ABOUT THIS SERIES

Anyone who has visited New York City can tell you that it’s a magical place. But what if the magic that resides there is more than hectic energy and a bunch of tourist-friendly sites . . . what if it’s real? What if there’s another layer to this world that most people can’t see, a layer that’s full of faeries and vampires, werewolves and demon hunters, protective runes and evil overlords? In The Mortal Instruments trilogy, Cassandra Clare peels back the glamour to reveal the magic that is usually hidden from us.

In City of Bones, Clary can hardly believe her eyes when she sees a trio of teens slay a demon at her favorite nightclub. Little does she realize that it’s merely her first glimpse into a world that she was born into—a world that her mother, Jocelyn, has tried desperately to keep from her. But with her mother missing and Luke—her mother’s oldest friend and the second most important person in Clary’s life—pushing her away, Clary must turn to these same demon-slaying teens, known as Shadowhunters, for answers. Along with her best friend, Simon, Clary struggles to absorb all that she is learning. Demons attack her; Simon is turned into a rat at a warlock party and stolen by vampires; Valentine, an evil Shadowhunter long thought dead, is back and trying to find the Mortal Cup so that he can create a Nephilim army. Through it all, though, there is Clary’s intense attraction to Jace, the Shadowhunter who both drives her crazy and draws her to him. Can Valentine be right? Can Jace really be her brother?

The Mortal Instruments series speaks to the outsider in all of us as we try to figure out who we are and how we fit into the world, without letting anyone know how scared we are. By finding a balance between the worlds of the mundane and the Shadowhunters, Clary defines what sort of adult she will be. She finds out who she loves, where she belongs, and what she’s willing to fight for.
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. When Clary learns that Magnus Bane had erased her supernatural memories, she says that she had always felt like there was something wrong with her. How much of this is because she didn't know her history, and how much is caused—as Magnus says—by the simple fact that she's a teenager? Does she belong in the Shadowhunter world?

2. How much of what mundanes see in this world is a glamour, constructed by those with magical powers? Why do these glamours exist? How do things change for Clary once she can see through them?

3. Where did Nephilim, witches and warlocks, vampires, werewolves, and faeries come from? Do their origins justify the roles they play and the rivalries between them?

4. Why did Valentine rebel against the Clave in the first place? What does he hope to accomplish by stealing the Mortal Instruments and fighting the Clave now? Whose best interests does he have in mind?

5. At one point, Jace says he doesn't believe in God. Do you think this is true? Can someone be a Shadowhunter and not believe in God?

6. What is it about the Silent Brothers that is so disturbing to Clary and the others? Do you think the Silent Brothers play up this aura of creepiness?

7. How do Jace's feelings about danger and death differ from Alec's and Isabelle's? Why does Jace feel the way he does about putting himself in the line of danger?

8. Shadowhunters are charged with protecting mundanes, but they seem to have very little respect for those they serve. Why do you think their feelings for normal humans are so complicated? Why do they continue to serve mundanes if they don't like them?

9. What role does Luke play in Clary's life? Does this role change as the story progresses?

10. Discuss the character of Hodge. Why did he betray his young charges? Was he just self-serving and bad, or did he do some good with his life? Was he right to fear Valentine more than the Clave?

11. Valentine's plotting and lies cause a lot of confusion about who his children are. How does Clary define family? Who had the greatest influence on the formation of Jace's character? Where does Jace belong? Which child—Clary or Jace—was most affected by Valentine?

12. Several people, including Jace and Luke, accuse Clary of rushing into situations without any regard to how her actions will affect others. Do you think this is a fair assessment? Do any other characters act like this? In the end, does this trait harm or help Clary?

13. Why does Alec have such a hard time coming out? What is it like to be LGBT in the Shadowhunter community?

14. The author starts each book and each section within the book with a quotation. What do you know about the sources of these quotations? What sort of works are they from? Is there a common theme? Why do you think the author chose these quotes?

ACTIVITIES

1. Write a research paper on ancient runes. When were they used? By whom? What did they look like? Are they still used today? What is their connection to modern written language?

2. Hodge knew many tricks for healing physical ailments using herbs, plants, and other natural remedies. Compare and contrast different branches of alternative medicine—homeopathy, herbal medicine, acupuncture, etc. How do they compare to the practice of medicine as we traditionally think of it?

3. There is a rich mythology surrounding angels, Nephilim, demons, vampires, and other creatures in the book. Choose one of these magical creatures and find out more about them. Find other books and movies that cover the subject, and compare the world found there to the world of The Mortal Instruments. Write a short paper about the history of the creature you've chosen and the different ways it has shown up in literature throughout the years.

4. Shadowhunters devote their lives to making the world a safer and better place for those around them. What can you do to make the world a better place? Choose a cause you believe in and then volunteer.

5. Clary is a talented artist, and often uses art to make sense of the things that are happening in her world. Express yourself through some art form—drawing, painting, sculpting, or collage—and draw someone or something from the books.

6. Shadowhunters have strong ties to their ancestors. Trace the family trees of the Shadowhunters and discover their connections to one another.