

# The Patron Thief of Bread

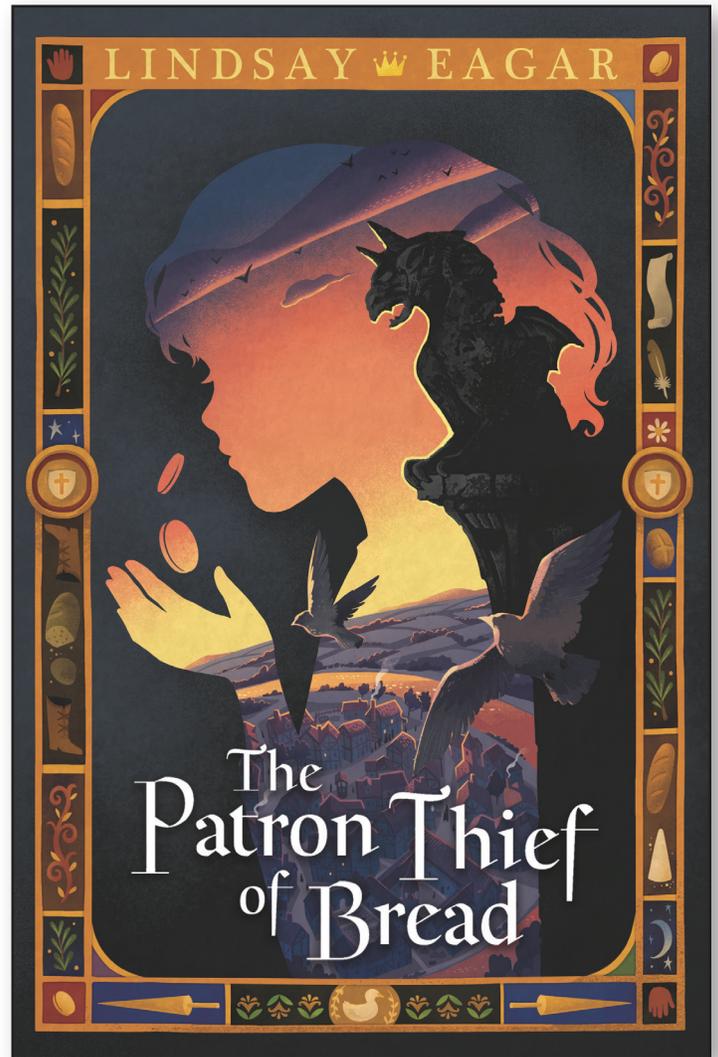
LINDSAY EAGAR

## About the Book

Rescued from the river as an infant and raised by a band of thieving orphans who call themselves the Crowns, eight-year-old Duck loves her life of freedom and belonging. Then Gnat, the Crowns' leader, forces her to apprentice herself to the local baker so Duck can steal bread and coins for her friends. Soon Duck's loyalty becomes blurred: is she still a Crown, or is she an apprentice, loyal to baker Master Griselde? Meanwhile, high above on the roof of the unfinished cathedral, an old and ugly gargoyle grows weary of waiting to fulfill his own destiny—to watch *and* protect. Told in alternating viewpoints, this exquisite novel evokes a timeless tale of love, self-discovery, and what it means to be rescued.

## About Lindsay Eagar

Lindsay Eagar, a classically trained pianist who once wanted to be a shark biologist, lives in the mountains of Utah with her husband and two daughters. This is her fourth book for young readers.



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Also available as an e-book and in audio

### Common Core Connections

This discussion guide, which can be used with large or small groups, will help students meet several of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) for English Language Arts. These include the reading literature standards for key ideas and details, craft and structure, and integration of knowledge and ideas (CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL), as well as the speaking and listening standards for comprehension and collaboration and for presentation of knowledge and ideas (CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL). Questions can also be used in writing prompts for independent work.



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## Discussion Questions

1. Most of the book is told in the third person, but every few chapters there is a chapter narrated by a gargoyle. How does the gargoyle's point of view add to the story?
2. It is hard for us to imagine building something that takes generations to complete, but that is the way it was with medieval cathedrals. However, the one in this book hasn't been worked on for many decades and is falling into ruin. The author tells us at the end of the book why the work was stopped, but did you have a theory before that?
3. Gnat, the leader of the Crowns, is an interesting person. He is very smart, he keeps the group fed and sheltered, and his schemes always succeed, but he doesn't seem to like Duck and treats her differently than he does the other Crowns. Why do you suppose this is?
4. The book says on page 40, "Maybe other orphans would have given themselves over to the church, or else found farms and manors to work for—a lifetime of dedication to a friar or a lord in exchange for room and board." The Crowns instead prefer the streets and freedom. If you had had to choose, which one would you have picked?
5. After Duck steals bread from Master Griselde and each of the Crowns gets a penny to spend at the fair, "Duck couldn't remember a time when she'd had a penny of her own—but now that she'd experienced it, she wasn't sure she cared for it" (page 62). Why does she have such a negative feeling about having money? Have you ever felt money or something else you possess to be a burden?
6. If you were in Duck's situation, and had money in your pocket, what would you have bought at the fair?
7. Duck is totally enchanted with the scent of rosemary—something mentioned often in the book. Are there scents that you love? Do you associate them with a particular place or person?
8. When Gnat makes Duck apply to be an apprentice with Master Griselde, the baker says, "No one wants to be a baker's apprentice. . . . The other guilds fill up with applicants first—painters, metalsmiths, glassmakers. That's why you're here, isn't it? Everything else was taken" (page 93). Why do you think baking is looked down upon? What trade would you have chosen if you were to be an apprentice at that time?



9. Duck is a whiz at learning to read and write under the tutelage of Master Frobertus, and both he and Master Griselde praise her repeatedly. Master Griselde's praise "felt like sunshine, and she could not endure it" (page 162). Explain why this is.
10. When Duck finds out about the bargain that Gnat has made with the Red Swords, she must choose between her two families: the Crowns and Master Griselde. Which one would you have picked, and why?
11. Duck thinks about how chance determined her life. If Ash had not found her in the river when she was a baby, she might have floated down to the bakery and have been found by Master Griselde instead. Does Duck owe the Crowns total loyalty because they were the ones who found her and took care of her?
12. When the bakery is on fire and Duck is determined to save Master Griselde, she and Griselde jump into the river below—the second time that Duck has landed in the river to save her life. How were these two times similar? How were they different?
13. After the gargoyle saves Duck from drowning, he watches the cathedral tumble to pieces. He says, "Think of darkness. Think of how darkness would sound if it had a voice" (page 373). That is how his soul sounds. How would you describe this darkness with a voice?
14. Gnat runs away when he sees his mother at the abbey. Do you think he will ever return?
15. The book says, at the end, "No one got to choose where they came from. But everyone got to decide where they were going" (page 438). How much choice do you think we have in our future?

These questions were prepared by Grace Worcester, a former youth services consultant for the Vermont Department of Libraries. She has served on the Newbery Medal, Caldecott Medal, *Boston Globe-Horn Book Award*, and National Book Award for Young People's Literature committees.

