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# MAGICALIA

The *Magicalia* series by acclaimed author Jennifer Bell is the perfect read for young fantasy fans. Packed with imagination and fast-paced action, it's ideal for emerging and confident readers and offers huge scope for exploration and follow-on activity with reading groups. In book one, *Magicalia*, Bitsy Wilder and her best friend Kosh are starting to get ready for their long-awaited trip to Paris when a giant horned hamster crashes through Bitsy's house and kidnaps her dad. With a whole world of magic to understand and a secret history they knew nothing about, they must enter a deadly race to uncover the truth if they are to stand any chance of rescuing him. In book two, *Magicalia: Thief of Shadows*, Kosh is accused of being the notorious Shadowsmith thief, and he and Bitsy must go into hiding before Kosh is arrested. Determined to prove his innocence, Bitsy, Kosh, and their friend Mateo set out to find the real villain. But they have something the Shadowsmith desperately wants, something the conservatoire also needs for protection. Can Bitsy, Kosh, and Mateo figure out the true culprit before time runs out and someone catches them? Brimming with fantastical creatures, incredible magic, daring escapes, and a hunt around the world, this series is a surefire hit for young readers.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Jennifer Bell** worked as a children's bookseller at a world-famous bookshop before becoming an author. Her debut novel, *The Uncommoners: The Crooked Sixpence*, was an international bestseller. In addition to creating the *Magicalia* series, she is also the author of the Agents of the Wild adventure series for younger readers; *Wonderscape*, inspired by some of her favorite heroes from history and her love of gaming; and *Legendarium*, which celebrates incredible legends from around the world. Jennifer Bell lives in London.

## GENERAL INTRODUCTION

This guide is designed to provide discussion points and activities encompassing both *Magicalia* books, and where questions are specific to a book, it uses the first in the series. There is a huge amount to explore in the stories, from the world of magic the author creates to the nature of family and first impressions. The creativity in the books is a great launch point for readers to start exploring their own ideas, but there are also weighty elements to discuss outside of the fantastical elements. With lots of real-world inspiration for locations in the book, too, there's something for any reader to explore and be inspired by.



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# DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

## Getting Started

What did you like about the book? Why? Encourage members to expand on their answers. Was the book what they were expecting? Why? Did it remind anyone of anything else they've read or seen?

### 1. Bitsy

"Bitsy's hands trembled as she finished reading. 'Kosh, this is about me.'" p. 29

How does the author show the reader Bitsy's personality? How would you describe Bitsy? What makes her a good protagonist? (Check for understanding of the word "protagonist" as needed.)

### 2. Kosh

"Perhaps one of your grandparents is a conjuror, like you said before. We can investigate together. I'll help you." p. 175

How does Kosh complement Bitsy? Are they a good team? Why? How does the author hint at storylines that might follow in later books?

### 3. Magicores

"They're powerful beasts conjured from emotional energy. That particular species is conjured from greed." p. 7

What did you think of the magicores? Did you have a favorite type? Why? How do the characteristics of the magicores relate to the emotions that help to generate them? How does this differ from other sorts of magic you have read or seen in stories? Are there similarities?

EXTENSION: Challenge group members to invent their own magicores based on emotions. What would they be called? What would they look like? What would their magical powers be? Create profiles for each magicore and present them to one another.

### 4. The Farthingstone

"Long ago, Giverna went on, 'a meteorite landed on a remote island in the Atlantic Ocean.'" p. 39

How were the first magicores discovered? What does the name "farthingstone" suggest? If the farthingstone is a meteor that changes people at a cellular level, what does that suggest about space and the possibilities in the universe? What might it be like to be "cosmodynamic"?

### 5. The Hunter Guild

"For hundreds of years, hunters have attacked us, stolen from us, and spied on us." p. 42

Discuss how the various guilds came to exist—what were the traits and skills that went into each guild? Why was the Hunter Guild banished from the conservatoires? What does it say about politics and power that even after the battle at the end of the book, the other guilds are unwilling to accept the Hunter Guild? Are the qualities of the Hunter Guild good qualities? Necessary qualities?



## 6. Magical Travel

“It’s the fastest way for conjurors to travel inland. Now, where am I taking you?” p. 59

What are the different means of magical travel in the book? Would you rather travel by ozoz or by the root network? Why? Why is the root network that Bitsy’s mum created important in the novel?

## 7. Magicalia

“Embossed in gold letters on the front cover was a single word: *MAGICALIA*.” p. 21

What is *Magicalia*? Why is this the name of the book? Bitsy has her mum’s special edition with notes that only she or her dad can read, but what makes an edition of a book special? Do you have a special edition of a book? What makes it special?

## 8. Riddlejax

“During those years, an imposter was in charge of the conservatoire—a man who called himself Riddlejax.” p. 91

What do we learn about who Riddlejax is? Does his name suggest anything? Does it reflect the unknowns about him? Does “Riddlejax” sound like a hero? A villain? Why?

## 9. Giverna

“Giverna winked. ‘Conjurors have magicore—means of getting everything done. Watch and learn.’” p. 45

Why does Giverna secretly support Riddlejax? Are there any clues earlier in the book that she might be a traitor? Did you suspect her? Why?

## 10. Arkwright’s Gyrowheel

“And here we have the first chancellor of the European Conservatoire of Conjuring,’ Chancellor Hershel said with pride, ‘Gilander Arkwright.’” p. 93

Look up the name “Arkwright” together—what does it mean? Is it a fitting name? Why? Now look at the words in “gyrowheel”—what do they suggest? Why has Arkwright created the gyrowheel? What’s his purpose? And why does he then hide it? What does this say about power, even with the best intentions?



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