

Reader's Guide
For
A Curse Dark as Gold
by
Elizabeth C. Bunce
A Debut Young Adult Novel

About the Book

Upon the death of her father, seventeen-year-old Charlotte Miller struggles to keep the family's woolen mill running in the face of an overwhelming mortgage and what the local villagers believe is a curse, but when a man capable of spinning straw into gold appears on the scene she must decide if his help is worth the price.

About the Author

Elizabeth C. Bunce is a native midwesterner who never grew out of reading fairy tales. She enjoys the challenge of fleshing out the details of traditional stories--"putting meat on their bones," and trying to make the sometimes inexplicable events in fairy tales (like spinning straw into gold) make sense. "Rumpelstiltskin" is actually her least favorite fairy tale. Visit her online at www.elizabethbunce.com.

Discussion Questions

1. Charlotte Miller feels responsible for her entire village. Do you think this feeling is justified? Why or why not?
2. When she finds herself in desperate straits, Charlotte makes some extraordinary choices about who she can trust to ask for help. Do you think she made the right decisions, or could she have turned elsewhere for assistance? What would you have done?
3. *A Curse Dark as Gold* takes place in an imaginary village called Shearing, where almost everyone and everything is named for what he/she/it does (Millers, Smiths, Bakers, etc). Why do you think the author chose to do this, particularly for a story based on "Rumpelstiltskin?"
4. One of the themes of *A Curse Dark as Gold* is the conflict between traditional folk beliefs and modern technology or "Progress." Discuss how this theme is played out in the novel. How do you see the tension between tradition and technology in your own world?
5. What do you think the title *A Curse Dark as Gold* means? How can gold be dark?

Activity

Readers create their own retellings of fairy tales or other stories, and present them to the rest of the group, either as short stories, plays, mock newscasts, etc.