

The Inquisitor's Mark by Dianne K. Salerni

Discussion Questions and Activities

Common Core Learning Targets:

1.3.5.A Determine a theme of a text from details in the text, including how characters in a story or drama respond to challenges or how the speaker in a poem reflects upon a topic ; summarize the text.

1.3.5.C Compare and contrast two or more characters, settings, or events in a story or drama, drawing on specific details in the text.

1.3.5.D Analyze multiple accounts of the same event or topic, noting important similarities and differences in the point of view they represent.

1.3.5.E Explain how a series of chapters, scenes, or stanzas fits together to provide the overall structure of a particular story, drama, or poem.

Discussion Questions:

1. At the beginning of Book 1, *The Eighth Day*, Jax strongly disliked Riley. However, when Jax is faced with a dilemma in *The Inquisitor's Mark* (his friend Billy has been kidnapped by Jax's own relatives), he asks himself, "What would Riley do?" Why do you think Riley changed, in Jax's mind, from someone to be despised to someone who makes a good role model?
2. Speaking of role models – when the author was a teacher working on an early draft of this book and sharing it with her class, one of her students made this analogy: *Jax is to Dorian what Riley is to Jax*. Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Explain your reasoning.
3. Why do you think the author chose Dorian as an alternate POV instead of sticking with Evangeline, who had the alternate POV in Book 1? (Hint: What could Evangeline have brought to this story as a POV character, compared to Dorian?) Based on the situation at the end of *The Inquisitor's Mark*, who do you think might be given POV in Book 3, *The Morrigan's Curse*? Explain your reasoning.
4. This book explores the themes of family and loyalty. Jax's loyalties are tested when he discovers he has close relatives who want him to be a part of their family – but they are enemies of his friends. Discuss how Jax is drawn toward his family despite his distrust of them. What things about the Ambrose family are attractive to Jax? At what point does

Jax realize that his “family” does not necessarily have to include just his blood relations? What significance is there in Jax calling Riley “bro” at the end of the book? (When handing back Excalibur: “Here you go, bro. It’s just a rusted piece of junk, but I know you’re attached to it?”)

5. Discuss “Bad Jax” in Chapters 24-26. A.J. says, “He’s not even Jax anymore.” Do you agree or disagree? Do Jax’s altered memories make him a different character? Or is he still basically Jax? Explain your answer.
6. When Ursula Dulac has Jax dragged into her office to change his memory, she says, “You are distressingly like your father.” What do you think she means by this?
7. What are Dorian’s main character traits? What is his biggest problem and most important goal? What changes do you see in Dorian’s character over the course of the story? What are Dorian’s most important acts and which ones best demonstrate growth?
8. Has there been any change in Tegan Donovan over the course of Books 1 and 2? Why do you think she chose to follow Jax to New York City and help him? Why didn’t Tegan tell Evangeline that she had arranged a “fix” in case Jax’s memories were changed? Where does Tegan fall on the spectrum between good and evil? (And is her twin brother Thomas on that same place in the spectrum?)
9. Discuss the Morrigan. Review Evangeline’s description of her on page 38 and Jax’s glimpse of her on page 277. At the end of the book, Jax expresses concern that the Morrigan has been “arranging” events all along. What evidence does he have? Do you agree or disagree?
10. We narrowly miss meeting Evangeline’s sister Addie in this book. But what do we learn about her? Describe her character as best you can, based on clues she has left behind and the way other characters talk about her.

Activities:

1. In this book, many characters have conflicted loyalties, and even people on the same side don’t always get along. The Taliesins are supposed to be on the same side as Riley and Evangeline, but they don’t want to cooperate with them. Dr. Morder is supposed to be a Dulac vassal, but he betrays his liege. Angus Balin was on the side of evil in *The Eighth Day*, but he and Jax arrange a temporary alliance in *The Inquisitor’s Mark*.
 - a. Ask students to make a chart with 5 rows labeled: Character, Main Goal, Positive Traits & Actions, Negative Traits & Actions, Final Verdict. They will need columns for the following characters: Taliesin Brothers, Ursula Dulac, Finn Ambrose, Dr. Morder, Sheila Morgan, Angus Balin, Tegan Donovan.

- b. For each character, students should fill in what they believe is that person's main goal, positive traits and acts performed on the side of good, negative traits and acts performed on the side of evil, and then a final verdict about the character: Good, Evil, or Neutral.
 - c. Students should be prepared to defend and explain their final verdict.
2. In Books 1 and 2 of the Eighth Day series, magical talents are sometimes categorized. Riley's voice of command and Dorian's inquisition talents are classified as **compulsion**. The talents of Miller Owens, Smitty, and the Dulacs are classified as **manipulation**. The talents of the Donovans and Melinda Farrow are classified as **sensitivity**.
 - a. Students create definitions for those classifications and then place the various talents of characters encountered in the series into appropriate categories.
 - b. For talents that don't seem to fit in one of those three categories, students create additional classifications, provide definitions for them, and examples of talents that fall into that category.
3. Have students write a manual for the use of brownie tunnels by humans based on what Jax and Dorian have learned. Provide a list of Do's and Don'ts.