



# QUESTIONS

## for Discussion and Writing

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The questions in this document can be used as writing prompts and/or group discussion prompts for *Serafina and the Splintered Heart*. For more writing assignment ideas, see the Activities, Assignments, and Quizzes document at [robert-beatty.com/education](http://robert-beatty.com/education).

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Content developed by Kim Donehower, Professor of English Education, as well as the author, Robert Beatty. Please send feedback to [robertbeattyauthor@gmail.com](mailto:robertbeattyauthor@gmail.com).

#### COMMON CORE COMPATIBLE

*Serafina and the Splintered Heart* and its educational materials are well suited for Common Core curriculum.

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Educational materials for *Serafina and the Splintered Heart*:

- Questions for Discussion and Writing
- Activities, Assignments, and Quizzes
- Vocabulary

Go to [robert-beatty.com/education](http://robert-beatty.com/education) for links to the PDF files, teacher testimonials, and other resources.

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## QUESTIONS

for Discussion and Writing

### General Questions / After Reading the Book

1. Much of the story in *Serafina and the Splintered Heart* is about why and how people change. In what ways do the major characters of the book change over the course of the book? If you have read books 1 and 2, how do these characters change over the whole series?
2. The book suggests that while people can change, some aspect of them stays the same. In the last chapter, this is referred to as the “inner spirit.” What stays the same about the major characters? How would you describe the “inner spirit” of each character? Do you think there is something essential about a person that doesn’t change?
3. Rowena is a character who changes a lot in the book and over the course of the whole series. Why does Rowena change so much? What predictions can you make about what Rowena will be like in the future? Could she turn to evil again? Why or why not?
4. One theme of the book is the power and nature of friendship. What do Serafina and Rowena learn about friendship over the course of the book? What does the book suggest true friendship is? How would you define true friendship?
5. Serafina has to discover new powers when she no longer has her old ones. Eventually she realizes that “if I can do even the smallest thing, then I am a powerful being” (page 100). What are some examples of small actions that have large effects?



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## QUESTIONS

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### General Questions / After Reading the Book

6. Serafina has always been a fighter, but in this book, she has to learn “that sometimes the key to survival wasn’t resisting, but giving in” (page 90). What examples are in the book of Serafina and other characters learning how and when to give in instead of resist? How can you tell when it’s time to resist in a situation, and when it’s better to give in?
7. Through much of the book, Serafina is trying to find her way home to her family. What does “home” mean to Serafina? What does “family” mean to her? Who is in her family by the end of the book?
8. Serafina feels anxious that so much has changed in her world, and is always changing. How does she learn to manage her feelings about change? How do you manage your feelings about change?



## QUESTIONS

for Discussion and Writing

### Quotes to Think and Write about

There are many quotable moments in *Serafina and the Splintered Heart* that invite reflection and writing. Choose a quote below, or one of your favorite lines from the book, to think about and explore through writing:

“In that moment, she came to understand that sometimes the key to survival wasn’t resisting, but giving in” (p. 90).

“If I can do even the smallest thing, then I am a powerful being” (p. 100).

“‘Sometimes I reckon the universe we live in is one of God’s great machines,’ her pa had said. ‘Its gears are nigh on invisible, and its spinning wheels are often silent, but it’s a machine all the same-like, with patterns and rules and mechanisms. And if you look real close, you can understand it, and for just a spell, in just the smallest way, you may be able to get it to do what you want’” (p. 100).

“‘There can be no sense in the world to someone who doesn’t want to understand it. You look at me, but you don’t see me’” (p. 161).

“‘Maybe the most difficult thing wasn’t to trust your friend, or even your enemy, but to trust yourself’” (p. 222).

“‘Everything is always changing and everything is always staying the same’” (p. 255).



## QUESTIONS

for Discussion and Writing

### Quotes to Think and Write about

“We are made of the world, and the world is made of us” (p. 257).

“With every injury, we become more of who we are” (p. 276).

“What do you do when you realize you are the monster in your own story?’.... ‘You rewrite the story” (p. 299).

“All she wanted to do was to be part of something. That was all she ever wanted, not just to see, but to be seen. Not just to hear, but to be heard. Not just to feel, but to be felt by other people, to touch them, affect them in some way, to make their lives different, and to be made different by them” (p. 354).

“There was a rare and hidden thing, maybe the most important thing, that never changed, and that was the spirit deep inside us, the thing we were when we were a child, and the thing we were when we grow up, the thing we are when we’re at home, and the thing we are when we go out into the world—it’s always with us—that inner spirit stays with us through it all, no matter how our body changes from year to year or how the world changes around us” (pp. 354-355).



## QUESTIONS

for Discussion and Writing

### Chapter-by-Chapter Questions

#### Chapter 1

1. Look at the final chapter of book 2, *Serafina and the Twisted Staff*, and compare it to this chapter. How much time do you think has passed? What has happened to Serafina, and where might she be?
2. What clues are in this chapter to help you figure out what has happened to Serafina since the end of book 2?

#### Chapter 2

1. On page 6, Serafina imagines her pa saying to her, “Get your wits about ya, girl.” What are “wits”? Do you think Serafina gets her wits working in this chapter?
2. On page 6, Serafina uses the clue of her torn dress to try to figure out what has happened to her. Based on these and other clues in the first two chapters, what do you think has happened to Serafina? Has your opinion changed since the last chapter?
3. On page 6, Serafina hears footsteps and thinks about to whom the footsteps could belong. Which of the options she considers do you think is most likely to be true, and why?

#### Chapter 3

1. In the Serafina series, some characters can transform into panthers or mountain lions, including Serafina, her friend Waysa, and her mother. Who might the black panther in this chapter be?



## QUESTIONS

### for Discussion and Writing

#### Chapter 4

1. On page 14, Serafina thinks about who the panther might be. What do you think of the options she considers? Has your opinion about the panther changed from the last chapter?
2. How much time does Serafina think has passed between the last thing she remembers at Biltmore and her waking up in the grave? What clues does she use to figure this out?
3. What does the angel symbolize to Serafina (pages 17-18)? Why is she so important to her?
4. On pages 18 and 19, Serafina wonders why none of her friends or family had come for her. What might be some reasons they haven't come to check on Serafina or try to rescue her?

#### Chapter 5

1. On pages 21 and 22, Serafina uses her knowledge of the moon's cycles to try to figure out how much time might have passed since she was put in the grave. What are the possible time frames Serafina comes up with?
2. On page 22, Serafina is described as being "in a world of many in-betweens." What is "in-betweenness"? Have you ever experienced this feeling, and if so, what were you "in-between"?
3. On page 24, Serafina encounters "a man, a creature, or whatever it was," and the creature is described in detail on pages 25 and 26. What does this creature look like? Who or what might this creature be? Why might it attack Serafina?



## QUESTIONS

### for Discussion and Writing

#### Chapter 6

1. On page 27, Serafina tries to change into her panther form, as she has many times before, but she fails. Why might Serafina be unable to change into a panther now?
2. On page 28, Serafina encounters “an eerie black shape” when she is running away from the creature in the last chapter. What might this black shape be? How might it be connected to the creature from chapter 5?
3. On page 32, Serafina encounters a sorcerer. What is the connection between the sorcerer, the storm-creature from chapter 5, and the black shape in this chapter?

#### Chapter 7

1. In this chapter, Serafina again fails to change into a panther. But on pages 36 and 37, she can do something she has never done before: hear and feel the droplets of water that she can only see from where she is hiding. What powers does Serafina seem to have lost at this point in the book? What powers has she gained?
2. At the end of the chapter, we find out that the sorcerer can't see Serafina. Why might Serafina be invisible to him?





## QUESTIONS

### for Discussion and Writing

#### Chapter 8

1. On page 41, there is a reference to “destroying the Black Cloak and freeing the estate’s lost children from its dark imprisonment.” What incident does this refer to from the earlier books?
2. On page 41, Serafina reflects that after the incident with the Black Cloak, she was welcomed into the Vanderbilt family and home. What was Serafina’s status at Biltmore before this? Why was she not welcomed then?
3. On pages 45-48, Serafina sees Braeden for the first time in the book. How has Braeden changed since the last time Serafina was with him? What might be some reasons for these changes?
4. At the end of the chapter, Serafina reveals herself to Mr. Vanderbilt and Braeden. Do you think they will be able to see or hear her? What are your reasons for your opinion?

#### Chapter 9

1. On page 51, Serafina offers some possible explanations for what has happened to her and gives evidence for each on page 52. What do you think has happened to Serafina, and what is your evidence?
2. At the end of the chapter, Braeden says Serafina is “dead and buried.” Could this be true? Why or why not?



## QUESTIONS

### for Discussion and Writing

#### Chapter 10

1. In this chapter, Serafina considers more clues to explain what has happened to her. What are these clues? Do you agree with Serafina's interpretation of these clues, or do you have a different interpretation?
2. On pages 56-57, Serafina sees Pa for the first time in the book. How has Pa changed since the last time Serafina was with him? What might be some reasons for these changes?
3. On page 59, Serafina remembers what happened to her when she fell in the river and hid in the trees to escape the sorcerer. She decides, "I only have so much more time left here...and then I'm going to fade away completely." Why does she think this? Do you think she is right? Why or why not?

#### Chapter 11

1. Who is Essie, and what was her relationship with Serafina?
2. On pages 62-63, Serafina has to convince herself to look into a mirror. Why is she afraid of the mirror?
3. Serafina talks to herself often to build her confidence, as in the "Stay bold" scene on page 64. Is talking to yourself a useful strategy? In what kinds of situations might it be helpful?
4. On page 64, Serafina discovers that she can see the shape of dust particles, and possibly make them move with her hand. Why would Serafina be able to make the dust move, if she can't affect any of the people she's tried to touch?
5. On page 65, why is Serafina so worried about storms?



## QUESTIONS

### for Discussion and Writing

#### Chapter 12

1. On page 67, Serafina discovers that she can also move steam. What kinds of things can she affect in her current state? Do you have any predictions about what Serafina's new powers are and how she might use them?
2. Who are Uriah, Rowena, and Waysa, and what are their relationships to Serafina and to each other?
3. We find out in this chapter that Braeden has a special power. What is it?
4. On pages 70-71, we find out more about how Braeden has changed. How has he changed?

#### Chapter 13

1. What are the "elements from whence all things came" (page 74)? What does it mean that "the universe is taking [Serafina] back" (page 74)?
2. On page 78, Serafina remembers a story her pa told her. What kind of a person is Pa? How would you describe his character and personality?
3. On page 79, Serafina wonders why Braeden has become "reckless." What does "reckless" mean, and why might Braden have changed in this way?

#### Chapter 14

1. What do you think Braeden has hidden in the box? What are your reasons for thinking this?
2. On pages 82-83, Serafina worries that she might be turning into water. Why might she feel this way? Is there any evidence that this could happen to Serafina?



## QUESTIONS

### for Discussion and Writing

#### Chapter 15

1. Why might Braeden have kept the Black Cloak? What might he be planning to do with it?
2. Why is the Black Cloak so dangerous?
3. Why is Serafina so terrified of the Black Cloak?

#### Chapter 16

1. Who are Clara Brahms and Anastasia Rostonova?
2. What is Serafina's history with the Black Cloak? Why is she so surprised to see it, and find that Braeden has it?
3. On page 90, Serafina "came to understand that sometimes the key to survival wasn't resisting, but giving in." What does this mean? In what situations might "giving in" be better than "resisting"?
4. At the end of the chapter, Serafina discovers she can shape-shift—but into water, not into a panther. Why might Serafina be able to shape-shift in this way, but not in her old way?

#### Chapter 17

1. At the beginning of the chapter, Serafina has trouble shifting from water back to her "spirit" form. Why might this be difficult for her?
2. On page 92, Serafina calls herself "Spirit." What are some different meanings for a person's "spirit"? What does Serafina's "spirit" seem to be?
3. On page 93, Serafina wonders if Braeden has turned on her. Do think this is possible? Why do you think this?



## QUESTIONS

### for Discussion and Writing

#### Chapter 18

1. At the beginning of the chapter, Serafina hopes Waysa can see or hear her, or feel her presence, even though her other friends can't. Why might she think Waysa could do these things?
2. On page 98, Serafina feels like she should know who the black panther is, but doesn't. Who do you think the black panther might be, and what evidence in the book supports your idea?
3. On page 100, what does it mean that Serafina is "trying to play the flute of the world"?
4. On page 100, Serafina thinks that "if I can do even the smallest thing, then I am a powerful being." How could doing something small lead to power? Do you agree with Serafina's idea?
5. Serafina's pa says that if you understand something, "you may be able to get it to do what you want." What does Serafina understand in this chapter, and how does it let her do more than she could previously?

#### Chapter 19

1. On page 104, Serafina recalls her pa's definition of courage: "when you were scared of something but did it anyway because it had to be done." Do you agree with Pa's definition of courage? Why or why not?
2. A catchphrase of the Serafina books is "stay bold" (page 104). What does "bold" mean?
3. What happens to Serafina on page 105 when she wakes up and can't get off the ground?
4. Why does Serafina seem drawn to the timberdoodle bird on pages 106-107?
5. Who is the girl sorcerer Serafina recognizes at the end of the chapter, and how can Serafina recognize her if she is "nearly unrecognizable"?



## QUESTIONS

### for Discussion and Writing

#### Chapter 20

1. In this chapter, Serafina encounters Rowena. How has Rowena changed since the last time Serafina was with her? What might be some reasons for these changes?
2. On page 113, Rowena can sense Serafina's presence but doesn't know who she is yet. She seems to think Serafina is someone else. Who might Rowena think the presence is?
3. Is Rowena the sorcerer the same sorcerer who was chasing Serafina early in the book? Why or why not?

#### Chapter 21

1. Why can Rowena hear Serafina when no one else can?
2. Why might Rowena think Serafina has come to kill her?
3. Who might Rowena be hiding from?
4. Who is Mr. Thorne?
5. Why does Rowena say that Serafina doesn't know anything about who her friends and enemies really are (page 119)?

#### Chapter 22

1. In this chapter, Serafina finds out what happened to her before she ended up in the grave. What did happen to her?
2. How could Serafina and the black panther both be lying on the ground at the same time?
3. What happens to the black panther?
4. Why does Braeden bury Serafina?
5. At the end of the chapter, Rowena says to Serafina, "now you know what friendship is." What is it? What did Serafina not understand about it before?



## QUESTIONS

### for Discussion and Writing

#### Chapter 23

1. What does Serafina mean by “my trinity was split” (page 129)?
2. On page 131, Serafina and Rowena discuss their relationship and how it has changed. How has it changed, and why?
3. What does Serafina mean when she says to Rowena, “so that’s why you thought you could show me the vision” (page 132)?

#### Chapter 24

1. The chapter begins, “Something was driving these evils toward Biltmore.” What might this something be, and why would it want to destroy Biltmore?
2. Why is Serafina tempted to see if she can shape-shift into air (pages 133-134)?
3. On page 135, Serafina wonders, “What was important to [Braeden] now?” What do you think is important to Braeden? Why do you think this?
4. On page 136, Serafina notices Braeden changing from how he has been in the book so far. What kinds of changes does Serafina see? Why might these changes be happening?

#### Chapter 25

1. On page 141, Serafina thinks that even death wouldn’t end her and Braeden’s friendship. How could this be true?
2. On pages 142-143, why can Gideon notice Serafina’s tricks with the dust and Braeden can’t? How does Gideon know that the dust means Serafina is there?
3. What do you think they will see in the coffin? Why do you think this?



## QUESTIONS

### for Discussion and Writing

#### Chapter 26

1. On page 146, Serafina's body is described as being in "suspended animation." What does this mean?
2. On page 147, we find out exactly what has happened to Serafina's body, her panther body, and her spirit. What has happened, and how did it happen?
3. Might there be a way for Serafina's body, her panther body, and her spirit to be reunited? Make a prediction about what you think will happen, and give evidence from the book.

#### Chapter 27

1. Why did Waysa help Rowena after the battle on the Loggia? Why did Braeden think Waysa should have killed Rowena instead?
2. Braeden and Waysa wonder if Rowena is causing the storms. Do you think Rowena is responsible for the storms? Why or why not?
3. At the end of the chapter, Serafina "could see only one path she could follow" to help Waysa and Braeden. What might that path be?

#### Chapter 28

1. Rowena tells Serafina, "You've seen all the pieces. You just have to put them together. You just don't want to accept it" (page 161). What is it that Serafina can't accept? What are the "pieces" Rowena refers to?
2. In the last chapter, Waysa says that "there is more than one path to follow" (page 157). On page 162 in this chapter, Serafina thinks again of Waysa's "many paths." What are these paths?
3. At the end of the chapter, Rowena says, "He's found us!" Who might "he" be?





## QUESTIONS

### for Discussion and Writing

#### Chapter 29

1. Serafina sees many scars on Rowena's back. Who or what might be the source of these scars?
2. Why does Serafina save Rowena, who has been her enemy, and who has been ordered by the voice to steal the Black Cloak from Braeden?
3. At the end of the chapter, Rowena has a plan to get the Black Cloak back. What do you think her plan is?

#### Chapter 30

1. Why don't the adults at Biltmore seem more aware of the threat of the storms?
2. What is the "carriage with no horses" on page 172?
3. Serafina assumes Rowena plans to hurt Braeden. Do you agree? Why or why not?

#### Chapter 31

1. Why has Rowena made herself look like Serafina, if Braeden knows Serafina's body is in the grave?
2. On page 181, Mr. Vanderbilt is suspicious of Rowena, but Mrs. Vanderbilt is not. Why?

#### Chapter 32

1. Why does Braeden not notice that his injured leg seems healed when he is dancing with Rowena?
2. Why does Braeden think his mysterious dancing partner might be a catamount?
3. Why does Braeden take his dancing partner into the Gun Room?
4. How does Braden know who his dancing partner really is?



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## QUESTIONS

for Discussion and Writing

### Chapter 33

1. Braden says Rowena is “always a monster” (page 190). Do you agree? Why or why not?
2. On page 191, Rowena says that she is not going to fight on her father’s side any more. Do you believe her? Why or why not?
3. On page 193, Serafina reflects on how she has changed and how Braeden has changed since they first met. What are these changes?
4. On page 199, Rowena says “that which does not destroy us makes us stronger.” What does this mean? Do you agree?
5. On page X, Serafina asks Rowena what her plan is for the Black Cloak. What do you think Rowena’s plan might be? What evidence is there in the book for your idea?

### Chapter 34

1. Serafina tells Braden she only has a night or two before....what (pages 201-201)? What is going to happen to Serafina?
2. Why does Rowena refuse to describe what she is going to do with the Black Cloak?
3. Rowena does not want to work with Waysa (page 204), even though he saved her life. Why not?



## QUESTIONS

### for Discussion and Writing

#### Chapter 35

1. On page 208, Waysa says he healed Rowena because he does not wish to get lost. What does he mean by this?
2. On the same page, Waysa says he wants to find his way home. What might he mean by “home,” and why does Rowena understand what he means?
3. On page 209, Rowena describes something that happened to Waysa’s people, the Cherokee, in history. To what incident is Rowena referring?
4. Why is it easier for Waysa to believe in the existence of spirits than it is for Braeden (page 211)?

#### Chapter 36

1. Why does Serafina have more confidence that she will exist long enough to do what needs to be done to defeat Uriah?
2. Why is Serafina jealous of Braeden’s riding on Waysa’s back (page 215)?

#### Chapter 37

1. On page 218, Serafina starts to see Rowena’s plan, and is terrified. Do you think Serafina should trust Rowena? Why or why not? What evidence in the book supports your idea?
2. On page 222, Serafina reflects that “maybe the most difficult thing wasn’t to trust your friend, or even your enemy, but to trust yourself.” Do you agree? Why or why not?
3. On page 224, Serafina wonders “how do you know when someone’s lying to you, or if they will keep their promise?” What is your opinion on this question, and why?



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## QUESTIONS

for Discussion and Writing

### Chapter 38

1. Why is Braeden fascinated that animals have to be involved in constructing the Black Cloak (page 226)?
2. Why does Serafina lose her sight when she watches Rowena working on the cloak?

### Chapter 39

1. To whom does the voice telling Serafina not to fight belong?
2. Serafina wonders if Rowena's plan is to destroy Serafina because she is jealous of Serafina's relationship with Braeden. Do you think this is a possibility? Why or why not?
3. Why does Serafina decide to trust Rowena and her plan (pages 231-232)?

### Chapter 40

1. How does Serafina know that she is back inside her body?

### Chapter 41

1. On page 237, Serafina thinks that she cannot make it out of the coffin and that she is going to die. Why does she think this, especially since she has dug her way out of the coffin once before?
2. Why does Serafina need to turn into a panther to escape the coffin?



## QUESTIONS

### for Discussion and Writing

#### Chapter 42

1. On page 243, Serafina thanks Rowena, who says, “I put you there. And now I brought you back.” Serafina wonders what Rowena means by this. What do you think Rowena means?
2. Serafina notices that she has some new abilities, now that she is restored to her body. What are they?
3. What might it mean on page 244 that “the world lingered in her”?

#### Chapter 43

1. Serafina thinks that Pa knows her mother is a catamount, but doesn't know it about Serafina. Do you think she is right? Why or why not?
2. Why can't Serafina talk to Pa about her fondness for Braeden (page 251)?
3. On page 252, Serafina asks Pa, “If everything is always changing, what can we hold on to?” What do you think of Pa's response? What is your own answer to this question?

#### Chapter 44

1. On page 258, Serafina reflects that “there was much for her to learn.” What is it that Serafina has to learn?
2. Why is Uriah the enemy of the crows (page 263)?
3. Serafina sees something different in Braeden now (page 264). What is it, and why might Braeden have changed in this way?

#### Chapter 45

1. On page 270, Waysa is described as “honor bound” to defeat Uriah. What does “honor bound” mean?
2. What does Serafina mean when she says, “We are the storm” (page 271)?



## QUESTIONS

### for Discussion and Writing

#### Chapter 46

1. How is Serafina able to move through the poisonous fog?
2. On page 276, Uriah is described as “once a man.” Why is he no longer a man? What has changed him?
3. Rowena says, “With every injury, we become more of who we are” (page 276). What does this statement mean? Do you agree with it? Why or why not?

#### Chapter 47

1. Uriah tells Serafina he cannot be killed (page 283). Do you think this is true? Why or why not?
2. How do Serafina and Waysa escape the fire on the mountain?

#### Chapter 48

1. How do Braeden and Rowena escape the fire on the mountain?
2. Why is Essie fascinated by Waysa?
3. On page 294, Serafina thinks that she has not fully understood Rowena previously. What does Serafina understand about Rowena now that she did not before?

#### Chapter 49

1. Why does Serafina think that it would be a “mistake” to call for another attack on Uriah (page 297)?
2. What has Rowena’s relationship with her father been, and why has she decided to fight him now?
3. On pages 299-300, Serafina and Rowena argue whether a person can change themselves and “rewrite the story.” What does it mean to “rewrite the story”? Do you think this is possible for Rowena?



## QUESTIONS

### for Discussion and Writing

#### Chapter 50

1. What does it mean to “set down the hammer” (pages 304-305)? And if this idea “makes no sense at all” (page 305), why does that make it a beautiful idea?

#### Chapter 51

1. On page 310, Braeden asks, “is it wrong to use an evil weapon to fight against evil?” What do you think?
2. How could remaking the Black Cloak help defeat Uriah?

#### Chapter 52

1. On page 319, Serafina starts to wonder again whether Rowena can be trusted. Why?

#### Chapter 53

1. Why are the Vanderbilts Uriah’s “despised enemy” (page 321)?
2. Why might Uriah be envious of Braeden’s powers with animals (page 322)?

#### Chapter 54

1. Why does Rowena still fear the Black Cloak (page 332)?
2. On page 333, Serafina asks Rowena what she will do now. Rowena responds, “I will *live*.” What do you think Rowena means by this? Why is the word “live” in italics?



## QUESTIONS

### for Discussion and Writing

#### Chapter 55

1. What does the cloak mean when it says to Serafina, “there are other paths to follow” (page 335)?
2. Why do Braeden and Serafina hide the cloak instead of destroying it?

#### Chapter 56

1. Why is Rowena now dressed as a sorceress?
2. On page 341, Rowena is described as “the girl who had been [Serafina’s] enemy and her friend.” Can the same person be both an enemy and a friend? What has to happen to turn an enemy into a friend?

#### Chapter 57

1. On page 345, Serafina reflects that “She was just beginning in the world, and she needed her mother to guide her. The spirit and the body, the heart and the soul, the light and the darkness, she wanted to learn it all.” What does this mean? And why does thinking about it give Serafina “a great sense of peace”?
2. Why is Waysa leaving?

#### Chapter 58

1. Why does Biltmore now truly feel like “home” to Serafina?
2. Pages 354-355 describe an “inner spirit” that “stays with us through it all, no matter how our body changes from year to year or how the world changes around us.” What do you think this “inner spirit” is? Does it change, or not change? Where might this inner spirit come from?