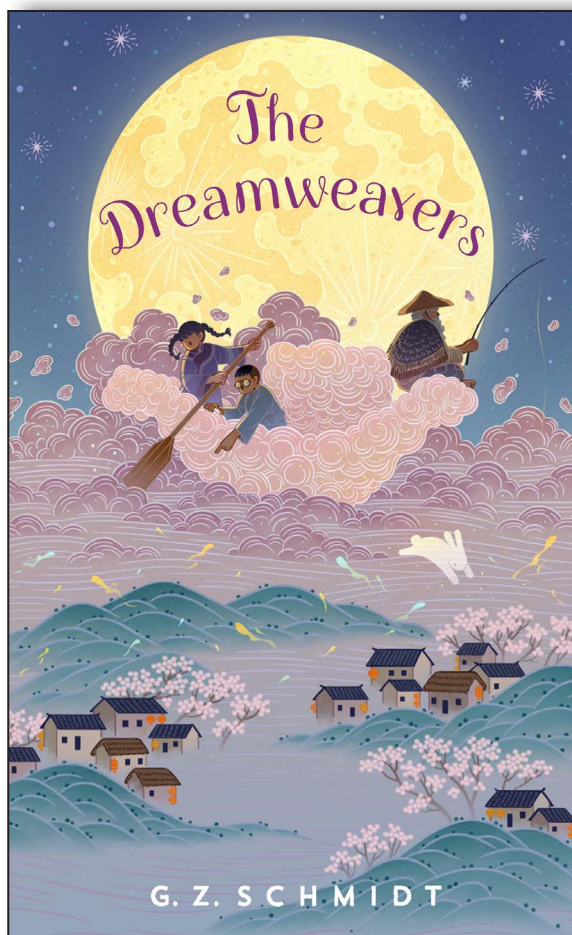


HOLIDAY HOUSE READING GROUP GUIDE



THE DREAMWEAVERS by G. Z. Schmidt

ABOUT THE BOOK

Twin siblings journey through the City of Ashes and visit the Jade Rabbit to save their grandpa in this Chinese folklore-inspired fantasy adventure.

Since their parents' strange disappearance several years ago, 12-year-old twins Mei and Yun have been raised by their grandfather, who makes the best mooncakes around using a secret ingredient.

On the day of the Mid-Autumn Harvest Festival, the emperor sends his son to sample Grandpa's renowned mooncakes—but instead of tasting wonderful, they are horrible and bitter, strangely mirroring the odd, gloomy atmosphere and attitudes that have been washing over the village in the last few days. Grandpa is arrested for insulting and harming the prince, and Mei and Yun realize they are the only two people who will come to Grandpa's aid.

The twins set out on foot for the long journey to the emperor's palace where Grandpa's being taken, but a surprising stop in the eerie City of Ashes; a visit with the legendary, mystical Jade Rabbit; and an encounter with a powerful poet whose enchanted words spread curses influence just how Mei and Yun will manage to clear their grandfather's name.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What is the purpose of the Mid-Autumn Festival? How do the villagers traditionally celebrate the festival? Discuss the significance of this year's festival. What goes wrong?
- Discuss the reaction of the villagers when Grandpa is arrested. How does his arrest establish the conflict of the novel?
- Mei is described as the impatient twin, and Yun as careful and cautious. How are their different personalities showcased in the novel? Why aren't the twins popular among the children in the village?
- Explain the "collective sixth sense" that the twins often possess. How does this sixth sense help them as they travel through the City of Ashes and on to the Imperial Palace? Explain how Mei and Yun's individual traits, as well as their sixth sense, contribute to their teamwork.
- By the end of the novel, Mei sees the relationship between courage and fear. How does it take courage to set out on their journey? Chart their fears.
- There is a story within a story in the novel. Explain why the story of Lotus and the City of Ashes is written in italics. How does the story of Lotus and the City of Ashes tie into the overarching plot?

- At one time, the City of Ashes was called the City of Blossoms. When and why did the name change?
- The twins know their parents disappeared six years ago when they went to the City of Ashes to do research. Discuss Grandpa's response each time the twins ask about their parents. How does he know more than he reveals?
- What is Madam Hu's attitude toward education? How does she equate education with ambition? Discuss why she thinks ambition led to the disappearance of Mei and Yun's parents.
- Explain Madam Hu's reaction when she learns that Mei and Yun plan to travel to the Imperial Palace to free Grandpa.
- What is significant about Grandpa's porcelain jar?
- What happens when Yun opens the jar? How do the swirls of color from the jar foreshadow other events in the novel? Why does Yun insist on taking the jar with them on their travels to the Imperial Palace?
- Grandpa talked about using magic in the mooncakes. Why does Yun think that is simply a metaphor? What do the twins learn later in the story about Grandpa's magic?
- Discuss Mei and Yun's journey to the City of Ashes. What is meant by "The path of snow had guided their way like the North Star" (p. 56)? Describe what they see upon their arrival.
- The children learn that a dreamweaver is a person who works with dreams and nightmares. How is the City of Ashes like a dream and a nightmare to the twins? Explain what Mei means when she says, "I never knew the physical world was linked to the dream world" (p. 72).
- What is Jade Rabbit's role in the story? Discuss Jade Rabbit's advice: "Remember, a journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step" (p. 90).
- Discuss each step the twins take to ultimately free Grandpa. What is the first hint that Grandpa is Lotus's baby? How do the twins finally come to this conclusion? Debate whether Grandpa knew that he belonged to Lotus.
- Describe the Imperial Palace. Why are Mei and Yun separated at the palace? How does this cause them loneliness and fear?
- What role do Fu-Fu and Princess Zai play in the story? How is Fu-Fu filled with anger? Discuss Princess Zai's idea of freedom. How does this contribute to her willingness to help the twins?
- Explain what Princess Zai means when she tells the twins, "Monkey King was hero of his story. In the same way you two are the heroes of your story" (p. 201).

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



G. Z. Schmidt was born in China and immigrated to the United States when she was six. She grew up in the Midwest and the South where she chased fireflies, listened for tornado warnings, and pursued a love of reading. In the third grade, she began writing stories in a spiral-bound notebook and never looked back. *Foreword Reviews* called her debut *No Ordinary Thing*, "no ordinary time travel story; it contains timeless lessons on friendship, bravery, and letting go." She currently lives in California with her husband and their tuxedo cat.