

WATERFIRE SAGA



This guide is aligned with the Common Core State Standards College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards (CCR) for Literature, Writing, Language, and Speaking and Listening, and provides grade level–specific standards for English Language Arts.

DISCUSSION GUIDE

Disney • HYPERION BOOKS



WATERFIRE SAGA BOOK ONE

DEEP BLUE

ABOUT THE BOOK

Deep in the ocean, in a world not so different from our own, live the merpeople. Their communities are spread throughout the oceans, seas, and freshwaters all over the globe.

When Serafina, a mermaid of the Mediterranean Sea, awakens on the morning of her betrothal, her biggest worry should be winning the love of handsome Prince Mahdi. And yet Sera finds herself haunted by strange dreams that foretell the return of an ancient evil. Her dark premonitions are confirmed when an assassin's arrow poisons Sera's mother. Now Serafina

must embark on a quest to find the assassin's master and prevent a war between the mer nations. Led only by her shadowy dreams, Sera searches for five other mermaid heroines who are scattered across the six seas. Together, they will form an unbreakable bond of sisterhood and uncover a conspiracy that threatens their world's very existence.

pre-reading

Read the prologue aloud to the reading group, then ask students to discuss.

- 1 What connections do you make to the text?
- 2 Does it remind you of any other type of literature?
- 3 What imagery stands out?
- 4 Predict what you think the rest of the novel will be like based on this section.
- 5 Which characters do you think will be the most important to the story?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1 What is happening on Miromara's borders? Explain what Serafina's Dokimí will provide for her and the country. Why is it so important? What role does her mother have?
- 2 Describe two things Serafina sees in the looking glass that surprise her.
- 3 As Serafina prepares for her Dokimí what does she learn about Crown Prince Mahdi? Why does this matter to her? Can you imagine agreeing (as Serafina must) to "a marriage as a matter of state, not a matter of the heart"?

- 4 Who is Thalassa? How does she help Serafina with her last preparation before the ceremony (*and* put Lucia in her place)? What happens during this critical practice?
- 5 What does Thalassa teach Serafina about living a public life? Why? What does Serafina trust her with? How did Sera fall for Mahdi?
- 6 Describe Neela. Why is she important to Serafina? What does she reveal about Mahdi, after much prodding and avoidance?
- 7 What do they discover after their escape out the window? Does Mahdi confirm the rumors about him or dispel them? Is Sera able to act indifferent, as she wants to seem?
- 8 When Serafina goes to her mother to break off the betrothal, what does she discover about the match's necessity? Would you be willing to put aside your own happiness for your country?
- 9 Describe the first part of the Dokimí ceremony. What is the test? What creature can declare a principessa "a true daughter of the blood," and how?
- 10 Did all of Sera's preparation for the ceremony pay off? Who was most proud? In the end, how is the ceremony cut short?
- 11 Describe the attack. Does Sera's mother show great courage, or do you think she's foolish? What happens to Sera's father?
- 12 What advice does Isabella give her daughter? What's happened to the palace? Who does Sera believe is to blame? What evidence is there for this theory?
- 13 What magic is used for Sera and Neela's escape? Who helps them? How do they help themselves? On the journey to Tsarno, what do they learn about those hunting them?
- 14 Who is Baco Goga? What does he do to the girls? How does he hope to profit? Who betrayed them?
- 15 What has Traho done to the canta magus, Thalassa? What information does he want? What does Sera provide him instead? How does she get the idea?
- 16 How does Neela know about Sera's dream? How are their chants different, slightly? What do you think that means?
- 17 How is Neela able to free herself from the bands? Who appears to aid them in their escape? Do you think they should trust them or not? Why?
- 18 How does Thalassa save Sera and the mermen who are helping them escape? What surprising information does she learn about this band of outlaws she once feared?

- 19 Describe the Lagoon. Who typically inhabits this city near Venice and the terragogs? Where are they taken? What important information do they learn from the leader of the Praedatori about both their purpose and the origins of the attack?
- 20 What were the logistics of the attack and who was responsible? What reason would he have to attack Miromara? Why does Sera trust the terragogg Duca Armando?
- 21 Who is Blu? How does he help settle Sera down so she can sleep? Is she falling for him? Is Blu falling for her? What clues make you think yes or no?
- 22 Describe the double attack at Duca Armando's home. How do Neela and Sera manage to escape once more?
- 23 Analyze the elements of the world of Rorrim Drol. What makes this episode into the world of the mirror so nightmarish? Which elements did you find most disturbing? What characters inhabit this world? How are things controlled within this world? Is this a metaphor for our own lives?
- 24 Compare Ling with Neela and Sera. What characteristics make her unique? What qualities does she add to the trio?
- 25 On her journey, how is Sera treated by Miromaran mermen? What do they offer her? Why does she have difficulty accepting that she is their leader?
- 26 What is shoaling? If it is so dangerous for the mermaids and mermen, then why do they do it? What does it offer? What happens when Sera goes shoaling?
- 27 Is Mfeme the most frightening antagonist presented so far? What makes a worthy antagonist? Explain what happened to Ling. How did the girls slow down his pursuit of them? What else did they discover about him in this episode?
- 28 Summarize the aid that Lena offers the girls. What creatures does she keep as pets? How do Ling's talents serve Lena? How does Neela use her talents to protect the girls as they prepare to journey onward?
- 29 When they finally reach the mouth of the river, what greets them? What other creatures block or hinder their journey up the river? Which one did you find most frightening?
- 30 Characterize the other mermaids they meet along the river journey. What are the most important aspects of their personalities and traits? Why do you think they keep adding to their number?
- 31 Describe the entrance to and passage through the witch's cave. Who else do they discover has arrived? Why do Sera and Astrid end up in a confrontation that verges on the edge of violence? What do they blame each other for?
- 32 Describe the attack from Abbadon and the six girls' first work together. What exactly does Vrăja want them to do? Where would they have to go to accomplish this task? Who doubts their ability to make a difference?

- 33 What do they learn is the true story of Atlantis according to the bloodsong? What do the six teenage merls have to do with it?
- 34 What do the girls learn about each of their ancestors and their powers? Which power would you most like to wield? Why?
- 35 When the girls are left alone, what makes them laugh together? What questions need to be answered for them to defeat Abbadon? What is Serafina's idea about where the talismans could be hidden?
- 36 What does Astrid reveal about the attacks? Do you believe her? Why would their enemies be planting false evidence? What purpose would that serve?
- 37 What does Vräja teach Sera about leadership? How should she inspire the others? Who must she first believe in? Do you think that is the most difficult task or not?
- 38 How do the girls practice and grow their powers together? Who has arrived? How did he find them once more?
- 39 What is Serafina's idea to get Abbadon to hear the girls' resolve to fight for their people? What do they do to get its attention? Does it work?
- 40 What promise do the girls make to one another? Why? How do they escape in the end?

KEY IDEAS AND DETAILS

- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.1: *Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.*
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.2: *Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze in detail its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text.*
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.3: *Analyze how complex characters (e.g., those with multiple or conflicting motivations) develop over the course of a text, interact with other characters, and advance the plot or develop the theme.*

CRAFT AND STRUCTURE

- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.4: *Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the cumulative impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone (e.g., how the language evokes a sense of time and place; how it sets a formal or informal tone).*
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.5: *Analyze how an author's choices concerning how to structure a text, order events within it (e.g., parallel plots), and manipulate time (e.g., pacing, flashbacks) create such effects as mystery, tension, or surprise.*

SPEAKING & LISTENING, COMPREHENSION AND COLLABORATION

- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.9-10.1: *Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 9–10 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.*
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.9-10.1.A: *Come to discussions prepared, having read and researched material under study; explicitly draw on that preparation by referring to evidence from texts and other research on the topic or issue to stimulate a thoughtful, well-reasoned exchange of ideas.*

CLASSROOM CONNECTIONS

READING, WRITING, AND RESEARCHING

VOCABULARY

It's important to practice the skill of understanding new vocabulary words in the context in which they appear. This builds your vocabulary rather effortlessly, and it also helps with comprehension when facing more difficult text. Insert the words below in the context where they make sense:

decorum	inscrutable	scimitar	decimated	baroque
betrothal	proximity	alliance	reconcile	immobilizing

- 1 “[The Dokimí ceremony] It must go well. We desperately need this _____ with Mitali. Now more than ever.” (Ch. 1)
 - 2 “Only the [ceremony] where I take my _____ vows and swear to give the realm a daughter someday.” (Ch. 1)
 - 3 They’d be bought and sold. Confined in small tanks for the goggs’ amusement. Their numbers would be _____ like the tunas’ and the cods’. (Ch. 1)
 - 4 A new palace had been built high on a seamount—a _____ construction of coral, quartz, and mother-of-pearl—for the royal family and its court. (Ch. 2)
 - 5 Like many rules of the adult world, a lot of Merrow’s _____ decrees made no sense to her. They still had to be followed, though, whether she liked it or not. (Ch. 3)
 - 6 A matching turban with a narwhal’s tusk protruding from it graced his head. A _____, its gold hilt encrusted with jewels, hung from his belt. (Ch. 10)
 - 7 It was hard to _____ the Miromarans, a people so cultured and refined, with such a gruesome ritual. (Ch. 10)
 - 8 Magic depended on so many things—the depth of one’s gift, experience, dedication, the position of the moon, the rhythm of the tides, the _____ of whales. (Ch. 12)
 - 9 Her people were cheering her, even more loudly than they had after the blooding. They’d abandoned all _____ and were tossing up their hats and helmets. (Ch. 12)
 - 10 She flailed and tried to break away, but one of the guards grabbed her hair and pulled her head back, _____ her. (Ch. 20)
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.9-10.4.A: Use context (e.g., the overall meaning of a sentence, paragraph, or text; a word’s position or function in a sentence) as a clue to the meaning of a word or phrase.

STRUCTURE

Within a novel, authors play with the idea of time, with devices such as flashbacks or pacing. These techniques give readers a glimpse of a character's motivation, or they're used to create mystery, tension, or surprise. Fill out the following chart based on your reading of *Deep Blue* and use it as a starting point to discuss these writing techniques. (There is no one right answer here; it is an exploration of your opinion).

Scene	Motivation	Mystery	Tension	Surprise
The prologue, where the river witches sing				
When Serafina reveals her true feelings for Mahdi to Thalassa				
During the Dokimí ceremony, when they are attacked				
When Neela and Sera get stuck in the mirror world with Rorrim Drol				
When they learn the true nature of the Praedatori outlaws				
When Astrid and Sera come face to face for the first time since the attack				

Which of these scenes do you think was most effective in its purpose? Which element of pacing is most important to you: motivation (character), mystery, tension, or surprise? Why?

- *CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.5: Analyze how an author's choices concerning how to structure a text, order events within it (e.g., parallel plots), and manipulate time (e.g., pacing, flashbacks) create such effects as mystery, tension, or surprise.*

summary & theme

The ability to summarize text is an important skill to master in high school reading—and beyond. Take the opportunity to learn this skill with a book that is interesting and fast-paced like *Deep Blue*! After reading each chapter, write a sticky note that summarizes the most important plot developments in a single sentence (perhaps two if it's a long chapter). Be sure to mark the chapter number on the sticky note in the upper left-hand corner. Then sort the sticky notes into the chart:

The protagonist discovers a conflict she did not know about before	The protagonist (or her goal) is in danger of being destroyed by enemies	The protagonist meets allies who help her along the way	The protagonist makes a decision or shows a marked change

THEME DISCUSSION

- 1
- What was the most important lesson that Serafina learned?
- 2
- How did she change the most over the course of the novel?
- 3
- What did she learn about herself and her society?
- 4
- How does she want to be perceived?
- 5
- What can you learn from Serafina’s actions and choices that would have merit in our world?
- 6
- What do you think the author is trying to say about what it means to be a young woman in that world or this one?
-
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.2: Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze in detail its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text.



WATERFIRE SAGA BOOK TWO

ROGUE WAVE

ABOUT THE BOOK

Serafina, Neela, Ling, Ava, Becca, and Astrid, six mermaids from realms scattered throughout the seas and freshwaters, were summoned by the leader of the river witches to learn an incredible truth: They are direct descendants of the Six Who Ruled—powerful mages who once governed the lost empire of Atlantis. The ancient evil that destroyed Atlantis is stirring again, and only the mermaids can defeat it. To do so, they need to find magical talismans that belonged to the Six.

Serafina believes her talisman was buried with an old shipwreck. While researching its location, she is almost discovered by a death rider patrol led by someone familiar. . . . The pain of seeing him turned traitor is devastating. Neela travels to Matali to warn her parents of the grave threat facing their world. But they find her story outlandish: a sign that she needs to be confined to her chamber for rest and recovery. She escapes and travels to Kandina, where her talisman is in the possession of fearsome razormouth dragons. As they hunt for their talismans, both Serafina and Neela find reserves of courage and cunning they didn't know they possessed. They face down danger and death, only to endure a game-changing betrayal, as shocking as a rogue wave.

pre-reading

If it has been a while since you read *Deep Blue*, then fill out the character chart below and use it to refresh your memory and as a handy bookmark. The first character is complete as an example.

Character	Key Details	Character	Key Details
Serafina	Principessa of Miromara, promised to Mahdi, crown prince of Matali	Ava	
Neela		Mahdi	
Ling		Yaz	
Astrid		Vallerio	
Becca		Traho	

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1 In the prologue, where did Sera return? Why did she linger in this place? What danger is she unaware of?
- 2 Why does Sera tell Rorrim Drol all her deepest fears? Which would you be most frightened of? How does he gain power over those who enter his realm?
- 3 Where does Sera first go through the mirror? What magic does she seem to have acquired? How?
- 4 Describe the temple and the goddess, Morsa, that it was named after. What was the history of the goddess? What is the most frightening thing about her?
- 5 Who followed Sera to Atlantis? Why? What's her idea with the vitrina? How could they possibly help when they're so vain?
- 6 List the important facts that Sera learns from Thalia. How was Sera able to keep her talking? Do you know anyone who is like a vitrina?
- 7 What is Orfeo's story? How did he become so evil? What evil is he responsible for?
- 8 Describe how Ling and Sera managed to escape the dreaded Opafago and the man with no eyes.
- 9 Where is Ling headed after Atlantis? Why? Where will Sera go? What did she admit about Blu? Is that why she must return to Cerulea?
- 10 When Neela visits the palace, how is she welcomed? How has Neela changed while the expectations for her have remained (irritatingly) the same? Have you ever felt a similar way?
- 11 What do Neela's parents believe about her? What evidence do they use to support this opinion? Can you blame them?
- 12 How does this lead to Neela's confinement in her own room? Have you ever felt like a prisoner of your parents' expectations? Is there any escape?
- 13 What does Serafina learn about the duca and the Lagoon from Filomena? What did the duca leave for Sera? Why?
- 14 List the series of events that begin with Sera being mistaken for a siren and end with a Latin phrase. What does this episode reveal about Sera's character?
- 15 Describe the safe house in the royal city. How does Sera make herself useful to the others there? What surprise comes to the door, and how does she react to it? Why?
- 16 What does Sera discover about Mahdi? What did she first think he was? Why? How did Mahdi try to get involved with the disappearances? How was he brought around to the cause?

- 17 List the information that Sera learns from Mahdi while they're at the safe house, evaluate it, and reorder it from most important to least important. What do you think she should do first? What would you do?
- 18 How does Sera show that she is a great leader during the escape from the safe house?
- 19 Why do Sera and Mahdi return to the safe house when Traho's troops have just busted inside? What new power does Sera show during their escape. What was she taught about what was just in war from her uncle Vallerio? Did she act in accordance with her instruction? Why?
- 20 At Neela's house they want her to go, "back to smiling until her face hurt. . . Back to never doing anything important, or saying anything honest. Back to the eternal beauty contest." How does she feel about this? How would you?
- 21 How is Sera changing that's not entirely for the better? While looking for food, what does she discover?
- 22 Who is Coco? How does she inform Sera that she may have the key to unlocking the truth about Merrow's Progress and the clues about the talismans?
- 23 What dangers lurk when Sera and Coco retrieve the conchs needed from the stacks? How do they get help?
- 24 How is the information embedded in seemingly inconsequential material? What can that teach us about research even today?
- 25 Where is the first talisman? Why is Sera so certain of its location? What will she do?
- 26 How is Sera finally able to reach Neela through all the protection spells? How does she inspire Neela to act and escape?
- 27 List the steps Neela takes to escape her room. What help did she get? What was the cleverest part of this plan? What does Neela discover in her quest to outsmart the guards?
- 28 What is Mfeme doing with the merfolk who have been disappearing? What cruelties do they face? Why?
- 29 Who is Kora? How does Neela convince her that the information she holds is true? What do they plan to do with this information? Compare and contrast Neela and Kora.
- 30 Examine Kora's plan to free her people from the living prison where they're trapped. What's the most dangerous part of the plan? What will Neela's role be? Why?
- 31 What does Sera discover when she's being chased by sharks? Why is it a problem to encounter a ghost who died on a shipwreck?
- 32 Summarize Maria Theresa's story. What agreement does Sera make to get the talisman? Why is this such a dangerous mission?

- 33 Which part of this epic battle was your favorite? Why?
- 34 Who did Neela save from becoming a baby dragon's food? How? Why would she be considered desirable if she stayed in Nzuri Bonde, especially in a backless gown?
- 35 How did whales become part of the rescue mission? Why were they willing to get involved?
- 36 What does Neela discover upon her return home to the palace? Who captures her? What does she learn from this person?
- 37 Where does Sera take the infanta? Why? How does she nearly die in this quest? How is she revived?
- 38 Who is the true mastermind of the evil behind the attacks? What is her plan? How does it include her daughter, Lucia, and Mahdi?
- 39 Once Sera tells Mahdi everything that's happened to her, what does he ask for? Do you think this is a good idea under the circumstances or not? Why?
- 40 Describe the ceremony that binds Mahdi and Sera together. Where does it take place? Why do you think this is so important to them? What is Mahdi concerned is correct after the ceremony? Why must he leave so soon? How could Mahdi finding the infanta's fake jewel help the cause?
- 41 What do Coco and Sera learn on their way to Cerulea? Why does it make Sera hopeful?
- 42 What does Neela learn from Yaz about Vallerio? Where will all the roads lead? Why?
- 43 How do the goblins act as they march into Cerulea? Why is Sera being so cautious? What has Vallerio done to be welcomed back to the royal city? Who will now rule?
- 44 Why is Sera so surprised when Lucia faces Alítheia? What did she expect to happen? Why was Lucia able to sing Merrow's songspell so perfectly? What does it make Sera realize?
- 45 What does Mahdi communicate to Sera about the ceremony and her safety? What does he wear that is a symbol of his promise to her?
- 46 What's the plan for the resistance? Why is Sera refusing to go to the rendezvous point? What does she hope to learn?
- 47 Why does Sera feel like she just lost another member of her family? What was his motivation for his betrayal?
- 48 Where does Serafina gain strength again to do what she must? Where do you go for inspiration and strength? What did Sera discover about her parents' fate?

- 49 Where is Ling? What horrible thing does she discover at the end of the novel? What could this mean for Serafina and the others?

KEY IDEAS AND DETAILS

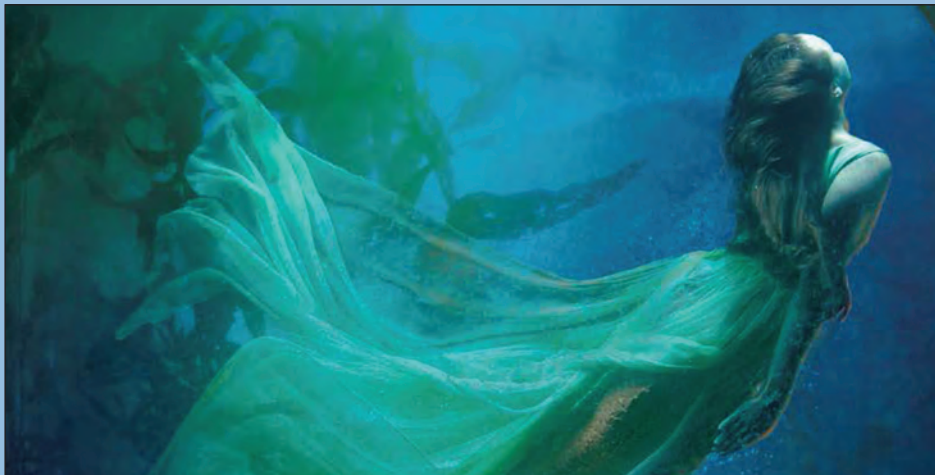
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CLASSROOM CONNECTIONS

READING, WRITING, AND RESEARCHING

TEXT EVIDENCE

Good readers know that they need to support their opinions with evidence, even when discussing literature. There are two ways to accomplish this. The first is to cite evidence through summarizing an important scene that shows proof, called a *Text Reference*. The second, more powerful approach is to find a *Key Quote*, pulling a sentence or two directly from the text as proof. The key quote does not need to be part of a dialogue exchange; it may be part of the narration. Use at least three key quotes or text references and cite them in MLA format. Find proof of the following information from the text:

Important Information	Key Quote or Text Reference
Sera learns how to confront her fears.	
Sera's magic is stronger than it once was.	
Using their weakness against them, Sera can gain information surreptitiously.	
Ling sometimes dreams of her old life of privilege and ease.	
Neela has fundamentally changed from the princess she once was.	
Sera is a brave merl who thinks of her people before her own safety.	
Neela learns to make important choices for herself outside typical expectations.	

KEY IDEAS AND DETAILS

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CHARACTER MOTIVATION ANALYSIS

Some characters in a novel have one motivation or purpose (often to thwart the protagonist and her goals). “Round” characters have more nuances and teach the reader not only their own story but also truths about life. Analyze the multiple motivations of these key characters and discuss how it both reveals the theme and develops major plot points.

Character	Personal goal (what they want for themselves)	Their goal/desire for their closest family and friends	Who or what they want to defeat and why
Sera			
Mahdi			
Neela			

- 1 Which character has the clearest motivation? With which character do you most identify? Why?
 - 2 How were their desires and dreams thwarted? What was their enemy’s purpose? Did this affect the plot or theme more in your opinion?
 - 3 With each choice these characters make, what is the author trying to tell us? For example, what do Neela’s choices to defy her parents tell the reader about defining oneself?
- *CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.3: Analyze how complex characters (e.g., those with multiple or conflicting motivations) develop over the course of a text, interact with other characters, and advance the plot or develop the theme.*

VOCABULARY

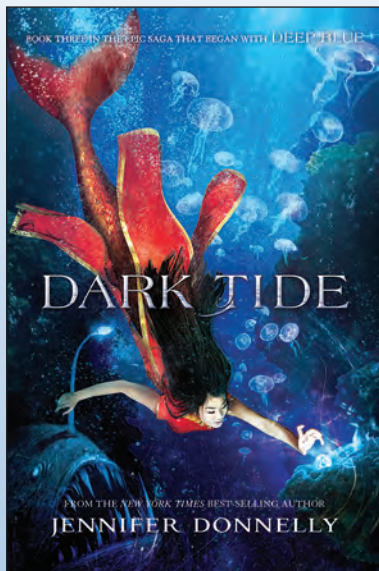
Good readers know how to use the context of a sentence to discern its meaning. Practice this invaluable skill with words drawn directly from their context in the novel:

captivating	sumptuous	venomous	encounters	contention
desolate	voluminous	debris	colonnades	fathomless

- 1 He watched with eyes that were _____ pits of darkness. (Prologue)
- 2 [Rorrim Drol's] face was round as a full moon. He wore an acid-green silk robe. Its _____ folds couldn't conceal his girth. (Ch. 1)
- 3 His _____ words struck at Serafina's heart like a stingray's barb. (Ch. 1)
- 4 Its houses were broken. Its temples toppled. Its palaces ruined. It was silent. Deserted. _____. (Ch. 2)
- 5 "I have *myself* to talk to, my dear, and there's no one more charming, or lovelier, more graceful, or wittier, or more _____ in every possible way than me." (Ch. 5)
- 6 The force of the blast knocked Serafina to the floor and sent _____ flying through the water, covering her in gravel and silt. (Ch. 6)
- 7 Blood from the cut on Ling's cheek was dripping down her jaw. She was still holding her arm. This was their life now—violent _____ and narrow escapes. (Ch. 6)
- 8 Her reluctance to return home had been a bone of _____ between them. They'd argued about it on their way to the Iele's cave . . . (Ch. 7)
- 9 As she'd swum out of the shop, she'd spotted the palace and as always, the very sight of it—with its gleaming golden domes, its soaring rock crystal _____, and vaulted archways—had taken her breath away. (Ch. 8)
- 10 The Emperor's Chamber was incredibly _____ designed to awe both friends and enemies of the realm. (Ch. 8)

- *CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.9-10.4.A: Use context (e.g., the overall meaning of a sentence, paragraph, or text; a word's position or function in a sentence) as a clue to the meaning of a word or phrase.*





WATERFIRE SAGA BOOK THREE

DARK TIDE

ABOUT THE BOOK

Once a lost and confused princess, Serafina is now a confident leader of the Black Fin Resistance (BFR). While she works on sabotaging her enemy and enlisting allies for battle, her friends face challenges of their own. Ling is in the hold of Rafe Mfeme's giant trawler, on her way to a prison camp. Becca meets up with Astrid and learns why the Ondalinian mermaid is always so angry: she is hiding a shameful secret. Ava can't return home, because death riders await her arrival. And it is getting more and more difficult for Mahdi, Serafina's betrothed, to keep up the ruse that he is in love with Lucia Volerno. If Lucia's parents become suspicious, his life—and all of

Sera's hopes—will be extinguished. Political intrigue, dangerous liaisons, and spine-tingling suspense swirl like a maelstrom in this penultimate book in the WaterFire saga.

pre-reading

Before reading the book, brainstorm a list of everything that is most important for a fan of the series to remember about the conflict in the story. Put an asterisk next to anything that poses a mortal danger to one or more of the mermaids. Then, make a prediction about what will happen in this installment of the series.

PROLOGUE

Describe Astrid's mirror meeting. What do you predict it means? Why?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1 List the steps of the mission through the Traitors' Gate. Why is it worth the risk?
- 2 What does Sera see when she casts her spying spell during the party? Why is Mahdi acting this way? After they open the valve, what happens? Why?
- 3 Explain whether their "robbery" attempt was successful or not, and why. Is it truly robbing or not? Why?
- 4 Why is Lucia so conflicted? Should she be? How has Mahdi shown loyalty to her family? What, then, makes her question it?
- 5 Explain how the mission worked to get the gold/jewels out of the palace. What happened to Sera during this quest?
- 6 Analyze the escape that Sera and Sophia use and the complications they face because of it. How do things get far worse before better for the girls?

- 7 After slipping through the crack to escape the dragons, what amazing discovery does Sera make? How does this give them an advantage over their enemies?
- 8 Summarize what Sera tells Sophia and why after the discovery.
- 9 Describe Ling's ordeal in the hold of the *Bedrieër*. What has she learned about Orfeo and his plans?
- 10 Explain why Becca does not care for Astrid. Why is Becca trying to hurry? How is Astrid difficult to read?
- 11 List and analyze the steps Astrid enacts for she and Becca to escape the death riders at the market hall. Which is the most daring? Be prepared to defend your answer!
- 12 What does Becca discover about Astrid? Why would this make a mermaid particularly vulnerable? What does it explain about her behavior in the previous books?
- 13 How does Becca get Astrid to trust her by sharing her own secret? Whose do you think is more compromising? Why? Is the trading of secrets a necessary step to real friendship?
- 14 Describe Ling's ordeal on the ship and in the hold with the other prisoners. Does it seem hopeless? Why? Does it remind you of any other events in human history?
- 15 In chapter fifteen Becca thinks "One needed a high tolerance for sarcasm and the ability to resist getting drawn into arguments" to become friends with Astrid. Why did she think this? What would someone need to be friends with you, by comparison?
- 16 List everything Sera shares during the convoca with Astrid and Becca. Then, analyze the list and order them from most important to least, and be prepared to defend your choices.
- 17 Explain how Becca helped Astrid access her magic. What tool did she use? Why was it effective?
- 18 Analyze the bargain pact made with the Goblin King, Guldemar, and Sera. Was it fair and useful to both parties? How?
- 19 Who is Baco Goga and what did he reveal to Lucia and her mother? Why is it important?
- 20 What did Astrid suspect about the attempt on Kolfinn's life? How did she learn the truth of her suspicions?
- 21 List everything Astrid learns after entering the Citadel, then put an asterisk beside the three most important facts and be prepared to defend your choices.
- 22 Describe the meeting between Mahdi and Sera. Why can't they be together in the near future?
- 23 Explain Kolfinn's plan to keep Astrid safe after his impending death. Why is he so scared to learn of her disability?

- 24 What shocked Astrid the most about the upcoming contract with Tauno? What would you do in her situation?
- 25 Describe Ava's journey to her parents' home. At the last moment, what is revealed to her? How? What question would she most like revealed?
- 26 Summarize Astrid's reaction to the conversation she overhears between Rylka and Tauno. What is the most horrifying piece of information?
- 27 Paraphrase Astrid's escape attempt through the dungeon and the result. Who does she end up saving? How?
- 28 What is *canta sangua* and why does Lucia use it against the one she loves? What does this reveal about her?
- 29 Who is Desiderio and what's his story? How does he prove it to Astrid? How does he react to the news she shares with him? Why?
- 30 What happened to Kolfinn? What was Astrid's reaction? What do she and Desi decide to do? Why?
- 31 Describe Ling's life in the work camp. Who does she discover is there? Why is this both good and bad news?
- 32 Create a chart that lists everything Ling and her father learn from each other. Sort the information into categories of positive and negative. Discuss.
- 33 Explain why Astrid puts bloodsongs into an urn at Ludo's home. What does Ludo outfit Des and Astrid with for their journey?
- 34 Summarize Astrid's best method of escape. What are the key elements to controlling her new ride? Would you, if you could, attempt to ride one? Why or why not?
- 35 Describe Ling's plan to escape with her father's help. Why won't she just leave and go straight back to Sera and friends? Just as she was exiting the gates, what happens to poor Ling?
- 36 Who is Kharis? Describe where she lives, who serves her, and why Lucia pays her visits.
- 37 What is a *maligno* and what price must Lucia pay to have one do her bidding? Will she?
- 38 What does Vallerio know that he shouldn't? What does that make Sera suspect is in her midst? What decision does she make? Why?
- 39 Find evidence (at least two key quotes) to support whether you think Des and Astrid make a good partnership or not. What is their part in the quest to find the talismans? How is Astrid's fear tampering with her decisions?
- 40 Why is Astrid being summoned to Vadus, the mirror realm? Why is she tempted at all?

- 41 Describe Becca's plan to find the coin and her attempt to do so. What are the complications she must face in this quest?
- 42 Explain how Becca uses fear to get the Williwaw to help her reach the coin. How does she get the cod to help her? What is his part? Summarize her escape and who helps her recover from it.
- 43 How is Astrid forced to reveal her secret to Des? Explain his reaction.
- 44 Who are Elisabetta and Marco and how do they connect with Mahdi? Explain why (or even if) Becca should trust them. Who is trying to attack them? Why?
- 45 How did Ling survive? Now what is her task and how does she attempt to do so? Who comes to her aid and why?
- 46 Sketch the escape plan created by Elisabetta through Mfeme's boats. Does it work? Why? What does Marco reveal before Becca leaves? Explain Becca's reaction.
- 47 Explain why Lucia is visiting the monstrous Alítheia's den. What deal has she struck with the beast?
- 48 Describe the reunion between Ling and her mother. Why does her mother apologize?
- 49 Who has all converged on Sera's new northern camp? What do they have in their arsenal? What do they learn from each other? Describe their reunion.
- 50 What devastating news does Ling reveal to her friends? How many talismans do the mermaids now control? Where are the others?
- 51 What conclusions is Sera able to draw about the horrible Orfeo? How exactly has he managed to stay alive all of these years?
- 52 When Astrid's secret is finally revealed to all the mermaids, how do they react? How do they prove their loyalty to her despite her inability to use magic?
- 53 Why does Ava believe she lost her sight as a child? Why does she still refuse to come to the camp and be with her friends?
- 54 Analyze Lucia's plan to capture Serafina. Do you think it will work? What advantages does it have? Disadvantages?
- 55 Despite her inability to songcast, Astrid takes on the responsibility of facing Orfeo alone. Why? What will she hope to do on her own? Predict what you think will happen next and why.

KEY IDEAS AND DETAILS

- *CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.1: Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.*
- *CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.2: Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze in detail its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text.*
- *CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.3: Analyze how complex characters (e.g., those with multiple or conflicting motivations) develop over the course of a text, interact with other characters, and advance the plot or develop the theme.*

CRAFT AND STRUCTURE

- *CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.4: Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the cumulative impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone (e.g., how the language evokes a sense of time and place; how it sets a formal or informal tone).*
- *CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.5: Analyze how an author's choices concerning how to structure a text, order events within it (e.g., parallel plots), and manipulate time (e.g., pacing, flashbacks) create such effects as mystery, tension, or surprise.*

SPEAKING & LISTENING, COMPREHENSION AND COLLABORATION

- *CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.9-10.1: Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 9-10 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.*
- *CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.9-10.1.A: Come to discussions prepared, having read and researched material under study; explicitly draw on that preparation by referring to evidence from texts and other research on the topic or issue to stimulate a thoughtful, well-reasoned exchange of ideas.*



common core projects

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.3: *Analyze how complex characters (e.g., those with multiple or conflicting motivations) develop over the course of a text, interact with other characters, and advance the plot or develop the theme.*

Authors build characters (and ultimately, their characterization) by developing their appearance, actions, words, and effects on others. Fill out the following chart on the characters and then describe that character’s ultimate characterization with a few words.

Characters	Quest	Allies	Enemies	Characterization
Sera				
Neela				
Ling				
Becca				
Ava				
Astrid				

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.2: Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze in detail its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text.

The theme of a particular text is usually first unearthed by considering what overarching ideas and topics that the author explores through the conflict. What topics do you think are most important to Donnelly in this series? *Example:* Friendship

1 _____

2 _____

3 _____

Now, what do you think she’s trying to say about those topics (stated in an elegant way, often revised several times for a poetic effect)? Often, the main characters are in some way changed by this topic.

Topic	Theme
<i>Example:</i> Friendship	<i>Example:</i> Friendship is a bond between people willing to sacrifice for each other and honor each other for who they are.



CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.1: Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

Find, and cite correctly, a key quote (or short, important selection) that best represents each of these characters.

Characters	Key Quote
Lucia	
Orfeo	
Kharis	
Williwaw	
Vallerio	
Alítheia	

Then, write a brief, persuasive paragraph about which character you think is the most menacing in the story. What qualities make it the most fearsome and why? What qualities make the best antagonists?



WATERFIRE SAGA BOOK FOUR

SEA SPELL

ABOUT THE BOOK

At the end of *Dark Tide*, Book Three in the WaterFire Saga, Astrid leaves her mermaid friends to confront her ancestor, Orfeo, the evil force behind the rise of the monster Abbadon. Orfeo possesses one of the six talismans that the merls need in order to keep the monster locked up forever. But without the ability to songcast, how will Astrid be able to defeat the most powerful mage in history? Meanwhile, Serafina and her Black Fins train goblin troops for battle against her uncle Vallerio's death riders. Will Sera ever see her beloved home—and her beloved Mahdi—again, or will the Volneros take over the mer realms while Orfeo takes on the gods

themselves? Nothing less than the fate of the underwater world is at stake in this breathtaking finale.

pre-reading

After reading the prologue, create a list of the most important characters in the WaterFire Saga. Where were they left at the end of the last book, *Dark Tide*? What do you think is going to happen next? Why? Create a list of six predictions (one for each mermaid, perhaps) about where you think they'll be at the end of the novel and why.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1 Describe Manon and how and why she helped Ava not once, but twice, in the prologue alone.
- 2 Explain why Sera is so conflicted dealing with the merchants of warfare. Why must she do so at all? What has she already lost as this book opens?
- 3 Who was Orfeo? What vow did he make in his own grief? Why did Astrid feel unable to help defeat the monster he helped to create?
- 4 Summarize what happened as Astrid attempted to enter a mirror. What did she finally admit to herself (and the mirror)?
- 5 List Lucia's steps to get Mahdi (and Sera) to do her every whim. What does Lucia want? What is her strategy to get it?
- 6 Who is Ling? Explain her plan to unearth the spy in Sera's midst. Why must Sera implicitly trust Ling?
- 7 Summarize Astrid's encounter with Rorrim Drol. Why is she in his mirror world at all? What "danklings" would he find in you?
- 8 Describe Shadow Manse and Astrid's first encounter with its owner, and her relation, Orfeo.

- 9 Why is Becca so conflicted? How does she deal with her feelings? How do you?
- 10 List everything that the reader learns as Mahdi meets with Portia and Vallerio, Lucia's parents. Put a star next to the three most important facts and be prepared to defend your choices.
- 11 How does Manon attempt to help Ava? What does she see in her seeing stone?
- 12 Summarize the choice that Sera must make. Why is she having so much difficulty with her decisions as a leader?
- 13 Explain why a woodcarver's story gives Sera the purpose to send her troops into battle? Why may it not matter anyway?
- 14 List the results of the attack by death riders on Sera's camp from most important to least. Be prepared to defend your ranking.
- 15 What does Sera mean when she says at the end of chapter fourteen, "Time to play my uncle's game like a queen, not a pawn."
- 16 How does Orfeo say he wants to help Astrid? Summarize the story of the day she first lost her voice.
- 17 Describe Ava's encounter with Okwa Naholo. How do they usually take victims? How did they act with Ava?
- 18 Were Baby and Ava able to accomplish their quest to get the ruby ring? Just when it's safe, who appears?
- 19 How is the hunt for the spy proceeding for Ling? What interaction makes Ling realize that the spy could be a close friend?
- 20 Why is Astrid sleeping and staying at Shadow Manse rather than just stealing the black pearl and moving on?
- 21 Who is Guldemar? Why do his decisions matter? Who does he force Sera to meet? Why is this ironic?
- 22 Explain why Sera and Mahdi pretended to hate each other in front of Guldemar. What did they actually communicate to each other?
- 23 Describe the private meeting between Mahdi and Sera. What do they learn from each other? What do they truly feel for one another? What plan is created?
- 24 What does Becca finally confide to Sera? What discovery may change the whole conflict for Sera?
- 25 What does Manon try to teach Ava? Why? How did they rescue her?
- 26 Describe the conservatory in Shadow Manse and why Astrid is fascinated with it. What does Orfeo offer her?

- 27 Why had Orfeo summoned Astrid? What is his place for her? What must she choose between?
- 28 Why is Astrid grateful to Orfeo, her enemy? What is their connection? What is she learning from him?
- 29 Who confessed to being the spy? How did Ling get her to do so?
- 30 Who is Thalassa? Explain how Orfeo is forcing her to work with Astrid. Find a key quote that reveals what Thalassa wants.
- 31 What message does Sera receive from Mahdi? What does she learn from the message? What does he ask of her? What terrible mistake does it lead to for Sera?
- 32 What is Becca's bold idea? How will it include Mahdi?
- 33 Describe Lucia's plan. What does she believe is the connection between Sera and Mahdi? How will she break it?
- 34 Where does Becca go? What is her plan there? How does the reunion go with Marco? How does he feel about her request?
- 35 What does Mahdi learn from Lucia? How does she plan to control him until just before the wedding? Why?
- 36 Describe Sera's captor and her plans for the queen. What is Sera's connection to this beast? Who else is a prisoner as well? What is her only weapon for escape? What did Sera learn from Alítheia?
- 37 Explain the details of Becca's plan to attack Vallerio. Describe what happens between Becca and Marco.
- 38 Why is Mahdi still planning on going through with the wedding ceremony to Lucia? What will happen when he tries to sing his vows? Why could this be the end of him?
- 39 What does Sera promise Alítheia? Why should she believe her? How is Sera able to convince the great monster to listen to her?
- 40 When does Mahdi realize that Sera is actually alive? How does he try to get help for Sera during the ceremony itself? What happened when he revealed his true love for Sera?
- 41 How do Sera, Alítheia, and Fossegrim know the battle for Cerulea has begun? Where does the great spider lead them? Why doesn't she come with them too?
- 42 Who does Sera add to her team before she emerges? Why don't they trust her at first? How does she finally arrive to the battle?
- 43 Describe the death match between the bronze spider and the water dragons.

- 44 How does Sera get custody of her uncle? What are the charges against him and his family? How does he try to convince her otherwise? What happens to traitors?
- 45 Describe Lucia when she is apprehended and charged with the crimes. Who does Sera find before the final attack? What is a maligno? Why had Lucia created them? When Lucia finally does attack, what specifically happens?
- 46 Examine Sera's last conversation with her uncle before his sentence is carried out. How does he manage to unnerve her? What are his final words? What does he mean by them?
- 47 Summarize the information exchanged between Ava and Sera after their reunion. Then, analyze the information exchanged and sort it from most important to least. Be prepared to defend your choices.
- 48 How does Astrid finally communicate with the others? Evaluate her plan to snatch the talismans and escape. Who is helping her? Right after the reader hears her conversation with the other mermaids, what do they realize in the following chapter? Will she betray her family or her friends?
- 49 Describe Mahdi's condition. What are Sera's worries that she voices to her beloved? What did she miss when she turned away?
- 50 Who is Lena? How has she helped Sera in the past? What does she offer now?
- 51 Who else joins in the march toward Abbadon? How is the defeat of the monster not just Sera's quest? Do you think Sera lacks confidence? Do you?
- 52 Describe the journey to Abbadon and the complications they faced along the way. What were some of the surprises as they made their way south?
- 53 Explain the situation outside Abbadon's prison. What should Ava be able to sense? Who finally shows up at Abbadon's prison?
- 54 What does Orfeo have in his arsenal? Describe the battle with Orfeo. What are his advantages? What mythological beast appears?
- 55 Explain how Orfeo gets Sera to relinquish all of the talismans. Then, what does he do? Finally, who surprises Sera and the others with her seeming betrayal and reversal?
- 56 Explain how Astrid proves herself once more. What had Orfeo offered her? What did she already have? Describe the struggle between Astrid and Orfeo and the results of it.
- 57 Summarize the strengths of each of the powerful mermaids. Why are they more powerful together than apart? Explain why the guards are not attacking the mermaids as they descend inside the Carceron.

- 58 Evaluate the battle between Abbadon and the mermaids. Who was the most courageous? Who was the most useful? Why? What made the monster a worthy opponent? What idea from Ling finally brought Astrid to the front of the battle?
- 59 Who is Horok? What is his role in the defeat of Abbadon and Orfeo? Why are the pearls an important detail from this scene?
- 60 What connections do you make to the song that Sera sings to her mermaid friends? What is her life like at the end of the book? What is the plan with Mahdi and her country? What is the hint of more to come offered in the epilogue? What do you think might happen next?

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summarize

An important skill for all readers (not to mention writers) is to be able to succinctly summarize lots of information down to its most important parts. To practice this skill, fill out the following chart after reading the entire novel. Summarize the main conflict each of the mermaids faced in this episode of their journey.

Protagonists	Major conflict in the story	In the end...
Sera		
Neela		
Ling		
Becca		
Ava		
Astrid		
Mahdi		

The bad guys:

Antagonists	Character motivations	In the end...
Abbadon		
Vallerio		
Portia		
Lucia		
Orfeo		

structure

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.5: Analyze how an author's choices concerning how to structure a text, order events within it (e.g., parallel plots), and manipulate time (e.g., pacing, flashbacks) create such effects as mystery, tension, or surprise.

Within a novel, authors construct their use of time with devices such as flashbacks or pacing. These techniques give readers a glimpse at a character's motivation, or they're used to create mystery, tension, or surprise. Fill out the following chart based on your reading of *Sea Spell* and use it as a starting point to discuss this writing technique. (There is no one right answer here; it is an exploration of your opinion.)

Scene	Motivation	Mystery	Tension	Surprise
The prologue where we see Manon attempt to help Ava in her quest.				
When we see Astrid interacting with Orfeo in tender ways.				
When we see Mahdi acting like an excited groom-to-be.				
When Sera is kidnapped.				
When Sera kisses Alítheia, is tender and loving to her captor.				
When Astrid does Orfeo's will outside the Carceron.				

Which of these scenes do you think was most effective in its purpose? Which element of pacing is most important to you: motivation (character), mystery, tension, or surprise? Why?

VOCABULARY PROJECT

Skeptical	Beguiling	Malice	Ruse	Blustered
Treacherous	Obsidian	Customary	Repellent	Delegating
Penetrate	Pillaged	Vulnerability	Traitorous	Menace
Instability	Mirthless	Insurmountable	Beseeched	Despondent
Wretched	Desolate	Tersely	Contemptuously	Deflected
Bewilderingly	Tentatively	Insatiable	Omnipotence	Chastised
Summon	Commotion	Forge	Provision	Anguished
Faltering	Niche	Lavishly	Repertoire	Dismissive
Gaunt	Remnants	Imperious	Manacles	Withering
Skeptical	Nuance	Shrewd		

RESIDENT EXPERT

Choose a dozen of the words above that appear in the novel to become an expert. Then, choose at least three of the following projects to show your word savvy:

<p>Index Cards</p> <p>Create a set of flashcards that have the following information on them: a definition (in your own words), a list of synonyms and antonyms, a picture that will help you remember its meaning.</p>	<p>Crossword</p> <p>Create a crossword puzzle using all of your vocabulary words. The clues should help the player learn the definitions. Provide an answer key.</p>	<p>Word Parts</p> <p>Identify the various parts of the words: prefixes, suffixes, and roots. Annotate the different parts of the word and analyze their impact on its meaning. Then, use each in a sentence that reveals your understanding.</p>
<p>Etymologies</p> <p>Discover how these words were originally used in their language of origin. Then, reveal any changes in the meaning over time and across the world's languages.</p>	<p>Art</p> <p>Create a comic that best explains the word. Kuddos if you can use more than one word in a panel!</p>	<p>Acrostics</p> <p>Create an acrostic that proves you understand the meaning of the words by using them in context.</p>

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jennifer Donnelly is an award-winning author of both adult and young adult books, including *Deep Blue*, the first book in the WaterFire Saga. For adults she has written a trilogy of best-selling books that includes *The Tea Rose*, *The Winter Rose*, and *The Wild Rose*. Her first young adult novel, *A Northern Light*, received many accolades, among them the Los Angeles Times Book Prize, a Carnegie Medal in the UK, and a Michael L. Printz Honor. Her second young adult novel, *Revolution*, was named a Best Book of 2010 by *Kirkus Reviews* and *School Library Journal*, and the audiobook received a 2011 American Library Association Odyssey Honor. She lives in New York's Hudson Valley. For more information, visit www.jenniferdonnelly.com.



Doug Dundas



Tracie Vaughn Zimmer, author of *Disney's Second Guard* and an English teacher, created this guide.

Many more guides can be found on the Disney • Hyperion website at disneybooks.com.

WATERFIRE SAGA



WATERFIRE SAGA BOOK ONE

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WATERFIRE SAGA BOOK FOUR

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