

Ninth House

by Leigh Bardugo

PLEASE NOTE: In order to provide reading groups with the most informed and thought-provoking questions possible, it is necessary to reveal important aspects of the plot of this novel—as well as the ending. If you have not finished reading *Ninth House*, we respectfully suggest that you may want to wait before reviewing this guide.

1. Alex's life before Yale is lived on the fringes of society. At Yale, she finds herself in a somewhat similar situation: an outsider in a world of privilege. How does Alex's sense of identity change over the course of the book? What kinds of attempts to assimilate into the culture does Alex make, and do they help or hinder her work for Lethe, and later, her attempts to solve Tara's murder?
2. While Alex is in the hospital, Dean Sandow offers her a chance to remake her life by joining Lethe and attending Yale. If you were Alex, would you have said yes? What if you knew the challenges ahead? Have you ever been offered a second chance, and how did it impact your own journey? If you haven't, is there a second chance you would like to be offered?
3. In contemplating Tara and Hellie's death—and contemplating the possibility of her own death—Alex laments that "There are always excuses for why girls die." How is violence against women in the novel made better or worse by magic? How does magic work differently for each of the main characters in the novel? How is this impacted by a character's background and education?
4. Themes of class, race, and ethnicity are woven throughout *Ninth House*. How does having Alex as a narrator influence our view of the story and the world of Yale and New Haven? How would it be different if the story were narrated by Darlington, Dawes, or Turner?

5. Despite Darlington being absent for much of the novel, he's still a big presence in Alex's life and in the house of Lethe. Why do you think Alex has such a connection with Darlington despite how different they are in both background and personality? To what extent do you think their relationship transcends that of mentor and mentee and why?
6. There are many kinds of fantastical magic and houses in this novel. If you had to choose one house to be in, which would it be—and if your friends or family had to pick for you, do you think they would choose differently, and why?
7. Throughout the novel we see magic in Yale and New Haven used for both good and bad. If you were in charge of Lethe, would you run it differently? If you had the power to ban the use of magic by the Houses of the Veil, would you or wouldn't you, and why?
8. At one point in the novel it's said that New Haven is a place where magic took root. The idea of magic being drawn to certain places is a new way of looking at a map—is there a place you've visited that you felt magic might be lurking? What was that place, and why?
9. There are many ghosts in this novel. Some of them become allies, like the Bridegroom; others are more insidious and even evil. Most people have ghosts of a different variety, namely ghosts from our pasts—a difficult ex, our younger selves, or friends from a time long gone. How do you think those kinds of ghosts are similar to the ghosts in *Ninth House*? How are they different, and what allows them to exert influence over us?