



READING GUIDE

THE LABYRINTH OF SOULS

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About the Book

Magical school meets a darkly charming world of nightmares in this inventive fantasy for fans of *The Nightmare Before Christmas*!

Twelve-year-old outcast Ix Tatterfall can see the Nightmares that slip out of the forbidden Labyrinth of Souls. While trying to save her father's lost soul, she gets swept away to the mysterious Candle Corps Academy, where the students train to deal with spooky, fun and sometimes terrifying Nightmare creatures.

Discussion Questions

- In the Kingdom of Spinar, not everyone can see Nightmare creatures, which makes Ix feel different and very lonely sometimes. Do you think being able to see Nightmares is lucky or unlucky for Ix?
- The Nightmare creatures of the Labyrinth are connected to our feelings and emotions. Which of the Nightmares did you feel connected to and why?
- Making friends is hard for Ix. She has a tough time connecting with Ollie and Morrigan in the beginning. What do you think is important when reaching out to new people?
- The mysterious Labyrinth of Souls is ruled by the Seven Sorrows, like Terror, Wrath, Greed, and Chaos. Do you think these figures are villains in the story?
What role do you think the Sorrows play in the book?

- Many of the Nightmares of the Labyrinth are frightening, but Ix comes to understand that even though they may look scary, that doesn't make them evil. Do you think people can live alongside Nightmares? If so, should there be rules like we have for dealing with wild animals?
- There are all different kinds of families in *The Labyrinth of Souls*. Like Ix and her missing parents, Captain Kel and his husband and Morrigan, and so many more. How do these family connections affect the characters? What do you think makes a "found family," and do you think Ix has found hers?
- Candle Corps Academy is the school where kids with Dreamlight powers go to study, but Ix finds out she has Nightmare powers. Why do think she's so afraid to tell anyone about her powers? Do you think the way Candle Corps treats Nightmares is fair?
- Ix brings along Hanky the Inkling as a companion through the story. Why do you think she brought Hanky? What does Hanky contribute to the story? What do you think humans can learn from Nightmares?
- In the end, Ix finds out she's the daughter of one of the Sorrows, Death, but she can't stay with her parents in the Labyrinth because she's human. Do you think this is fair? If you were writing the end of the book, how would you change it?
- In Spinar, the fourth rule for safeguarding your soul is: *Never count your griefs without counting your blessings alongside them, so that the Sorrows cannot make a home inside you.* What do you think this means?
- Chaos the Grinning Cat is Ix's first ever friend, but he's also a Sorrow of the Labyrinth. Do you think Chaos is a good friend to Ix? What do you think makes someone a good friend?



Writing Exercises

1. Personification

The Seven Sorrows in the book are personifications of emotions. *Personification* is when you give human characteristics to something not human. Think about how the Sorrows look and talk and act portrays the emotion they represent. Wrath wears red and is loud and rude and hot-tempered, while Terror is a child with long hair and empty saucer eyes.

Now try writing your own personification of an emotion! What might joy, or frustration, or hope, or jealousy be like? How would you describe them?

Pair up or break into groups and see if your partner can guess the emotion from what you wrote!



2. Writing with Your Five Senses

The descriptions of the domains of the Labyrinth, like Terror and Misery, are filled with sensory details. These are details based on the five senses: sight, smell, touch, taste, and sound. Using all of these senses in a scene can really bring it to life! We often write what things look like, but what about the other senses?

For example: the domain of **Misery** looks like a muddy swamp, smells like moldy bread, sounds like buzzing mosquitos in your ears, is slimy to the touch, and would probably taste like curdled milk!

Try writing your own description of a place, real or imagined, and see if you can use all five senses!

Bonus: Reread the description of the different domains of the Labyrinth and find as many words that use the senses as you can!

The Wonderful World of Words

One of my very favorite parts of writing is finding new words. The world is full of so many wonderful words! Some are funny, some are so old barely anyone remembers them—and some are just downright ridiculous.

Here are some of the words I ran into when I was writing *The Labyrinth of Souls*. Take a guess at what these words mean...then flip the next page for the answers!

Bupkis

Ornery

Madcap

Dillydally

Caterwaul

Flummox

Cattywampus

Kerfuffle

Malarkey

Oodles

Pandemonium

Persnickety

Balderdash

Crepuscular

Woebegone



The Wonderful World of Words

Bupkis: Nonsense or nothing; meaning very little

Ornery: unpleasant in disposition or temper

Madcap: wildly or heedlessly impulsive; reckless; rash

Dillydally: to waste time, especially by indecision or trifling

Caterwaul: to make a shrill howling or wailing noise

Flummox: to bewilder, confound, or confuse

Cattywampus: slightly off-kilter or imperfect

Kerfuffle: a commotion or a fuss

Malarkey: speech or writing designed to obscure, mislead, or impress; bunkum

Oodles: a large quantity

Pandemonium: a wild uproar, unrestrained disorder; utter chaos

Persnickety: overparticular or fussy

Balderdash: senseless, foolish talk; nonsense

Crepuscular: relating to or resembling twilight

Woebegone: beset with woe or sadness; melancholy

