

One Book One Minnesota | *The Secret of Dreadwillow Carse* Reading Questions For All Ages

1. Why doesn't Aon mind feeling sad, even when she thinks she is the only one who can?
2. Jeniah is often frustrated with her teacher Skonas, but she learns lessons in spite of his unusual methods. Can you think of a time when you learned something in an unexpected way? How did it change the way you felt about the lesson?
3. Jeniah spends a lot of the book worried that she isn't going to be a good queen. What did Jeniah need to learn to be a good queen? Do you think she learned what she needed to?
4. The Chorister says that "Happiness achieved at the expense of others is its own special brand of poison." How have you seen this idea in your own life?
5. What did you learn about happiness and sadness from this book? Would you rather live like the people of the Monarchy before Jeniah makes her choice, or would you rather live just as you are with all your complicated emotions?
6. Is it ever a good idea to try and protect people from things that are unpleasant, like all Jeniah's ancestors did? Why or why not?
7. Skonas is an enigmatic figure. The author shares little about his backstory or talents. What do we as readers know for sure about him? What do you think Skonas' air of mystery adds or takes away from the story?
8. Jeniah and Aon come from different backgrounds, but bond almost instantly. As they correspond, it becomes clear that their similarities extend beyond the obvious. What factors do you see in play behind their evolving friendship?
9. As one of her first acts as ruler, Janiah makes a decision about a flock of ruby wings – a choice that brings with it unintended and far-reaching consequences. How does this episode help shape her approach to ruling the Monarchy? Do you think it impacted the choices she ultimately makes concerning the Carse? What other factors or experiences played into her momentous decision to stray from Monarchy tradition?

For teens and adults:

You may want to compare and contrast the themes of *The Secret of Dreadwillow Carse* with Ursula K. Le Guin's "The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas."

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