THE GIRL WHO DRANK THE MOON
by KELLY BARNHILL

One year, a witch named Xan accidentally feeds a baby moonlight, filling the ordinary child with extraordinary magic. She raises the girl, whom she calls Luna, as her own—with the help of a swamp monster and a Perfectly Tiny Dragon. To keep Luna safe from her own unwieldy power, Xan locks Luna's magic deep inside her until her thirteenth birthday. Years later, when Luna's magic begins to emerge, Xan is far away and in grave danger. Soon, it is up to Luna to protect those who have protected her—even if it means the end of the loving, safe world she's always known.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

KELLY BARNHILL lives in Minnesota with her husband and three children. She is the author of four novels, most recently *The Girl Who Drank the Moon*, winner of the Newbery Medal. *The Witch's Boy* received four starred reviews and was a finalist for the Minnesota Book Awards. Kelly Barnhill has been awarded writing fellowships from the Jerome Foundation, the Minnesota State Arts Board, and the McKnight Foundation.

On book cover: A *New York Times* Bestseller — The Girl Who Drank the Moon — Kelly Barnhill — Award-winning author of THE WITCH'S BOY — "Impossible to put down." —*The New York Times Book Review*

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. "The Witch—that is, the belief in her—made for a frightened people, a subdued people, a compliant people, who lived their lives in a saddened haze . . ." Why do the Elders spread the story of the Witch to the townspeople? Why might the idea of a Witch be as powerful as, or more powerful than, the actual Witch?

2. Who is the speaker of the italicized chapters, and who is the child listening to the stories? What clues led you to your answer? Why might the author have chosen to tell parts of the story through those chapters, and how did that narrative choice change your experience of the story?

3. Antain desperately wants to visit the libraries in the Tower of the Sisters of the Star when he is young, but the Sisters refuse to let him in. What do they hope to accomplish by hoarding their knowledge? Is it right? Why or why not?

4. Xan insists that sorrow is dangerous. Do you agree? What does Xan learn about sorrow by the end of the novel? How are hope and sorrow connected?

5. When Luna's magic grows out of control, Xan decides to seal it away in Luna's mind until she turns thirteen. What are the consequences of that decision? Was Xan right to seal off her magic? What would you have done?

6. Many types of birds appear in the novel: the madwoman's paper birds, the sparrow Xan transforms into when she needs to travel, even the crow Luna befriends. Why do you think the author chose to feature birds? How do the different kinds of birds act similarly and differently in the story?

7. The madwoman is distraught when she realizes she cannot remember her own name. What is the danger of forgetting? What are some other examples of memory loss and its effects in the story? How do those compare to the madwoman's experience?

8. Xan and Luna's relationship changes once they start keeping secrets from each other. How do the lies they both tell influence their relationship? Why do they decide to keep those secrets?

9. Fyrian thinks he's a Simply Enormous Dragon, but everyone else thinks he's a Perfectly Tiny Dragon. Who is right? How does Fyrian's perspective affect his view of the world? What other examples from the story illustrate how a character's perspective of a particular event changed the way he or she understood the world?

10. Why does the Sorrow Eater feed on people's sorrow? Why does she choose to wall off her heart? What are the similarities and differences in the ways Xan and the Sorrow Eater use their magic?

11. When Antain begins asking about the Witch's nature and the Elders' deceptions, he calls his questions "revolutionary." Is asking questions important? How can questions be revolutionary?

12. "A story can tell the truth, she knew, but a story can also lie. Stories can bend and twist and obfuscate. Controlling stories is power indeed." Why are stories powerful, especially when you control them? On the other hand, what happens when stories are shared? Can you identify an example of the effects of sharing a story from the book?

Reader's Guide by Hannah Allaman