

PRAISE FOR *INCARCERON* AND *SAPPHIQUE*

A DISCUSSION GUIDE FOR *INCARCERON* AND *SAPPHIQUE*

BY CATHERINE FISHER

INCARCERON

IS A PRISON LIKE NO OTHER...



A NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER

★ “Like the finest chocolate, a rich confection of darkness, subtlety and depth, bittersweet and absolutely satisfying.”
—*Kirkus Reviews*, starred review

★ “A must-have.”—*Booklist*, starred review

★ “A tour de force.”—*School Library Journal*, starred review

★ “Brilliantly realized.”—*The Horn Book*, starred review

★ “A resounding success...”—*Publishers Weekly*, starred review



A NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER

★ “Fisher further explores themes of reality, illusion, and freedom without losing her intensely original world-building and authentic characters.”—*Booklist*, starred review

★ “A modern masterpiece.”—*Kirkus Reviews*, starred review

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



CATHERINE FISHER was born in Newport, Wales. She earned a degree in English from the University of Wales and has taught creative writing at the University of Glamorgan and worked as a primary school teacher and archaeologist. She is an acclaimed poet and novelist who has won much critical acclaim for her work. Her futuristic novel, *Incarceron*, won the Mythopoeic Society of America's Children's Fiction Award. *The Oracle*, the first volume in the Oracle trilogy, was shortlisted for the Whitbread Children's Books prize, and *The Snow-Walker's Son* was shortlisted for the W.H. Smith Award. Her work reflects her fascination for myth and history and her remarkable sense of imagination. She conducts workshops for teachers, librarians and lives in Newport, Gwent. She has written approximately twenty novels, and her work has been translated into more than a dozen languages. Visit Catherine at www.catherine-fisher.com and at www.incarceronseries.com.



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ABOUT THE BOOKS

Incarceron is a prison so vast that it contains not only cells, but also metal forests, dilapidated cities, and vast wilderness. Finn, a seventeen-year-old prisoner, has no memory of his childhood and is sure that he came from Outside Incarceron. Very few prisoners believe that there is an Outside, however, which makes escape seem impossible.

And then Finn finds a crystal key that allows him to communicate with a girl named Claudia. She claims to live Outside—she is the daughter of the Warden of Incarceron, and doomed to an arranged marriage. Finn is determined to escape the prison and Claudia believes she can help him. But they don't realize that there is more to Incarceron than meets the eye, and escape will take their greatest courage and cost more than they know. Because Incarceron is alive.

Finn has escaped Incarceron only to find that he must defend his right to the throne from another claimant, who is more princely in looks and charm than Finn could ever be. Suddenly, both Finn's and Claudia's very lives hang on Finn convincing the Court that he is the lost prince, even though he has his own doubts about being the true heir.

Inside Incarceron, Keiro and Attia are on the hunt for Sapphique's glove, which legend says he used to escape. In order to find it, they must battle the prison itself. Incarceron has built itself a body and it wants to go outside—just like Sapphique, the only prisoner Incarceron ever loved.

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- Describe the setting of Incarceron. What images does the prison evoke? What are living conditions like for the prisoners in Incarceron?
- Explain Finn and Keiro's relationship. What are oathbrothers? Without Attia's insistence, would Keiro have gone in search of Finn and Gildas?
- Characterize Claudia. What is her attitude toward her arranged marriage?
- Why does Finn believe he was born outside Incarceron? Why do others doubt him?
- Why does Attia become beholden to Finn? How does he feel about her loyalty?
- What plan does Claudia's father have for his daughter's future? Why does the Queen want Claudia to marry her son, Casper?
- Finn and Gildas are captured and taken before the Three Without Mercy for stealing. As punishment, Finn becomes a Tribute to the Beast, and he and Gildas enter the cave from which no one has returned to confront the Beast. What do they encounter there? How are they saved?
- What role does Bartlett play in the unraveling of the mysterious death of Giles, the future king whom Claudia would have married?
- Incarceron was intended to be an experiment, but it is an experiment gone awry. Explain.
- Claudia lives in a world in which time has been frozen. Describe the time period in which Claudia lives. What is meant by Protocol?
- How does Claudia's relationship with her father change? How does he come to her assistance? What secret has he been keeping about his identity?
- What decision is made at the end of the story about who will leave Incarceron and why? What might happen in the sequel?

Questions for Further Discussion:

- Steampunk is a relative new genre in YA literature. Research this genre. What elements of steampunk can you identify in the text? How does using this genre enable the author to explore some of the themes in the book? Name some examples of steampunk in other forms of entertainment.
- Incarceron was intended to be an experiment, but it is an experiment gone awry. Explain how this occurred.
- In what way is *Incarceron* similar to gothic literature. What sets it apart?
- What biblical references can you identify in the story? Why do you think the author chose to include these references? How do they help to explore the major themes in the text?
- Contrast the Outside World and the Inside World. What examples of goodness and evil can you find in both? Can one know good without knowing evil? Explain.

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The guide was prepared by Pam B. Cole, Professor of English Education & Literacy, Kennesaw State University, Kennesaw, GA to align with the national English and Social Studies core curriculum standards.

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- Finn has longed for the Outside. Now that he is living on the Outside, how is he adjusting? In what way might Finn feel imprisoned in his new life?
- Describe Claudia and Finn's relationship. Is she resentful or disappointed in Finn?
- How does the Queen tempt Jared? Does he fall for her bribe? How do his decisions show his commitment to his friendship with Claudia?
- Do Attia and Keiro feel betrayed? Why are they on a quest to find the Sapphique's glove? What perils do Attia and Keiro face as they search for a way out of Incarceron?
- The Warden has entered Incarceron by way of the portal. What role does he play in the prison?
- Why does the prison wish to go Outside? What will happen if the prison is able to manifest itself into a form that can escape?
- Who is the Dark Enchanter? Why does he have an interest in the glove?
- Several characters claim to be Sapphique. Who is the real Sapphique? Explain.
- In addition to finding her father, the Warden, and getting Keiro and Attia out of Incarceron, what other desires motivate Claudia? Why does she wish to be Queen?
- Who are the Steel Wolves and what role do they play in the story? Can Claudia trust them? Explain.
- Jared's illness seems to progress with the story. What happens to Jared in the end?
- Claudia's father decides to remain within Incarceron but promises to visit Claudia. Why does he decide to stay? Does the decision seem wise? Explain.

Questions for Further Discussion:

- Loyalty is a theme in *Sapphique*. Identify characters who demonstrate true friendship and commitment to others and give examples of their loyalty.
- The Warden is a complex character. At times he is despicable; other times he is likeable. What behaviors on his part illustrate his complexity?
- Will Claudia make a good queen? Explain. What changes do you think she will make in the Realm?
- In the real world, what drawbacks can you see to using incarceration as a punishment? What pros might there be?
- Should the story have another chapter, which characters would play a leading role and why?

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