



Book Club Questions

Alchemy of Secrets by Stephanie Garber

1. Interspersed with Holland's story are chapters set during the Professor's classes. Why do you think the author chose to include those chapters, and what was your experience of reading them? Did you have a favorite class?
2. Holland describes the connections among the Professor's Folklore 517 stories to be "similar to that of the Brothers Grimm fairytales" (p. 30), where they all exist in the same world. How do you understand the connections? How do the stories interact with the real world of Los Angeles?
3. We learn that Holland was "raised on her father's treasure hunts. As a child, she'd learned to look for clues the way other children learned to play with blocks or each other" (p. 6). What role do treasure hunts play in this story? What do you think Holland's father was hoping she would get out of following his clues?
4. Discuss this description of Holland: "Once she started down a rabbit hole, she couldn't stop herself from going all the way to the very end. Falling never scared her as much as failing to find out the truth" (p. 20). Do you agree, based on her actions in the novel? Do you think this is a positive or a negative character trait?
5. Why do you think Holland makes the decision to contact the Watch Man? Do you think she really believes he will tell her when she'll die, and if so, why would she want to know? If you had the chance to contact the Watch Man, would you?
6. Time is a central theme in the novel. Holland has less than two days to find the Alchemical Heart and save herself, and she is also caught in a time loop. Meanwhile, the Professor can stop time, the Watch Man can give a person more time, and the Alchemical Heart can be sent into the future. What do you think this novel is saying about the meaning of time, and how did that affect your reading experience?
7. Holland keeps her parents' identities a secret from even her closest friends. What impact does that have on Holland's relationships and on her life more generally? Do you understand her motivations, and do you agree with them?
8. Discuss these lines: "Normally, Holland loved the word myth. When she heard myth, she imagined her world was about to get bigger. She believed there was always some truth to every story. Myths and legends had to come from somewhere" (p. 83). What is the relationship between truth and myth in this novel? How does that relate to novels and storytelling more generally?
9. Holland and January are incredibly close, yet Holland learns that January has been keeping many secrets from her, including her involvement in the magical world. Holland reflects that perhaps January is just trying to protect her. Do you think January's secrets are justified? What might their relationship look like if they were fully honest with each other?



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10. Cat tells Holland, “I don’t think you actually want someone safe and nice. I think you want someone who scares you a little, like the Professor’s myths. And I think you need someone who won’t make you feel as if you have to hide those dark and twisty parts of you” (p. 41). Why do you think Cat believes this? Do you agree?
11. Throughout the novel, Holland is pulled between Gabe and Adam, never quite sure whom she can trust. What are the similarities and differences between the two men? Were you drawn to one or the other in particular?
12. Holland receives conflicting reports on whether the Bank is good or evil. January and the Professor work for the Bank, which suggests it can’t be all bad, yet the Bank’s history that Gabe shares with Holland suggests a darker side. What do you make of the Bank? What role does it play in the magical world?
13. Movies are a crucial part of Holland’s life and of this novel. She reflects: “The movie studio held a different type of magic than the Regal, but it was magic nonetheless. What is magic, if not something that makes you believe and feel and wonder?” (p. 237). Do you agree? Discuss the different kinds of magic in this novel and how they are similar and different.
14. The final scene in the novel features Mason and Holland. What are your first impressions of Mason, and what do you think his role in the next book might be? Do you think he will be a love interest for Holland? Do you trust him?
15. What are you most excited and curious to learn about in the sequel to Alchemy of Secrets?

Book club questions by the [publisher](#)