

HOW TO START YOUR OWN BOOK CLUB

Think it would be hard to start your own book club? Think again!

All you need is a little bit of organization and some friends who are as excited about the books they read as you are.

Here are a few tips to get you started:

The best way to find people to be in your reading group is to ask your friends.

Think of all the people you know who like to read, and ask them to join. If you still don't feel like you have enough people, ask each of your friends to bring someone else. You can usually get a good discussion going with six to eight people, but any number that is comfortable for you will work. If you're having trouble finding enough cool people to form your reading group, check with your school, local library, or bookstore to see if there's a group that you can join.

Figure out when and where you want to meet.

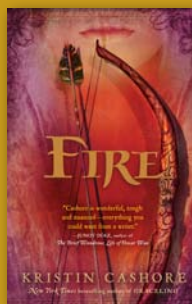
Some groups meet once a month, some meet every other month. You could get together at someone's house, in a park, on the beach, or in your school's library. If it sounds too official and overwhelming to decide all the "wheres" and "whens" right now, don't worry! It's your group and so you get to make all the decisions. All you have to do is get together once, and you can work out the rest of the details later.

Decide how you will choose books and how the discussions will be run.

Maybe you have a favorite author that you and your friends would like to focus on. Or maybe you want to take turns picking your favorite book. Maybe one person likes to talk and would like to lead the discussion, or maybe you would rather just all get together and talk about the books you are reading. If you get stuck, you can often find discussion questions online (try the publisher's website) or at your local library or bookstore.

The most important thing to remember is that there's no right or wrong way to have a reading group. Do what you're comfortable with and always have fun, and your group will be a success!

For more discussion guides to get your group going, visit www.penguin.com/teachersandlibrarians.



Fire

by Kristin Cashore

Ages 12 up • Grades 7 up

HC: 978-08037-3461-6 • \$17.99

PB: 978-014-241591-7 • \$9.99

"Cashore is wonderful, tough and nuanced—everything you could want from a writer."

—Junot Díaz, author of *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*

Five Starred Reviews for Fire!

★ "Fresh, hopeful, tragic, and glorious."

—*Kirkus Reviews*, starred review

★ "Vivid storytelling, strongly realized alternate world, well-drawn characters, convincing fantasy elements, gripping adventure scenes, and memorable love story."

—*Booklist*, starred review

★ "This stand-alone prequel surpasses Cashore's debut and paves the way for further exploration of a world in which readers will happily immerse themselves."

—*The Horn Book*, starred review

★ "Shot through with romance and suspense . . . This is Fire's story, and readers will fall in love with her . . . Marvelous."

—*SLJ*, starred review

★ "Absorbing . . . Readers will clamor for a sequel to the prequel—a book bridging the gap between this one and GRACELING."

—*Publishers Weekly*, starred review



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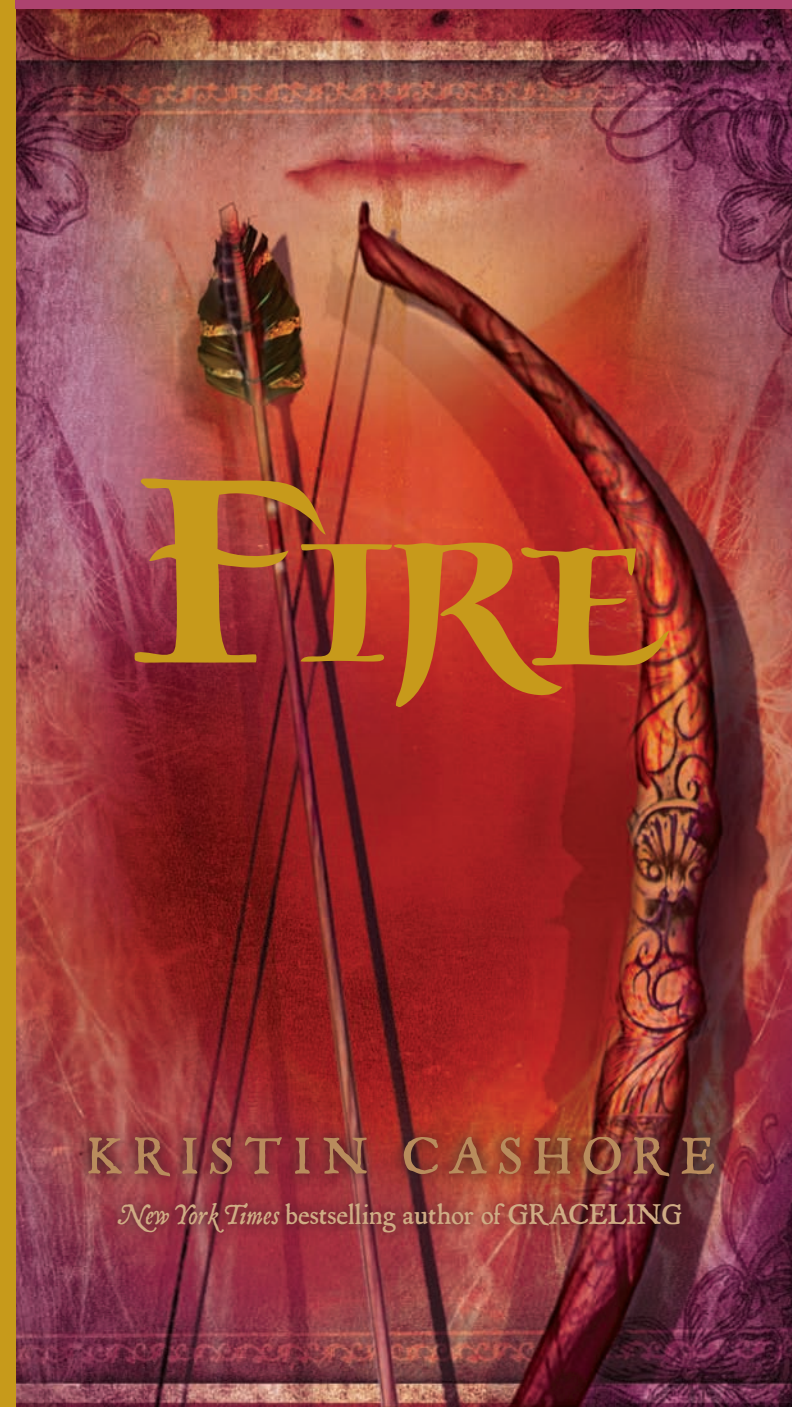
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DISCUSSION GUIDE



ABOUT THE BOOK



Fire, the companion novel to *Graceling*, is a tale of the last human monster: Fire. Exquisitely beautiful, Fire also can influence minds. She lives a reclusive, lonely life, in order to keep her own secrets and to avoid learning those of others. Then Prince Brigan arrives on her doorstep and sweeps her into a whirlwind of political intrigue and warfare. To protect all she cares for, Fire first uses her powers reluctantly—but ultimately wields them with grace, generosity, and hope.

2010 Amelia Elizabeth Walden Award

ALA Best Books for Young Adults

A *Publishers Weekly*, starred review

Kirkus Reviews, starred review

Booklist, starred review

The Horn Book, starred review

School Library Journal, starred review

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



KRISTIN CASHORE grew up in the northeast Pennsylvania countryside as the second of four daughters. She received degrees from William College and the Center of the Study of Children's Literature at Simmons College, and has worked as a dog runner, a packer in a candy factory, an editorial assistant, a legal assistant and a freelance writer. *New York Times* bestsellers *Graceling* and *Fire*, both have been named ALA Best Books for Young Adults. *Graceling* is the winner of the 2009 Mythopoeic Fantasy Award for Children's Literature and *Fire* is the winner of the 2010 Cybil for YA Fantasy/Sci Fi and the Amelia Elizabeth Walden Award. Kristin currently lives in the Boston area. She is currently working on her third novel. Learn more at www.kristincashore.blogspot.com.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- How is a companion novel, like *Fire*, similar to and different from a sequel? Why might an author choose to write one rather than the other?
- Why is Archer so important to Fire? Is she in love with him? Explain your answer. Would you ever become romantically involved with someone like Archer? Why or why not?

- What does music provide for Fire? How is her connections to music similar or dissimilar to the connection you have to music? Why do people form strong connections to music?
- To help Brigan and Nash, Fire chooses to enter enemies' minds against their will, something she initially refused to do. Why does she change her mind? Would you make the same choice she does? Why or why not?
- Why doesn't Fire want to have children? How are her reasons similar to Katsa's (*Graceling*) and how are they different? Do you agree with her decision to prevent herself from ever being able to conceive? Why or why not?
- While Fire grieves for Archer, Garan praises her strength. Then Fire wonders "if a person could be powerful, but inside be broken into pieces" (page 401). What do you think is the answer to this question? Why?
- Is the war depicted in this novel a just one? Why or why not? What makes a war just? Using examples from historical or contemporary wars, provide reasons for your answer.
- At the novel's end, Fire decides that she was both right and wrong to do what she did to her father because, "Some people were too terrible, no matter if you loved them; no matter that you had to make yourself terrible too, in order to stop them" (page 461). What does she mean by this? Do you agree? Why or why not?
- Would you describe Fire's father as evil or mentally ill? Why? In your experience, what is the difference between those who do terrible things because of mental illness and those who are evil? Should these two types of people be treated differently? Why or why not?
- How does Brigan feel about fighting and warfare? Why does he feel as he does? Do his feelings cause you to like him more or less as a character? Why? How do you feel about real life soldiers who share Brigan's perspective on fighting and warfare? Explain.
- How does the child Leck demonstrate the capacity to harm all around him? When a child in our world harms many people, as Leck does in *Fire*, what should a society do about him or her? Why?
- What emotional or behavioral characteristics does the river horse share with Fire? How might it represent Fire and the changes she goes through over the course of the story? If you were to choose an animal that in some way represents you, what would it be? Explain your answer.
- What does Fire provide for the injured and the dying? If you were in her situation, would you choose to provide this kind of aid? Why or why not? Have you ever considered becoming a doctor, a nurse, or another health professional? Why or why not?

ACTIVITIES

- **A Gift or A Curse** Consider everything that happens to Fire because of her beauty. Does she ultimately benefit from it? Does her society? Does the harm it brings to her and her society outweigh its benefits? Is it a mixed blessing, equally harmful and beneficial? Using examples from the story, write an essay on whether Fire's beauty is a gift or a curse.
- **Saving Lives** Gather a group of friends or classmates. Have every member choose the role of one of the story's warring characters: Nash, Brigan, Fire, Clara, Garan, Mydogg, Lady Murgda, Genetian, or Gunner. Keep in mind that while each character wants a specific ruler to triumph, each also knows that completely destroying lands and peoples will leave nothing left to rule. Host a peace talk session so members can try to gain political power through negotiation, thereby avoiding a war and saving lives.
- **Fire's Song** Imagine one of the melodies Fire might play on her violin. Then compose lyrics to go along with this melody—lyrics that express Fire's feelings in response to some important event in her life. If you play an instrument, create the accompanying music and perform Fire's Song.
- **The Day I Realized I Was a Monster...** Using *Fire* as inspiration, brainstorm ideas for a nonfiction or fiction story featuring a monster. This monster might be fantastical, as in *Fire*. However, you may choose to use "monster" in a metaphorical way, by depicting yourself or a character as a normal person who does monstrous acts. Begin your story with the prompt: "The day I realized I was a monster..." and then keep writing!
- **Archer's Bow** Consider how Archer's bow comes to symbolize him by the end of *Fire*. Then consider the items you possess that might symbolize you. Think on why they're important to you, as well as what your connection to them might say about you. Create an artistic representation of one. Then write an explanation of what it is, how you obtained it, and how it symbolizes important aspects of your life—just as Archer's bow symbolizes Archer.
- **Influencing Minds** Suppose you had the ability to influence minds, as Fire does. In what socially beneficial ways might you use this ability? Which three of these ways would most inspire you? Write an essay in which you describe the three socially beneficial ways you've chosen and the reasons why they inspire you. Revise, polish, and share your Influencing Minds essay.
- **Lost Life** Leck enters Fire's realm and then falls back into his and Katsa's lands. Imagine that one day you stepped outside your house and fell into a huge crack in the ground. After a long fall, you landed in another world or historical time. Write a story in which you describe what you discovered there and how you returned to your home, your family, your friends, and the life you almost lost.