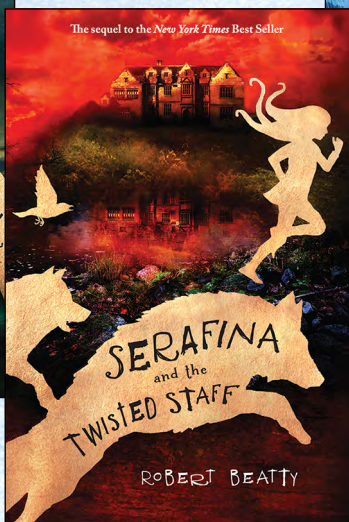


the SERAFINA series



TEACHING GUIDE

Disney • HYPERION

About the Series

The Serafina book series is composed of three books, *Serafina and the Black Cloak*, *Serafina and the Twisted Staff*, and *Serafina and the Splintered Heart*. Serafina is a courageous girl who lives with her pa in the basement of the Biltmore Estate. Her father is employed as the maintenance man on the estate, but he keeps Serafina hidden away from the fancy people who visit and live on the estate. However, a series of mysterious events causes Serafina to emerge from the basement and make her presence known to the staff, guests, and owners of Biltmore. As the series unfolds, Serafina builds strong friendships and collaborates to protect the place that she calls home. The heartwarming adventures of Serafina truly highlight the beauty of the South, important history, and magic that both adults and children can enjoy.

Common Core Alignment

This series allows readers to enter an enchanting world filled with adventure, mystery, and suspense. Within each novel, the focus on Serafina's spirit of determination during times of adversity, detailed descriptions of her relationships with others, historical connections, and sequence of connected events make the text an appropriate selection for a close read, student-led discussions, and research inquiries. This discussion guide provides suggestions aligned with the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) for Reading: Literature, Writing, and Speaking and Listening. Each question and activity in this guide includes a reference for the CCSS strand, domain, and standard that is addressed. To support instruction or obtain additional information, visit the Common Core State Standards website: www.corestandards.org.

Instructional note: For each of the guiding questions, please encourage students to support their claims with textual evidence. The opportunity to consistently answer text-dependent questions and engage with the novel is critical to success with Common Core State Standards.

Book One

Serafina and the Black Cloak

Discussion Questions



- 1 As you read the text, think about the meaning of the graphic images that contain the chapter numbers. How do the images relate to the content, messages, or tone conveyed in each chapter? Why did the author choose to include the images at the beginning of the chapter? Use evidence from the text to support your response. (*Reading Literature: Integration of Knowledge and Ideas: RL.4.7; RL.5.7*)
- 2 Serafina's pa calls her the Chief Rat Catcher. How does she feel about having this role? Why is she skilled at this job? What types of instincts and talents does she possess? (*Reading Literature: Key Ideas and Details: RL.4.1; RL.5.1; RL.6.1*)
- 3 Review the questions that Serafina has about the dark forest on page 8 of the text. Based on Serafina's questions, what does she know about the forest? What is she curious about in the forest? (*Reading Literature: Key Ideas and Details: RL.4.1; RL.5.1; RL.6.1*)
- 4 The author makes many animal comparisons and metaphors throughout the text. Think about Serafina's first encounter with the Black Cloak. The author states, "It felt like a giant claw gripped her around her chest" (p. 20). What comparisons and metaphors does the author present to describe Serafina, the man in the black cloak, and the captured girl throughout the chase? How do the descriptions impact the overall tone of the chapter and novel? (*Reading Literature: Craft and Structure: RL.4.4; RL.5.4; RL.6.4*)
- 5 Describe Serafina's physical appearance. How does it differ from others? Compare the way Serafina looks and behaves with the way other humans look and behave. Why might her appearance cause others to ask questions about her identity? Provide details from the text to support your response. (*Reading Literature: Key Ideas and Details: RL.4.3; RL.5.3*)

- 6 What does Serafina notice the first time she walks to the top of the stairway in the Biltmore Estate? How do her observations contrast with the description of the basement? The author states, “*She envied the way they spoke to one another and touched each other and shared their lives. It was so different from her own world of shadow and solitude*” (p. 37). What does this quote suggest about how Serafina views this new world? (*Reading Literature: Key Ideas and Details: RL.4.1; RL.5.1; RL.6.1*)
- 7 Describe the first interaction between Master Braeden Vanderbilt and Serafina. In your opinion, why does Serafina decide to tell Braeden about the Man in the Black Cloak instead of an adult? As you read, explain what Braeden and Serafina have in common. How do they differ? How do these similarities/differences help them work to collect clues and find a resolution to their problem? In your opinion, do they make a good team or friends? Why or why not? (*Reading Literature: Key Ideas and Details: RL.4.3; RL.5.3; RL.6.3*)
- 8 Serafina suspects that the Man in the Black Cloak is a guest at Biltmore and states, “*His satin cloak, his shoes, the way he walks, the way he talks, there’s something about him . . . like he thinks he’s better than everyone else . . .*” (p. 112). What does this quote suggest about Serafina’s view of Biltmore guests? Which guests are the suspects and why? Who are the children captured or attacked? Why do you think the children are being attacked and captured? Use the table below to explain. (*Reading Literature: Key Ideas and Details: RL.4.1; RL.5.1; RL.6.1*)

Suspect	Why is the Person a Suspect?	Text Evidence to Support Opinion

Child	Why is the Child Attacked or Captured?	Text Evidence to Support Opinion

- 9 Many phrases in the text are italicized. Why is the following text presented differently? As Serafina searches for Braeden she thinks about her pa’s words of wisdom: “*You’ve got to think, girl . . . Use what you know, and think it through*” (p. 75). How does her pa’s advice guide her throughout the story? (*Reading Literature: Craft and Structure: RL.4.5; RL.5.5; RL.6.5*)
- 10 What is Serafina’s perspective on the forest based on the advice from her pa? How does Serafina feel the first time that she enters the forest? What thoughts does she have about her mother while in the forest? Are her feelings about the forest similar to pa’s? Use details from the story to support your response. (*Reading Literature: Key Ideas and Details: RL.4.1; RL.5.1; RL.6.1*)
- 11 Serafina states, “*It had never occurred to her until now that she belonged anywhere but in the basement with her father, but now her mind ran wild with questions and ideas*” (p. 129). As you read, think about Serafina’s birth and current life. Where does she belong? The forest, basement, upstairs? Why? Provide textual evidence to support your conclusion. (*Reading Literature: Key Ideas and Details: RL.4.1; RL.5.1; RL.6.1*)
- 12 How does Serafina’s journey in the forest relate to the theme of the text? How does Serafina successfully navigate the forest? How do her pa’s words of wisdom and physical assistance save her life? What does pa’s entrance into the forest he believes is dangerous suggest about him? (*Reading Literature: Key Ideas and Details: RL.4.2; RL.5.2; RL.6.2*)
- 13 As Braeden and Serafina search the estate’s library, they encounter an image of a catamount. What is a catamount according to the images in the library and folktales that Serafina has heard in the past? Provide details from the text. (*Reading Literature: Craft and Structure: RL.4.4; RL.5.4; RL.6.4*)



Book Two

Serafina and the Twisted Staff

Discussion Questions



- 1 In the first chapter Serafina thinks, “*It was beyond her ken why so many animals of the forest froze in terror when she pounced*” (p. 1). Think about her adventure in the first novel. In which instances did animals and humans freeze out of fear? Do you think this response makes sense? Why or why not? As you read, examine when Serafina chooses to move and when she stays still to survive. (*Reading Literature: Integration of Knowledge and Ideas: RL.4.9; RL.5.9; RL.6.9*)
- 2 The author writes, “*The sound . . . was the soft murmur of thousands of tiny wings of sparrows, wrens, and waxwings making their fall journey. They were like jewels, green and gold, yellow and black, striped and spotted, thousands upon thousands of them*” (p. 7). What does this imagery tell the reader about the scene? Do you think the birds are migrating or fleeing? Why? Support your response with evidence. As you read, find additional metaphors, interpret their meaning, and discuss how they contribute to the tone of the chapter. (*Reading Literature: Craft and Structure: RL.4.4; RL.5.4; RL.6.4*)
- 3 Make a prediction: When the bearded man says, “*Find the Black One*” (p. 17), why do they chase after Serafina? When Serafina is in danger the text states, “*She’d never laid eyes on the boy before, never seen anything like him, the way he moved and fought.*” Who do you think the boy may be based on his actions and physical description? Make a prediction: Why would Serafina’s mother want the boy to “*keep his distance*” (p. 39)? Cite text evidence in your response. (*Reading Literature: Key Ideas and Details: RL.4.1; RL.5.1; RL.6.1*)
- 4 In what ways does Serafina seem like a *catamount*? In what ways is she different than a *catamount*? According to the text, how were Serafina and her mother trapped literally and figuratively? Where does Serafina belong? Do you agree with her mother? Why or why not? (*Reading Literature: Craft and Structure: RL.4.4; RL.5.4; RL.6.4*)

- 5 Serafina's mother traces the following note into the ground, "*If you need me, winter, spring, or fall, come where what you climbed is floor and rain is wall*" (p. 45). What does the note mean? Based on the clues, where did Serafina's mother and siblings travel? (*Reading Literature: Craft and Structure: RL.4.4; RL.5.4; RL.6.4*)
- 6 Summarize the type of wisdom that pa imparts to Serafina throughout the novels. What new lessons does pa want her to learn about being civilized and interacting with folk upstairs? Do you think Serafina needs to learn these lessons? Why or why not? What does Serafina think about some of the new information she learns (e.g., salad)? (*Reading Literature: Key Ideas and Details: RL.4.2; RL.5.2; RL.6.2*)
- 7 Based on observing pa's interactions, Serafina asks, "*Where do your people bury, Essie?*" Why is it important for her to know how to connect with others? Is there a unique way that people in your community ask one another questions? (*Reading Literature: Key Ideas and Details: RL.4.1; RL.5.1; RL.6.1*)
- 8 As Serafina walks in the hallway, she thinks about the images of great cats in the Estate. What are *great cats*? Describe the images that she has noticed over the years. How does Serafina's identity relate to the way she describes the *great cats*? Why do you believe *great cat* paintings and sculptures are in the estate? (*Reading Literature: Craft and Structure: RL.4.6; RL.5.6; RL.6.6*)
- 9 When Serafina finds Waysa, what new information does she learn about him? How is her relationship with Waysa different from her friendship with Braeden? Do you think she should travel with Waysa or return to the Biltmore Estate? Why or why not? (*Reading Literature: Key Ideas and Details: RL.4.3; RL.5.3; RL.6.3*)
- 10 What do we learn about Serafina's *catamount* father in this novel? What does the saying *stay bold* suggest about his character? How might her *catamount* father be similar to her pa? When Serafina returns to Biltmore, her pa states, "*When somethin' bad happens, Sera, no matter how foul and painful it is, ya don't go runnin' off. . . . Ya come home, girl. Ya come to me and we talk about it, whatever it is. That's what kin are for*" (p. 192). What does this tell us about Serafina's pa and how he feels about his daughter? (*Reading Literature: Craft and Structure: RL.4.1; RL.5.5; RL.6.5*)

- 11 The author states, “*She seemed to be evolving from merely peculiar-looking to positively hideous*” (p. 197). According to the novel, how is Serafina changing physically? What does she view as beautiful? How is she different from the *typical* standard of beauty? (*Reading Literature: Key Ideas and Details: RL.4.1; RL.5.1; RL.6.1*)
- 12 Pa tells Serafina, “*The metal is plenty strong at first. Seems unbreakable, don’t it? But when ya bend it back and forth over and over again like this, watch what happens. It gets weaker and weaker, these little cracks start, and then it finally breaks*” (p. 66). How does pa’s initial lesson and wisdom help Serafina in Chapter 37? How does this information relate to the theme of the story? (*Reading Literature: Key Ideas and Details: RL.4.2; RL.5.2; RL.6.2*)
- 13 What does the reader learn about the history of the Biltmore Estate? What was the process for it to be built? What controversies lie in the past? How is the man in the forest potentially connected to the Biltmore Estate? (*Reading Literature: Key Ideas and Details: RL.4.1; RL.5.1; RL.6.1*)
- 14 When the true enemy in the forest was revealed, were you surprised? Why or why not? How is the enemy defeated? How do Serafina’s actions help preserve the Biltmore Mansion? How does the encounter impact and change Serafina? Do you believe that this is the final time Serafina will have to face this enemy? Why or why not? (*Reading Literature: Key Ideas and Details: RL.4.3; RL.5.3; RL.6.3*)
- 15 In Chapter 50, how do Serafina’s interactions and confidence upstairs in the Biltmore Estate differ from the beginning of the book? What evidence suggests that she is more comfortable and confident? (*Reading Literature: Key Ideas and Details: RL.4.1; RL.5.1; RL.6.1*)



Book Three

Serafina and the Splintered Heart

Discussion Questions



- 1 In Chapter One the reader learns, “*She had been deep in the darkened void of a swirling, half-dreaming world when she awoke to the sound of a muffled voice, but now there was no voice, no sound, no movement of any kind*” (p. 1). Where do you believe Serafina is trapped based on the description? What tone does the description set for the reader? Based on what you know about Serafina’s skills, what actions should she use to escape? (*Reading Literature: Craft and Structure: RL.4.4; RL.5.4; RL.6.4*)
- 2 Serafina encounters a black panther in Chapters 3 and 4. How does she defeat the panther? Why is it a strange encounter? What questions does she have based on the interaction with the black panther? (*Reading Literature: Key Ideas and Details: RL.4.1; RL.5.1; RL.6.1*)
- 3 Describe Serafina’s life at Biltmore before she woke up in the forest. Specifically, the novel states, “*She felt like she truly belonged*” (p. 16). Why did she have a sense of belonging at Biltmore? How do her relationships contribute to her sense of belonging? (*Reading Literature: Key Ideas and Details: RL.4.1; RL.5.1; RL. 6.1*)
- 4 When Serafina describes the stone angel she says, “*Her face seemed to be filled with the silent wisdom of knowingness, as if the angel held inside her the fate and fortune of those she loved, and it was all too much to bear*” (p. 17). How does this description relate to Serafina’s own life, adventures, and point of view? Why is the angel significant to Serafina’s current circumstance? (*Reading Literature: Craft and Structure: RL.4.6; RL.5.6; RL.6.6*)

- 5 Based on the evidence provided in the text, how long do you think Serafina has been gone? What are Serafina's fears as she returns to Biltmore? What types of dark and powerful forces does she encounter as she attempts to travel back to Biltmore? (*Reading Literature: Key Ideas and Details: RL.4.1; RL.5.1; RL.6.1*)
- a Serafina uses the phases of the moon to begin estimating how long she has been away. If time permits, research the phases of the moon and how it can be used to tell time. What are other clues could she use to figure out how long she has been away?
- 6 Make a prediction: Why do you believe Serafina is unable to communicate with everyone around her? She has many questions: "*Am I truly here? . . . Or am I still buried underground in a coffin and just imagining that I crawled out? . . . Have I been cursed by a spell? Or am I some sort of whispery ghost or haint or spirit?*" (p. 51). Based on the evidence provided, what is Serafina? (*Reading Literature: Key Ideas and Details: RL.4.1; RL.5.1; RL.6.1*)
- 7 What discovery does Serafina make in Chapter 11 that gives her hope? Explain why the discovery is important. How might she use this discovery to survive? How does her discovery relate to the quote "*We all go to the same place; all come from dust, and to dust all return*" (p. 132)? (*Reading Literature: Key Ideas and Details: RL.4.1; RL.5.1; RL.6.1*)
- 8 Using examples from the text, define *power*. Do you agree with the following statement? "*I can't do much, but I can do something . . . and if I can do even the smallest thing, then I am a powerful being*" (p. 100). Why or why not? How is power aligned with the theme of the novel and series? Support your response with textual evidence. (*Reading Literature: Key Ideas and Details: RL.4.2; RL.5.2, RL.6.2*)
- 9 Throughout the novel there are many new encounters with the *Black Cloak*. Is Braeden's reason for wearing the *Black Cloak* acceptable? Is it a good idea for anyone to use the *Black Cloak* in this situation? Why or why not? (*Reading Literature: Key Ideas and Details: RL.4.1; RL.5.1; RL.6.1*)

- 10 How do guests respond as they arrive at Biltmore? What types of beautiful things do they notice? What new technology and inventions are highlighted at Biltmore throughout the book? How is Serafina’s pa connected to the technology and beauty at Biltmore? (*Reading Literature: Key Ideas and Details: RL.4.1; RL.5.1; RL.6.1*)
- 11 How do Waysa’s, Braeden’s, Rowena’s, and Serafina’s paths cross in the novel? How do they help one another survive? Provide an example that shows how the actions of one character impact the actions and/or emotions of another character? How has tragedy helped shape the lives of each person? (*Reading Literature: Key Ideas and Details: RL.4.3; RL.5.3; RL.6.3*)
- a Do you agree with the following? “*The most difficult thing wasn’t to trust your friend, or even your enemy, but to trust yourself*” (p. 222). In what ways has Serafina shown that she trusts her own abilities?
- b What skills does each individual bring to a battle? Use the organizer below to show how they make a dynamic team within a battle.

Character Name	Skills	Why it is Helpful in a Battle
Rowena		
Waysa		
Braeden		
Serafina		

- 12 Why do you think the *Black Cloak* calls to Serafina? What can the *Black Cloak* offer Serafina? What does Serafina desire? At the end of the story, does Serafina have the things she desires? Provide evidence from the novel to support your response. (*Reading Literature: Key Ideas and Details: RL.4.1; RL.5.1; RL.6.1*)

Working with the Series: Overview

Expanding Comprehension: Guiding Questions

- 1 In each story there is a theme, which is an important idea or message for the reader. According to the textual evidence, what is a unique theme in each novel? What is the common theme within the Serafina book series? (*Reading Literature: Key Ideas and Details: RL.4.2; RL.5.2, RL.6.2*)
- 2 Serafina uses pa's words of wisdom to get her through many challenging situations. Select your favorite words of wisdom from pa, and explain why they are relevant to Serafina's situation and how you could use that advice in your own life. Support your answer with evidence from the text. (*Reading Literature: Key Ideas and Details: RL.4.1; RL.5.1*)
- 3 In each novel the author reveals ways that Serafina transforms as a problem solver, leader, catamount, and friend. Think about Serafina's progression in the novels and answer the following questions:
 - a Summarize Serafina's mysterious adventures, the lessons she learns, and explain how her relationships with others develop as a result. Support your answer with textual evidence. (*Reading Literature: Key Ideas and Details: RL.4.3; RL.5.3*)
 - b In each novel Serafina has an encounter with the angel in the graveyard. Why are the angel, inscription, and sword significant in each story? Provide examples from the novels to support your response. (*Reading Literature: Key Ideas and Details: RL.4.1; RL.5.1*)
 - c Select a character that is featured in more than one novel. How does the character change? What causes the character to change? How is Serafina connected to the character? How does the character impact Serafina's journey? Use textual evidence in your answer. (*Reading Literature: Key Ideas and Details: RL.4.3; RL.5.3, R.L.6.3*)
- 4 It is important to think about the author or narrator's point of view since it impacts the development of the story. Select one chapter from a novel and explain how the author's point of view impacts the descriptions of the characters, setting, and/or events. Your response should incorporate details from the text. (*Reading Literature: Craft and Structure: RL.4.6; RL.5.6, R.L.6.6*)

- 5 Think of another novel you've read that follows an adventure of a female protagonist. How are the characters, themes, and authors' perspectives similar? How do they differ? Support your response with evidence from the novel. (*Reading Literature: Integration of Knowledge and Ideas: RL.4.9; RL.5.9, RL.6.9*)

Classroom Connections

Writing, Researching, and Art Projects

- 1 Think about the animals introduced throughout all three of the novels. Use books and online resources to research animals mentioned in the novels. For example, mice, peregrine falcons, jaguars, mountain lions, etc. . . . Create a multimedia report that describes the habitat, behaviors, prey, predators, and unique characteristics of the animals. Share the facts that you learn with a partner or small group in class. (*Speaking and Listening: Presentation of knowledge and Ideas: SL.4.4; SL.5.4*)
- 2 In the second novel there is a final chapter titled "An Invitation to Biltmore." The author states, "*The story is fictional, but I've done my best to describe the house and other historical details accurately*" (p. 371). Research the history of the Biltmore Estate in North Carolina using online sources and related texts. Create a timeline that highlights the process to build the estate. Write an essay that includes an introduction, key points, and a conclusion to compare/contrast how the details highlighted in the book are similar to the actual history of the estate. (*Writing: Research to Build and Present Knowledge: W.4.7, W.5.7, W.6.7*)
- a Create a graphic depiction or diorama of Biltmore, the dark forest, or an important room/area described in the novel. Be prepared to explain how the depiction relates to the actual Biltmore Estate.



- 3 Generate a list of dresses that Serafina receives throughout the series. Select the dress that is your favorite to discuss further and illustrate. In a written summary, describe the dress, the significance, and Serafina's response to receiving the dress. Also, create an artistic representation of the dress using paint, sketch materials, or graphic design programs. (*Reading Literature: Key Ideas and Details: RL.4.2; RL.5.2, RL.6.2*)
- a If time permits, design a dress that for Serafina that is connected to a theme or lesson in one of the novels.
- 4 In many different cultures, the folklore and mythology passed down throughout generations discuss people who can shapeshift. Research a folktale or myth about shapeshifters using available online tools and text sources. Write a detailed essay about the origin, meaning, and abilities of a shapeshifter. Your essay should include an introduction, details to support your opinion, and a clear conclusion statement. (*Writing: Text Types and Purposes: W.4.2, W.5.2, W.6.2*)
- 5 Create an adventure story about a person who has the ability to shapeshift. Your story should highlight the character experience, series of related events, dialogue, transition words, and a clear conclusion to the events. (*Writing: Text Types and Purposes: W.4.3, W.5.3, W.6.3*)



Vocabulary Enhancement

The Common Core Craft and Structure Literature Standards require students to examine important figurative language, vocabulary, and phrases. While reading the novel, examine the vocabulary words below and determine the meaning by using context clue strategies. (*Reading Literature: Craft and Structure: RL.4.4; RL.5.4; RL.6.4*)

Book One

Emblazoned
Meddling
Stamina
Unworldly
Defiance
Grand
Camaraderie
Catamount
Malformed
Unkempt
Mortal
Concealment
Conspiracy
Palpable
Prodigy
Contented
Otherworldly
Malevolent
Distinguished
Ecstatic
Frantically
Heroine
Guardian

Book Two

Prowled
Novelty
Allies
Calamity
Roil
Vicious
Menacing
Ferocity
Feral
Undulating
Rekindle
Peculiar
Instinct
Facetiously
Reluctantly
Uncertainly
Expression
Revelry
Discern
Unequivocally
Companion
Rigid
Kinfolk
Bold
Valiant
Relish

Book Three

Disoriented
Hopelessness
Clambered
Reeled
Intermingled
Eerie
Carnivorous
Flummoxed
Exertion
Disquiet
Flume
Deliberateness
Dread
Pounce
Coiling
Diminished
Splintered
Nonchalantly
Gregarious
Prospects
Coercion
Exhilaration
Boisterous
Valiant
Euphoric

Vocabulary Graphic Organizer

Use the graphic organizer below to figure out new words in the novels. Record the following information in the organizer: (a) the word, (b) context clue strategy that supported understanding, (c) a personal definition, and (d) an image to use as a helpful reminder. (*Reading Literature: Craft and Structure: RL.4.4; RL.5.4; RL.6.4*)

The graphic organizer consists of four rectangular boxes arranged in a 2x2 grid, connected by lines at their corners. Each box is labeled with a specific task:

- Top-left box: **Important Word**
- Top-right box: **Context Clues in Text**
- Bottom-left box: **My Definition**
- Bottom-right box: **Graphic or Image Reminder**

About the Author

Robert Beatty lives in the mountains of Asheville, North Carolina, with his wife and three daughters. He writes full-time now, but in his past lives he was one of the pioneers of cloud computing, the founder/CEO of Plex Systems, the co-founder of Beatty Robotics, and the CTO and chairman of *Narrative* magazine.

Visit him online at www.robert-beatty.com.



Dawn Jacobs Martin wrote this guide. She holds a doctorate in special education with a concentration in learning disabilities, and continues to improve academic outcomes for students with disabilities through teacher development, instructional design, and research in the areas of response to intervention, social support, and parent involvement.

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the SERAFINA series



Serafina and the Black Cloak

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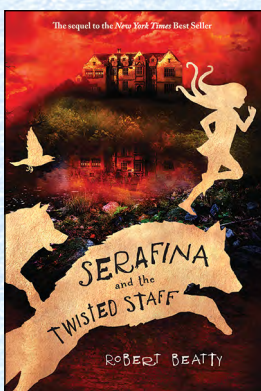
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