



FLATIRON  
BOOKS

# *Girl, Serpent, Thorn* Reading Group Guide

Welcome to the Reading Group Guide for *Girl, Serpent, Thorn*. 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 *Girl, Serpent, Thorn*, we respectfully suggest that you may want to wait before reviewing this guide.

1. *Girl, Serpent, Thorn* opens with this line: “Stories always begin the same way: *There was and there was not.*” The words speak not only of possibility, but hint at dualities. In what ways do you see these themes resonate throughout the book?
2. In *Girl, Serpent, Thorn*, nothing is simply what it seems, and expectations are subverted at every step. How did the story surprise you, challenging what you thought you knew?
3. Soraya is pulled to Azad, even as she suspects that he is “saying all the right words” and “making all the right gestures, almost as if he had practiced them in his head.” Why does she let him “play the hero” for her?
4. After killing the yatu, Soraya says she was “always afraid the poison would make [her] a monster,” and wonders if “trying to get rid of it makes [her] more of a monster than [she] was before.” Do you agree with her fears? Why or why not?
5. Though Soraya initially has feelings for Azad, she ultimately falls for Parvaneh. What is it about each character that Soraya is drawn to?
6. To save her family, Soraya must recreate the div ritual, giving up the touch she had always wanted for the poison she had always hated. What does it mean for Soraya to make this sacrifice?
7. When Soraya surrenders to the poison in her veins, embracing her transformation, she says that she finally feels whole. How does this acceptance make her feel complete? What was missing all these years?
8. Soraya wonders if Azad deserves the “mercy of her thorns,” but grants it to him. Why does she make that choice and how does it reflect a new perspective and understanding of her poisonous touch?
9. “Sometimes the princess is the monster.” What do you make of this line? What does it say about stories and archetypes?
10. *Girl, Serpent, Thorn* is inspired by *Sleeping Beauty*, *Rappaccini's Daughter*, and Persian myths like the *Shahnameh*. In what ways do you see connections to these stories? What other tales echo throughout the book?