISCUSSION GUIDE

1. Marissa Meyer has stated that she “tried to be guided by Lewis Carroll’s creation” and used the popular nursery rhyme (“The Queen of Hearts, she baked some tarts”) to inspire Cath’s love for baking. How does *Heartless* change the way you remember or interpret Carroll’s *Alice in Wonderland*, particularly the Queen of Hearts?
 2. So many beloved characters are portrayed, and Meyer intended to show their lives before Alice fell down the rabbit hole. Among the Cheshire Cat, the Mad Hatter, and the White Rabbit, whose backstory do you find most surprising?
 3. Cath’s ambitions to open her own bakery are at odds with what is expected of her by her parents, especially her mother. Is there any way that Cath can fulfill her dream and please the Marquess? If so, would that make her life easier or more challenging? How would you advise Cath if she came to you for help in choosing her own destiny?
 4. From a pastry-loving teen to a murderous madwoman—discuss what turns Cath from light to dark and how love turns to hatred for her.
 5. What first attracts Cath to Jest? How does this attraction change over the course of the story? Would Cath be as interested in Jest if her mother weren’t pushing her to marry the King?
 6. Why do you think Meyer chose to make Jest the court’s joker, instead of giving him a different role in the kingdom? Is Jest all charm and magic, or is there a dark side to him?
 7. What might Cath and Jest’s relationship look like if fate didn’t intervene? Is their romance fueled by its secretive nature?
 8. Is the King of Hearts in control of his own destiny or a pawn for others who are vying for power?
 9. Toward the end of the novel, Cath says to Lady Margaret Mearle that “you can’t judge a book by its cover.” This is a familiar saying, but what does Cath mean by this, and what is she thinking here?
 10. Meyer has been asked to name her dream cast for the movie version of *Heartless*—and her response has been that it’s difficult for her to envision who would portray these characters on screen, and also that her dream is to see *Heartless* adapted for theater. What do you think would be the strengths or weaknesses of this novel being adapted for the screen versus the stage? Which format do you think would better serve the story?
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