



HOW TO HEAL A GRYPHON

DISCUSSION GUIDE

About the Book



To save her family, she'll have to make a dangerous bargain and tip the scales of balance.

With her thirteenth birthday just around the corner, Giada Bellantuono has to make a big decision: Will she join the family business and become a healer or follow her dreams? But even though she knows her calling is to heal vulnerable animals, using her powers to treat magical creatures is decidedly not allowed.

When a group of witches kidnaps her beloved older brother, Rocco, and her parents are away, Giada is the only person left who can rescue him. Swept into the magical underground city of Malafi, Giada will need the help of her new companions to save her brother—or risk losing him forever.

About the Creator: Meg Cannistra

Meg Cannistra grew up in Sarasota, Florida. After living in New York City and northern New Jersey for a few years, Meg now resides with her husband, two cats, and dog in Charlotte, North Carolina. Her middle grade book, *The Trouble with Shooting Stars*, is currently on shelves. When she's not taking pictures of her cats, she writes magical, mysterious, and sometimes scary stories. You can find her on Twitter and Instagram at @MegCannistra and learn more about her books at MegCannistra.com.

About this Guide

The Common Core Standards push readers to look closer when reading a text including examining author’s craft and analyzing word choice and narrative elements. Cannistra’s novel *How to Heal a Gryphon*, includes mythology, imagery and descriptive language, complex characters, an opportunity to look at cause and effect, thought-provoking reflection opportunities, and a quest-focused plot that allows the reader to deeply delve into the text. This teaching guide includes discussion questions to be used in grades 3 to 7 as this text is read as a whole group, small group, or a combination. This guide could also be modified to be used with a student who is reading the novel independently.

The Common Core Anchor Standards in English Language Arts that can be addressed using the discussion questions in this guide are:

English Language Arts

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.1

Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.2

Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.3

Analyze how and why individuals, events, or ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.4

Interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text, including determining technical, connotative, and figurative meanings, and analyze how specific word choices shape meaning or tone.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.10

Read and comprehend complex literary texts independently and proficiently.



Discussion Questions

Use these questions as reading check-ins, writing prompts, or classroom discussions throughout *How to Heal a Gryphon*.

1. Giada is always compared to Rocco and her parents' reputations, setting high standards for her to achieve. How does this make her feel?
2. Many superstitions are shared in the book that Giada's family and community believe are bad luck. Does your family/community have any superstitions? Where did they come from? Do you abide by/believe in them? Why/why not?
3. Giada says that everyone is "so busy helping humans, they forget about the animals that need protection. Most often from us" (page 28). How is this seen in the book and in our world?
4. The smell of the ocean reminds Giada of her home. What reminds you of your home? Any specific smells, sounds, tastes, etc.?
5. How did becoming a guardian right when the pandemic started affect Rocco?
6. The book states that "fairy tales used to scare kids into behaving" (page 52). What do you believe is the purpose for traditional literature like fairy tales and fables?
7. Giada points out that she is often called too dramatic, too loud, or too bossy (page 58). This is a problem that too many face, when really these traits are positive. What other words could you use to describe Giada that state how amazing she is?
8. Giada compares herself to Snow White. How are the two of them alike?
9. A group of crows are called a murder. Why do you think that is their collective name? What other collective names do you know and why do they (or why do they not) make sense?
10. Giada states that "food's a kind of magic, too" (page 117). Even though food isn't actual magic, it can seem that way when a chef or baker mixes the perfect ingredients. What foods feel like magic to you? What other things in our world can seem like magic?
11. The mermaids are part of a balanced ecosystem in Malafi because they light the sea and help the fish and underwater plants thrive. What is an example of something in our environment that works the same way? (121)
12. When Giada finds Rocco, she shares that he looks small but okay, but that the Streghe del Malocchio have inflicted terror on his soul (page 130). What is worse: internal or external pain/injuries? Why?
13. The Streghe del Malocchio state that they "maintain balance...[but they] may tip the scales in cases of emergency, but we always make sure things are level in the end" (page 132). Are they fulfilling justice by making decisions like this? How/how not?

14. Throughout the book, how does Diana show she is upset with Giada? Accepting of Giada? When does she seem to be upset? Accepting?
15. Alessia says that moon beckoning was “so scary for a second, but so much fun” (page 153). What is something you’ve done that was scary at first but ended up being something you enjoyed?
16. Alessia says that Giada needs to be more sympathetic of the Streghe del Malocchio (page 157). Do you agree? Why/why not?
17. Giada ends up killing a star to try to save her brother (page 168) which causes streghe all over the world who were tethered to it to suffer. Should Giada have caused suffering of many to try to save one? Why/why not?
18. How does Giada’s choice of helping animals on a regular basis lead to her being able to save her family and Alessia?
19. How could the Streghe del Malocchio have changed everything just by talking to the guardians? Is there a lesson in this? And if so, what is it?
20. Giada’s father is concerned with tradition when she shares what her passion is. Why is tradition so important to so many? What should guide our choices: tradition, passion, both? Why?
21. How is Giada similar to her aunt and grandmother when it comes to the path that they chose?
22. Diana and Apollo are spoken about often in the book. What did you learn about the two of them? Which of the two do you think you would follow if you were a guardian?
23. Italian words are used throughout the book. What words did you learn?
 - Examples of Italian words can be found on pages 6, 7, 8, 9, 19, 25, 31, 35, 46, 55, 59, 67, 72, 78, 87, 97, 119, 184, 185
24. The author used a variety of figurative language throughout the book to add descriptions to the prose. What types of figurative language do you find in the book? What pieces of figurative language did you find the most beneficial in its assistance in adding description?
 - Examples of similes, metaphors, idioms, and personification can be found on pages 21, 22, 24, 29, 30, 32, 45, 46, 55, 64, 69, 79, 93, 105, 127, 131, 150, 164, 165, 172, 175, 182, 185, 188
25. Choose a section of the book where the setting is described and create a drawing using the imagery of the prose to add as much detail as possible.
26. *How to Heal a Gryphon* is a quest story that follows Joseph Campbell’s hero’s journey. How does the plot fit these plot structures?
 - **Resources**
 - <https://bookunitteacher.com/wp/?p=6405>
 - <https://www.masterclass.com/articles/writing-101-what-is-the-heros-journey>

This guide was created by Kellee Moyer, a middle school teacher-librarian in Orlando, FL. Kellee is the author of various teaching guides for all levels; the co-author of the blog [Unleashing Readers](#); a past committee member & chair of the Schneider Family Book Award and Amelia Elizabeth Walden Award; on the 2016-2018 ALAN Board of Directors; and a member of NCTE, ALAN, and ALA. Kellee can be reached at Kellee.Moye@gmail.com.