



Discussion Guide

TESSA GRATTON

THE QUEENS OF INNIS LEAR

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The information and discussion questions that follow are intended to enhance your reading of *The Queens of Innis Lear*. Please feel free to adapt these materials to suit your needs and interests.

1. *The Queens of Innis Lear* was initially inspired by this quote from *King Lear*: “we make guilty of our disasters the sun, the moon, and stars; as if we were villains on necessity; fools by heavenly compulsion.” Each of the characters in this novel takes a stance on whether fate can be manipulated or must be followed. Which characters do you think exemplify the idea that destiny cannot be circumvented—and which, if any, prove the opposite?
2. There is also differentiation between the idea of nature, and what is natural. Regan suffers feeling like she cannot do a “natural” aspect of life (childbirth), despite her nature (wanting to embrace her expectations of motherhood) but Ban finds a dark comfort in the idea that his nature has determined his actions, though being a bastard, is literally considered unnatural. How does the magical system of Innis Lear support the differences—and similarities—between the literal natural world and the idea of “natural” actions?
3. How do Tessa Gratton’s three Lear sisters address the traditional ideals of strength and weakness in their world? And how does each sister subvert or perform the prevailing values of those ideals?

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4. King Lear fails to notice the flaws of his rule and the flaws of his expectations of a rigid patriarchal inheritance—in part because he insists in remaining apart from his own court and family. In contrast, Brona has created an alternate society that relies on the strength of community and chosen family. What do you think the importance of community means for the longevity of Innis Lear.
5. Shakespeare's *King Lear* used the daughters of Lear as easily consumed narrative archetypes; with the two eldest daughters being selfish and unnaturally hungry for power, and the youngest being virtuous and loving to a fault, exemplifying a religious paragon. How does this novel challenge these depictions and how does this recreate the narrative of the play?

