

# The World Beyond the Stairs: Mary's Journey

## Instructor-Led Reading Guide

1. Discuss the inner turmoil/guilt the main character, Mary, feels about working full-time and being away from her kids.
2. The book introduces a world called Divinity. This gives you the opportunity to encourage students and/or readers to ask themselves how they would feel if they suddenly found themselves in a different or foreign place they had never been before: Would they feel like Mary? Would they feel differently? Would they welcome the experience? Would they think it was merely a dream? Would they immediately accept it as reality?
3. Discuss the unique dynamic/relationship between the four sisters Mary meets in Divinity: Do the students/readers agree with the age hierarchy structure established in Divinity? Do they think it's fair that the oldest sibling in a family is able to tell their younger sibling or siblings what to do? Would they be able to follow those rules if they were not the oldest sibling in the household? Why or why not?
4. Discuss the mental bond the characters in Divinity share with one another: Would they like it if others could hear their thoughts? Would they like being able to hear the thoughts of others? Why or why not?
5. If they could suddenly hear the thoughts of an insect or animal, which living creature's thoughts would they want to hear the most? Why?
6. In the book, the four sisters Mary meets decide to go along with Mary on her journey to the Northern Lands even though they could be imprisoned or killed. Discuss why the characters decide to risk their own lives for someone they just met. Would the student/reader make the same choice? Why or why not?
7. Can they think of any examples in their life where they have had to make a difficult decision like the four sisters? What did they do? Would they make the same choice if they could do it all over again?

8. In the book, Mary learns that the god-like being known as Hazaar has transferred his divine power and abilities to his adopted son, Milo. Yet, the four sisters Mary meets in Divinity still believe Hazaar watches over them and protects them. Discuss whether or not this could be possible. Ask students/readers if they believe Hazaar really gave up all of power to his son. Why or why not?
9. In the world of Divinity, Mary learns about a law that limits the number of children a family can have. Discuss whether or not they feel this is a fair law. Discuss what effects not limiting the size of families could have on a small community.
10. Discuss the major differences between the two groups of people in Divinity known as the Hazaarii and the Liberators. What are the similarities between these two groups? Discuss which group your student/reader feels they belong to. Why do they feel that way?
11. Discuss whether or not they feel all Liberators in Divinity are bad. Why or why not?
12. Discuss the conflicted thoughts Mary has about allowing the four sisters to go with her on her journey to the Northern Lands. If your student/reader were Mary, what would they do? Why?