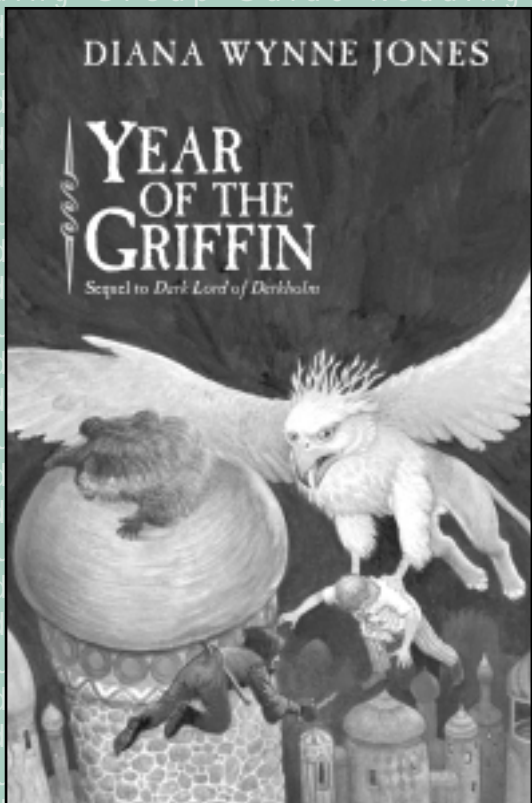


Reading Group Guide



Year of the Griffin

By Diana Wynne Jones

About *Year of the Griffin*.

It's been eight years since the Wizards' University was rescued from the last of its Pilgrim Parties—staged tours where paying participants visited frightening outer realms. But the school's problems are far from over. The buildings are falling apart, the staff and students are disgruntled, and the university is nearly broke. To top it off, the new first-year class includes a runaway prince, a golden griffin, a revolutionary dwarf, and a cast of others who are studying to become wizards while running for their lives. In this exciting sequel to *Dark Lord of Derkholm*, six students must face their darkest fears and try to survive.

For Discussion:

1. Each of the six students comes to the University to learn about wizardry, but all but Elda must keep their studies a secret in order to stay out of danger. What risks do Felim, Ruskin, Claudia, Olga, and Lukin each face? Why is it worth it to them to risk the dangers ahead? How are the dangers they face similar?
2. When Derk pays a visit to his daughter Elda, he explains that the faculty doesn't encourage creative thinking. He advises the students that "for every one way of doing things...there are usually ten more" and to "examine everything you're taught." What does he mean by this advice? Why is examining what is taught important? When does it hurt the students to do so? Is it worth it to challenge what they have been taught? Why or why not?

3. When the students attempt to create their own spells to protect Felim from assassins, each puts a piece of himself into the mix. What kind of spell would you create if you needed to protect someone? How would it work and how would it reflect who you are?
4. By creating their own protection spells, the six students are breaking the University rules. When is it okay to break the rules, and when should they be obeyed? How do you know the difference?
5. Elda is a griffin, which is a creature that is part eagle, part lion, and part human. Claudia is a mix of the Empire race and Marshfolk race. How does being of mixed-race heritage affect these students? Name an instance where they suffer from discrimination. Name an instance where having diverse backgrounds helps them.
6. After Elda bravely carries Wizard Corkoran to capture the assassins, he plays the hero without giving her even a word of thanks. Elda aches from the work but also from the hurt of being treated badly by Corkoran. She says she suffers most from disillusionment. What does she mean by this? When have you ever felt disillusioned?

7. Elda is very close to her parents and her siblings, who bond together to help save the University and their friends. On the other hand, Olga is embarrassed to be related to her father, an evil pirate, although she says she “still loves him, in a twisty sort of way.” What does she mean by this? Are there other members of the group who can’t get along with their families but still care for them? Why do they feel this way?

8. After Olga and Lukin pretend to be engaged to make the deal with the dwarfs, Olga is angry with Lukin. Why do you think she is upset? When Lukin can't understand it, what do you think his friends mean by “if you don't know, we can't tell you”?

9. Wizard Corkoran is never concerned with the effects of the spells or actions he produces—he’s only interested in making time for his own interests. On the other hand, Querida uses her wizardry to fix the problems of the past and make the world habitable again. Discuss how these wizards view their powers differently. How could Corkoran have prevented some of the problems that befell him if he had been more like Querida?

10. Toward the end, Claudia and Lukin both resolve their jinxes. How do they do it? Do you think people create their own jinxes? Think of a jinx that you have that you might be able to solve by yourself.

**Read the precursor to
*Year of the Griffin!***



***Dark Lord of Derkholm*
By Diana Wynne Jones**

Mr. Chesney operates Pilgrim Parties, “tour” groups that take paying participants into other realms where inhabitants play frightening and foreboding roles. But the staged madness is devastating to the world in which it happens, and Derk and his family are determined to put an end to it. Full of adventure, humor, and twists, this tale is a must-read for fans of high fantasy.

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Witch Week

Yes, Dear

Diana Wynne Jones was raised in the village of Thaxted, England. She has been a compulsive storyteller for as long as she can remember, enjoying most ardently those tales dealing with witches, hobgoblins, and the like. She lives in England.

This reading group guide is available at bookstores everywhere. Call 1-800-242-7737 to order more copies free of charge.

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