The Forest of Hands and Teeth

A novel by Carrie Ryan
About JLG Guides

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From all of us at Junior Library Guild, we wish you and your students good reading and great learning . . . with JLG Selections and JLG Guides.
The Forest Of Hands and Teeth
by Carrie Ryan

JLG Guide written by Frank Coffin

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About the Author

CARRIE RYAN was born and raised in Greenville, South Carolina. In high school, she played field hockey and soccer, competing for a year on a boys’ team until the school founded a team for girls. She enjoyed reading anything and everything, and made her first attempt at writing (a short story).

Ryan attended Williams College in Massachusetts, where she played field hockey and lacrosse for the Ephs (pronounced *eeفس* for Ephraim Williams, whose estate helped fund the college in 1793.) Ryan takes some pleasure in mentioning that the Ephs’ mascot is a purple cow. She also became active in student government.

After graduating from Williams, Ryan moved to Middleburg, Virginia, where she worked at the Foxcroft School, a school for girls in grades nine through twelve. There she finished her first book and wrote a second. Unable to interest an agent or publisher in the books, she turned to the study of law. She graduated from Duke University Law School and currently practices in the area of estates and trusts.

Still, Ryan continued to be interested in writing, and eventually her fiancé persuaded her to write the kind of tale that she loved, full of action and adventure—and zombies. The result was *The Forest of Hands and Teeth*, Ryan’s first published novel.

Carrie Ryan now lives in Charlotte, North Carolina, and plans to continue writing novels set in the same or similar worlds.

*The Forest of Hands and Teeth* is an April 2009 Junior Library Guild Y Level Selection.

To learn more about the author of this selection, how she came to write and publish her first novel, and how she creates her work, visit her Web site:  
www.carrieryan.com
Building Background Information

Understanding Zombies, Pandemics, and Genres

DO YOU BELIEVE in zombies? What is a zombie, anyway? A zombie is a fictional creature, a being not really alive but not dead either, often referred to as “the undead.” In most books and movies, zombies are slow-moving monsters in various states of mutilation or decay. They usually have only one goal—to attack humans and thus create more zombies. True to the mythology of these creatures, in The Forest of Hands and Teeth, author Carrie Ryan places readers in a world in which zombies pursue people in order to bite and infect them, thus turning them into fellow zombies.

Although not real, the idea of zombies has some historical basis. The voodoo cults of Haiti combined some Christian rituals, West African religions, and magic brought to Haiti with enslaved peoples. The voodoo cults believed in many kinds of strange spirits, including corpses that can be brought back to life. To them, a zombie (sometimes spelled zombi or zonbi) was a being without a will of its own, always doing the bidding of its master. The legend may have had its beginnings in rites in which voodoo priests injected certain poisons into the skin of people, who then suffered near-paralysis for several hours.

Zombies have been wildly popular in books and movies throughout the years. Night of the Living Dead (1968) is probably the most famous zombie movie, from which many others have sprung. In recent years, supernatural themes that include creatures such as vampires, mummies, and zombies have become the rage again. Tense and exciting, these tales please audiences whether or not they believe in creatures from beyond the grave.

One of the more thrilling elements of this kind of story is the possibility of spreading the evil infection. In The Forest of Hands and Teeth, anyone who is bitten by a zombie soon becomes one. The horror of becoming one of these beasts, or of having this happen to a loved one, provides extra dread, because the person is doomed to wander the earth forever, neither truly alive nor truly at rest.
The story, set in the future, takes place sometime long after an infectious organism has run wild in the world, turning much of the population into zombies. The reality is—zombies aside—that history has had some terrifying nationwide, or even worldwide, infections that could not be stopped. Such an infection is known as a pandemic. There have been pandemics of the plague, cholera, influenza, and other viruses—so the hint of real biology in the spread of the zombie “bug” just adds to the suspense.

To learn more about real pandemics and how they spread, have students visit an American Museum of Natural History online exhibit: www.amnh.org/exhibitions/epidemic/section_08/index.html

![Fourteenth-century plague victims](public domaine.png)

**Name That Genre**

In *The Forest of Hands and Teeth*, as Mary faces her environment, she tries to make sense of her world and her relationships, not unlike any young person anywhere or at any time. Though her world is strange to us, some of its problems are not. The mix of elements in the book makes it hard to classify it simply in terms of genre—there are elements of horror, of fantasy, of science fiction, and of romance. What keeps the story moving, though, is the non-stop action as Mary and her friends and family stay ahead of the zombies. Although there are aspects of many genres in the book, the action and adventure of this tale is what keeps you turning pages.

Beyond the genre, this book is a good example of archetypal literature. An archetype is a repeated pattern that shows up often in literature. *The Forest of Hands and Teeth* is the story of a quest, one of the most common kinds of stories told throughout time. Think of *The Wizard of Oz*, King Arthur’s legends, *Star Wars*, and other famous stories of people on a journey to find something or to solve a problem. In this guide, you will see a boxed element called *Thinking About Archetypes* that will be a valuable tool in understanding the elements of this powerful kind of literature.

To find suggestions for further reading, go to page 39. There you will find other books that may interest those who enjoy this one.
Prereading Activities

**Book summary:** Sometime in a distant future, Mary lives in a fenced world. Outside the fence, the Unconsecrated mill and moan in agony, trying to get through to the humans, to infect them with the same undead disease they carry. Guardians patrol the fences, protecting the people. When a human does get bitten, the Guardians must execute or cast that person out into the Forest of Hands and Teeth, because he or she will soon turn into a zombie—as happened to Mary’s parents. Mary thinks constantly of her mother’s dreams of the ocean, dreams that give Mary hope of a better world beyond the forest. In the meantime, she must hide her affection for Travis, who is betrothed to Cassandra. When all seems lost—with no imminent marriage and with her brother refusing to help her—Mary goes to live in the Cathedral with the Sisters who control the society. Mary wonders at some of their secrets and the rumors about a world beyond the fences. When the fence is breached, masses of Unconsecrated take the town. Mary, Jed and his wife Beth, Cassandra, Travis, Travis’s brother Harry, and a small boy named Jacob must flee down the mysteriously marked fenced pathways that lead to—what?

**Understanding Genre: Action/Adventure**

1. Explain in your own words what you would expect to find in an action/adventure novel.

2. Based on the summary above, what will create the action and adventure in *The Forest of Hands and Teeth*?

3. What do you expect to be the most exciting parts of the book?

4. What questions about the situation would you want the story to answer?
Prereading Activities

Making Predictions
Read this partial summary of the plot and make predictions based on evidence from the text and/or from your prior knowledge or personal experience.

Although Harry is interested in Mary, Mary thinks more about his brother, Travis, who is training to be a Guardian and is promised to Mary’s best friend, Cassandra. During a skirmish, Travis is hurt, and as Mary tends to him, her feelings grow stronger, much to the disapproval of Sister Tabitha. A stranger arrives, apparently from the unused paths near the town, and then disappears after taking refuge with Sister Tabitha. When the fence is breached and the Unconsecrated take the town, Mary and others take flight down these paths, trying to escape the ever-pursuing zombies and find a place of safety.

1. What do you think will happen in the relationships of Mary, Harry, Travis, and Cassandra?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I predict:</th>
<th>What is the basis for your prediction?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

2. How will the group escape the slow-moving but relentless zombies?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I predict:</th>
<th>What is the basis of your prediction?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

3. “I want to read further so I can . . .”
Set a purpose for reading based on your predictions above.
Before You Read
Introducing Vocabulary
Define each of the words below, paying attention to the part of speech indicated. Then complete each sentence with the correct word. You may need to change the form of the word.

necessitate (v.) ________________________________________

inevitable (adj.) _______ __________________________________

blasphemy (n.) ________________________________

chastise (v.) ________________________________

impending (adj.) ______________________________________

1. Late as usual, my mom _________ me for forgetting to set my alarm last night.

2. Every autumn, the _____________ arrival of winter filled my father with gloom.

3. She was disappointed that her travel plans would ____________ several flight changes.

4. In our town, saying you’re not interested in sports is a kind of _____________.

5. It was _____________ that budget cuts would affect our school programs.

After You Read
Analyzing the Writing: Point of View

1. Define first-person point of view in written works.

2. How does first-person point of view help you get to know Mary more deeply?

3. Why does first-person point of view often give a strong sense of voice to writing?
Getting to Know the Characters

Readers form ideas about the characters from the perspective of what Mary thinks and sees. Read each excerpt below and explain what it suggests about Mary's view of the character.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Character</th>
<th>Mary’s view</th>
<th>What I learned about the character or Mary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Harry</td>
<td>“…while a part of me wonders if our lifelong friendship could ever grow to be something more…” (page 5)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travis</td>
<td>“It is his attention that I have been trying to catch throughout the summer, his friendship I have wanted to turn into something more.” (page 5)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>her brother Jed</td>
<td>“I search his eyes for the tenderness I once knew but all I find is sharp edges.” (page 22)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sister Tabitha</td>
<td>“She inhales sharply and I can see her lips tighten into a single line.” (page 30)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Responding to the Story

1. Why do you think the author began with stories that Mary’s mother used to tell about the ocean?

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

2. Name three consequences for Mary’s life that occur as a result of what happens to her mother.
   1. _______________________________________________________________________
   2. _______________________________________________________________________
   3. _______________________________________________________________________
3. Why does Jed not permit Mary to come live with him and his wife?

4. Based on what happens between Mary and Sister Tabitha, what prediction can you make about Mary’s life in the Cathedral?

**Thinking About Archetypes: Plot**

One of the most common plots in literature is that of the journey or quest. Think of stories you’ve read in which the main character, or protagonist, leaves home to go looking for something. The search, or quest, can be for internal things, such as personal meaning or acceptance, or external things, such as treasure or a person. Often the journey is riddled with dead ends, obstacles, and discoveries.

List some books you have read or know about that use the archetype of the journey or quest as the main plot.

What journey do you think Mary will be going on?
Before You Read

Introducing Vocabulary: Unique Usage

In *The Forest of Hands and Teeth*, the author uses certain terms in unique ways. These words have a particular meaning in the world of the book. Define each of the following terms as they are used normally. Then explain the special meaning each has in the story. Use the back of this page if needed.

1. guardian
   ___________________________________________
   Guardian
   ___________________________________________

2. cathedral
   ___________________________________________
   Cathedral
   ___________________________________________

3. sisterhood
   ___________________________________________
   Sisterhood
   ___________________________________________

4. infected
   ___________________________________________
   Infected
   ___________________________________________

5. outsider
   ___________________________________________
   Outsider
   ___________________________________________

6. unconsecrated
   ___________________________________________
   Unconsecrated
   ___________________________________________

7. forest
   ___________________________________________
   Forest
   ___________________________________________

Explain why the author chose to name the forest “The Forest of Hands and Teeth.”

__________________________________________

__________________________________________

__________________________________________

__________________________________________
Making Predictions
1. Read the first two pages of Chapter V (pp. 38–39). Describe what has happened.

2. Make a prediction about how this occurrence will affect Mary’s life.

After You Read
Checking Predictions
Review your prediction about how Mary’s life will be affected by Travis’s wound. What happened in these chapters to support your prediction?

What new prediction(s) can you make since reading these chapters?

Analyzing the Writing:
Using Effective Verbs
To convey meaning more effectively, writers use verbs that add power and specific detail to their descriptions. Sometimes these verbs add variety; sometimes they supply even more sense of what is taking place. Each of the following examples could use the verb say or says instead of the more specific one the author chose. For each, explain what the verb used provides that using the more general say or says would not.

1. “Travis,” I gasp. (p. 39) ________________________________

2. “Mary,” he whispers. (p. 39) ________________________________

3. “Mary!” Cass calls out. (p. 44) ________________________________

5. “Yes,” I respond, language feeling strange in my mouth after so many weeks of silence. (p. 48)

6. “Why would they lock me in if it was just someone hurt?” he breathes. (p. 56)

7. “I—I—” I stammer. “I thought we didn’t know what caused the Return.” (p. 63)

**Getting to Know the Characters**

1. How does the author show Sister Tabitha’s disapproval of Mary?

2. Give two examples showing that Travis understands what Mary thinks and feels.

3. In what ways are Harry and Cass alike?

4. What does the Outsider represent to Mary?

**Responding to the Story**

1. Mary faces two major issues as Chapter VIII concludes. What are they?
2. How do Sister Tabitha’s actions reinforce Mary’s rejection of the community’s beliefs?

---

**Social Studies Connection**

![Image of nurse with mural]

There have been real cases of large-scale infection throughout history. Some of them, like the Black Plague in the Middle Ages, were mysteries at the time. Others were recognized but could not be controlled by available medicine. Learn more about the Influenza Pandemic of 1918 (during World War I) that took more lives than the war.

What keywords would you use in an Internet search to find out about this topic?

In what ways was the situation similar to what seems to have happened in Mary’s world?

The risk Travis faces, as Mary’s mother did, is the risk of infection by the Unconsecrated. Explain how this process seems similar to infections that can occur in the real world.

---
Analyzing the Writing

Writers add a sense of reality to characters by making them more complex. Even Sister Tabitha, who seems to represent everything Mary dislikes, is not merely a simple character. Explain how each of the following passages add depth and reality to the character of Sister Tabitha.

1. “Prayer is always the best medicine,” she says and then she comes to the bed and with a tenderness I never thought possible she pulls the sheet down from Travis's body in order to examine his wounds. (page 40)

2. “Your mother used to tell you stories about life before the Return,” she says. “But did she ever tell you of murder? Of the pain and anguish? The heresy and hypocrisy? Wars, deceit, selfishness? Of people allowing human beings to die of hunger outside in the cold when they had warmth and food?” (page 67)

3. Sister Tabitha tucks a strand of hair back from my face, her hand resting on my cheek the way my mother used to do. “I am trying to keep you safe, but you must help me.” (page 69)

Thinking About Archetypes: Conflict

Common conflicts can be found in archetypal literature. Often the conflict has to do with family members: children who have problems with a parent or parents (including missing parents), with siblings, or with the family in general. Think of fairytales that use this conflict: Hansel and Gretel, Cinderella, Sleeping Beauty, etc. How does this conflict show up in The Forest of Hands and Teeth?

Another common conflict is a kind of test or trial that transforms the protagonist, usually involving the transition from childhood to adulthood. How does this conflict show up in Mary’s story?
Chapters IX–XII
(Impending Marriage)
pages 74–114

Before You Read
Making Predictions
At this point in *The Forest of Hands and Teeth*, two large issues dominate Mary’s life. She has deep feelings for Travis, yet she is committed to the Sisterhood. An Outsider, Gabrielle has somehow made her way to the village. Make predictions about what will happen next regarding these two relationships.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>About Travis, I predict:</th>
<th>What is the basis of your prediction?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>About Gabrielle, I predict:</th>
<th>What is the basis of your prediction?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Introducing Vocabulary
Using Context Clues
Find each of the words below by reading the page on which it is located. Read the passage in which the word appears and try to figure out its meaning by using the context of the passage. Use a dictionary to check your definitions.

1. somber (page 80)______________________________________________________
2. culmination (page 85)_________________________________________________
3. ramrod (page 91)_______________________________________________________
4. dormant (page 93)_____________________________________________________  
5. acquiesce (page 100)__________________________________________________
After You Read
Checking Predictions
Reread your predictions. Were they confirmed by the story? What information in these four chapters affected the outcome of your predictions?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

Getting to Know the Characters
1. Why does Sister Tabitha agree to let Mary leave the Sisterhood?
________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

2. How does the surprise about Brethlaw affect the relationship between Cass and Mary?
________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

3. How does Mary respond to Travis’s statement that he has heard stories of a life beyond the forest also?
________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

4. Why does Mary return to the underground areas of the Cathedral?
________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________
Analyzing the Writing

Similes
The author sometimes uses a simile to show how Mary feels about something. A simile is an expression using “like” or “as” to compare two things. Consider each of the similes below and explain what the comparison reveals about Mary’s emotion at the moment.

1. I am surprised that I don’t growl like a wounded animal cornered by dogs. (page 77)

2. But this kiss with Travis—it’s like waking up and being born and realizing what life is and can be. (page 93)

3. The air is damp, moldy, and my own breath sounds like a windstorm to my ears. (page 102)

4. And I continue to pace at the top of the hill, waiting for Travis to come claim me, time slipping around me like water over a rock. (page 111)

5.

Making Connections
1. Mary lives in a very different world than we do. Yet we recognize her feelings. What qualities about her are like those of young people from any age or place?

2. Mary faces an uncertain future. Which of her uncertainties are similar to those of people you know?
Before You Read
Making Predictions
Time is running out for Mary before she must marry Harry. What do you think will happen?

I predict: What is the basis for your prediction?

After You Read
Checking Predictions
In what ways was your prediction correct? What factors that you did not know about affected the accuracy of the prediction?

Mastering Vocabulary
Words with Latin Origins
Latin, the ancient language of the Romans, gave English many base words and combining forms. Examine the Latin root of each of the following words. Then write a brief definition of each word as it is used today.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Latin root and meaning</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>fidelity (page 116)</td>
<td>fides, faith</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>compression (page 128)</td>
<td>comprimere, to squeeze</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>decapitates (page 130)</td>
<td>caput, head</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sanctuary (page 132)</td>
<td>sanctus, sacred</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sustenance (page 135)</td>
<td>sustinere, to hold</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>carnage (page 135)</td>
<td>caro, flesh</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Getting to Know the Characters
1. Why does Sister Tabitha tell Mary that her mother prayed to have a baby after many failures?

2. Why does Mary consent to be Bound to Harry when she loves Travis?

3. What does Harry’s behavior during the attack on the town demonstrate about him?

4. As Sister Tabitha’s life ends, how does she conduct herself?

5. Why doesn’t Mary tell Cass about where Gabrielle came from and why she turned?

Science Connection
Gabrielle is different from other Unconsecrated. She is faster and stronger. The villagers worried that the Unconsecrated were changing. They wonder if Gabrielle could be the result of mutation.

In the real world, a mutation is a change in the genetic material known as DNA. Sometimes mutations cause changes that are for the better—and sometimes for the worse.

Use your library or the Internet to find out what kinds of things cause mutations to occur.

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Analyzing the Writing

Sometimes writers use *figurative expressions* to convey meaning. Figurative expressions are words or phrases used in a manner other than their usual or literal sense. Most of us frequently use figurative expressions in everyday speech. Explain what each of the following figurative expressions means.

1. I am *at war with myself.* (page 115)

2. But I still *stand my ground,* unwilling to let her see the effect she has had on me. (page 116)

3. All of this takes place *in the space between heartbeats* and I back away from the window . . . (page 126)

4. I think I see that flash of red again but I can’t be sure that it isn’t *my mind playing tricks on me.* (page 136)

Responding to the Story

1. How does the action in these chapters shift from Mary’s internal thoughts to the external world?

2. Did you read these chapters more slowly or more rapidly than you had read earlier ones? What accounts for the difference?

3. Do you think there is any chance that the townspeople can repel the attack and regain control of the village? Explain your response.

Chapters XVII–XX

(On the Run)
pages 147–180

Before You Read
Making Predictions
Forced out of the town, the band straggles down the paths. What personal conflicts do you think may occur between characters as the group moves?


After You Read
Checking Predictions
What new information changed the situation? How did it affect your predictions?


Mastering Vocabulary
Applying Language
You can learn the meaning of a word by looking it up or discovering it from context clues. Yet you will not have mastered the word until you can use it correctly on your own, in either written or spoken form. Use whatever means you wish to understand the meanings of the following words. Then use each in an original sentence.

1. comprehensible (page 149)  

2. at bay (page 152)  

3. clamoring (page 159)  

4. desolate (page 165)  

5. dexterity (page 168)  

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Analyzing the Writing

Information from Dialogue

Throughout most of the story, we get information from Mary's point of view through her interior thoughts. In some sequences, however, factual information comes from what the other characters say. These speeches may offer new information or describe the feelings of characters from points of view other than Mary's. Explain what each of the speeches below adds to the story that could not have come from Mary herself.

1. “It's gone” is all Jed says. “There’s no going back.” (page 150)

2. Harry’s cheeks flash red. “My father was the chief of the Guardians and he said nothing of this!” (page 151)

3. “Cass makes a good point,” Travis says. “If we take the left branch, there’s no way she can follow us.” (page 162)

4. “Beth is dead,” [Cass] says, not even bothering to look up at me. (page 170)

Responding to the Story

1. How does what happens to Beth change Jed?

2. The group seems trapped at the moment. What would you do in their situation?

3. Do you have an idea what the strange letters are that Mary keeps finding? Why doesn’t she have an idea?
Chapters XXI–XXIV
(The Village)
pages 181–219

Before You Read
Making Predictions
The group seems to be lost and trapped in the maze of pathways. How do you think they will escape from this situation?

On what evidence do you base this prediction?

After You Read
Checking Predictions
Did your prediction prove to be correct? What other evidence could you have used to make your prediction?

Mastering Vocabulary
Words with Multiple Meanings
Many words in English have more than one meaning. Understanding which meaning intended by an author is a key to comprehension. Below are words from these chapters that could have more than one meaning. For each, identify two possible meanings. Then place a checkmark in the box with the meaning the author intended in the text.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Meaning 1</th>
<th>Meaning 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>reconcile (page 184)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>elaborate (page 188)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dedicated (page 189)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>quiver (page 193)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>milling (page 215)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Analyzing the Writing
Varying Sentence Length
One technique the author often uses in *The Forest of Hands and Teeth* is varying the length of sentences. Especially when the pace of action is fast, she uses short sentences and even partial sentences to speed the reader along. Consider the contrast between short and long sentences in the following passage:

> But I do not wait.
> The afternoon sun is slipping through the sky when I'm forced to my knees, my breath heavy in my chest—my body protesting, spent and exhausted. The others finally catch up, panting.
> “It has to be here,” I tell them.
> And that is when I see the village through the trees. (pages 186–187)

Explain why the following sentences make you want to keep reading.

1. Until I hear someone yell. Until I hear my brother shout “Run!” Until I feel Travis’s hand grasp my arm, the sound of glass breaking by my head. (page 189)

2. But still he comes for me. His eyes locked on to me. (page 191)

3. This child could be my brother's. It could be my mother's. It could be Travis's and mine. Someone was her father. Someone held her as I do now. (page 194)

4. This is the last photo. A girl I have never seen. Who existed before the Return. In the ocean safe with her mother. (page 211)

Responding to the Story
1. Why does Mary seem almost sympathetic to Gabrielle at times?

2. What is your reaction toward the descriptions of the hideous Unconsecrated?
3. Why does Mary sometimes feel as if she should let the Unconsecrated get her?

4. In what ways does the relationship between Mary and Travis change during their time in the village?

5. What effect do the clothing and photographs Mary finds have on her?

---

**Math Connection**

Mary is on the verge of understanding the numbering system on the paths. You recognize them as Roman numerals. Roman numerals are letters that represent numbers. The system was in common use throughout the days of the Roman Empire and in Europe until the tenth century CE.

Find information about Roman numerals and complete the chart below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Roman</th>
<th>Arabic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>XIV</td>
<td>_____</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CCX</td>
<td>_____</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LVII</td>
<td>_____</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>_____</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>_____</td>
<td>750</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>_____</td>
<td>2009</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Beginning about 900 CE, Roman numerals were increasingly replaced by the Arabic numerals we use today (which are based on a Hindu system). What disadvantages of the system of Roman numerals led to their replacement?
Before You Read
Making Predictions
Even though she is with Travis, Mary feels restless. What do you think will happen now?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I predict:</th>
<th>What is the basis for your prediction?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

After You Read
Checking Predictions
Reread your predictions. How were they confirmed or refuted by the story?

Getting to Know the Characters
1. In these chapters, we get to see and hear Travis and better understand him as a character. Use the Venn diagram below to compare and contrast him with his brother, Harry.

![Venn diagram]

Travis

Harry

both

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2. Why does Travis say he is not sure either he or Harry will be enough for Mary? What does he mean by that?

Analyzing the Writing: Action
Most of these four chapters consist of heart-stopping suspense as the Unconsecrated break into the house, and Mary and Travis escape. Summarize the action in Chapters XXV through XXIX in ten brief sentences or phrases.
1. 
2. 
3. 
4. 
5. 
6. 
7. 
8. 
9. 
10. 

11. Which part of these chapters was most exciting or compelling to you? Be specific.

12. What is the importance of the old newspaper that Mary finds in the attic?
Making Connections

*The Forest of Hands and Teeth* is set in a dark future. Do you believe the health of the world’s population as a whole will improve or decline in the future? What factors influence your opinion?

---

Thinking About Archetypes: Characters

One of the most interesting elements of archetypal literature is characterization. Certain kinds of characters commonly are part of the cast within the story. The following list is but a sampling of kinds of characters. Read the description and then decide which, if any, character in *The Forest of Hands and Teeth* represents that archetype. Then use this material to write an essay: “Character Archetypes in *The Forest of Hands and Teeth.*”

The **hero/orphan/pilgrim**: the main character who is abandoned or alone and must undertake the journey

The **martyr**: the one who puts others’ needs and safety above his or her own and often gives sacrificially—often his or her life—to help further the cause

The **innocent**: the inexperienced person or child who needs protection and guidance in order to grow up

The **mother figure**: the one who provides comfort, guidance, wisdom, and help when needed; is sometimes too protective or controlling

The **monster(s)**: the person, people, creatures, or force that is threatening the others in the story and sets up the main conflict

The **warrior**: the courageous one who is willing to fight and take on directly the evil that threatens; is sometimes the same character as the hero or martyr, but not always
Chapters XXX–XXIII
(Escape)
pages 259–288

Before You Read
Making Predictions
All the survivors are now on the same platform. What do you predict will happen as the story continues?

After You Read
Checking Predictions
Did you anticipate correctly what would happen next? What surprises did these four chapters bring?

Mastering Vocabulary
Synonyms
A synonym is a word with the same, or nearly the same, meaning as another. Writers choose particular words for many reasons. Some may want the shade of meaning that a synonym may supply. Other words may provide a better rhythm or sound in a sentence, or be more realistic if used in dialogue. Determine the meanings of the following words, and supply a one-word synonym for each. Use the context of the passage in which the word appears to help you.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Synonym</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>pronounced (page 184)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>consuming (page 266)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dispatch (page 270)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>desiccated (page 279)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>meager (page 281)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>deluge (page 281)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Analyzing the Writing

Sensory Language

Sensory language is language that appeals to one of the five senses. Words that create images or impressions that appeal to the senses of sight, sound, hearing, touch, and taste make the scene on the page seem more vivid and real.

The air is so dry it crackles, drowning out the moans of the Unconsecrated. (page 266)

In this example, the senses of touch and hearing are called into play. We feel the dry air. We hear the crackle of the flames.

Find at least two examples of how the author uses each of the following senses in these chapters:

Sight
1. 
2. 

Hearing
1. 
2. 

Touch
1. 
2. 

Foreshadowing

Foreshadowing is a technique in which writers give hints of what may be coming in the story. As you look back at the events in these chapters, what hints has the author provided that foreshadow what Travis might do as the fire closes in on the platform?

How does foreshadowing help you make predictions about what may occur in the novel?

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Responding to the Story
1. When they are again united on the platform, Cass accuses the group, saying that everything is always about Mary—for Harry, for Travis, and for all of them. How much truth is there in this statement?

2. What role does the fire play in moving the story forward?

3. Were you surprised at the way the group escaped the platform? Why or why not?

4. Why does Travis make the choice to act as he does?

5. Why does Mary insist on taking the final action toward Travis?

Social Studies Connection

Current Events
Each year in the western United States, wildfires destroy thousands of acres, hundreds of homes, and often take humans’ and animals’ lives. How do these fires get started and why are they so difficult to control?

Use newspapers, magazines, or the Internet to learn more about wildfires—both the negative and positive aspects of them. You may wish to visit a library and ask a librarian to help you perform a periodical search.

Compile data on the place, time, size, cause, and result of some of these fires. Use the chart like the one at the right to keep track of your data. Then write a summary of your findings.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Forest Fires</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Where</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Chapters XXXIV–XXXVI
(The Ocean)
pages 289–308

Before You Read
Making Predictions
In these final chapters, Mary comes to the end of the fences. What do you think awaits her on the other side? How will the novel end?

After You Read
Checking Predictions
Reread your predictions. Did the story end as you thought it would? In what ways was it different?

Analyzing the Writing
Characterization
All the major characters in *The Forest of Hands and Teeth* are dynamic characters—they each change as a result of things that happen to them in the story. For each of the following characters, describe a few of the changes that take place as a result of the struggles they faced.

Mary

Travis

Harry

Jed

Cass

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Responding to the Story

1. Why did Mary feel compelled to go on beyond the fences?

2. Why did Jed follow her?

3. What really happens to Mary as she has her dream?

4. Were you surprised that the Mudo exist in the area around the ocean? Why or why not?

5. What do you think will happen to Mary in the future?

Making Connections
Zombies, of course, are not real, but they are Mary’s main challenge in the novel. What “real” challenges does she face that are similar to the challenges that you or many young people face?
Wrap-up

Reviewing Predictions
Turn to page 6 of this guide and review your first predictions. Complete the chart on that page.

Analyzing the Writing
1. How would you describe the writing style to someone who has not read the book? (Focus only on the style, not the events of the plot.)

2. Author Carrie Ryan says that she would like to write more books with similar stories. Would you like to read them? Why or why not?

Thinking About the Genre
Action/Adventure
1. Do you have to believe in zombies or the possibility of zombies to find the book exciting? Why or why not?

2. How does the story depend on its futuristic time setting? Could the story have been set in an imaginary place or in a fictional past?

3. There are elements of many genres in this book: horror, romance, fantasy, science fiction, and action/adventure, to name a few. Which genre would you say the book best fits? Support your answer with details from the story.
Thinking About the Story Elements

Explain each of the following story elements as they apply to *The Forest of Hands and Teeth*.

1. Using the section headings in this Guide (see the Table of Contents), summarize the story. Write a synopsis, or story summary, on a separate sheet of paper.

2. Stories often have a sense of **rising action** that reaches a high point, or **climax**, followed by a **resolution**. What do you consider to be the climax of the story and why? Is the tale resolved? Does Mary achieve her dreams?

3. Is this book really about monsters? What do you think is the purpose of the book? What do you think is the theme of the book?

Making Connections

1. Through first-person point of view, we get a deep look into Mary’s life. What do you have in common with her? In what ways is she different from you? Would you have responded to situations the same way she did?

2. Fear is a powerful motive in *The Forest of Hands and Teeth*, yet we probably could guess from the beginning that the Unconsecrated are not going to get Mary. What is it that makes people enjoy reading these kinds of books?

3. Though you do not live in a world with zombies trying to get through fences to get you, what can you learn from this book? What will you take from it into your own life?
Library Applications

Research

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

Have students learn more about the way the government responds to health threats by researching the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Have students learn about:

- The CDC’s history and mission
- Various branches of the CDC
- Research programs and studies of the CDC
- Funding sources and support
- Citizen and consumer information available from the CDC
- Important current issues to the CDC

The CDC maintains an extensive Internet presence, which can be accessed via any search engine. Also, CDC publications and bulletins are available at most libraries. Students may wish to focus on a particular medical topic of interest and do research on that, using the CDC resources. Guide students in effective research skills, including locating and evaluating sources, especially on the Internet.

Writing/Technology

The Dreams of Our Ancestors

Mary’s life is deeply affected by her mother’s dreams. She learns, however, that she did not know as much about her mother as she would have liked to. Ask students to choose a parent, guardian, other relative, family friend, or other significant person in their life about whom to write a life story. The life story should be more than a chronology. It should include:

- General biographical information about the subject
- The dreams and goals the subject had as a young person
- Significant memories and important moments that the subject recalls
- Stories, customs, and beliefs gained from the subject’s ancestors
- What the subject values most in life now
- The subject’s advice to this generation

The product should be written, but there is no reason that it could not be accompanied by photographs, artwork, or even videos or audio recordings of the subject. The intention is to discover and preserve the mind of one generation for the next.
Sharing with Younger Students

Storytelling

Storytelling is an important part of *The Forest of Hands and Teeth*, not only in the narrator’s first-person execution of the tale, but also in the role that Mary’s mother’s stories play in motivating her. Help students understand this ancient form of passing information by having them become storytellers for younger students. Have them:

- Choose appropriate stories for the age group. (The Coyote tales of the American Southwest, for example, offer excellent material for storytellers. Students might also write or share stories from their own lives.)
- Practice reading the tales aloud until they can be retold in student’s own words.
- Learn to speak dramatically, using tone, volume, and pauses to make the tale-telling as much a part of the entertainment as the tale itself.
- Engage the audience, using eye contact, movement, and gestures to capture and hold attention.

Good storytelling is acting, so another option might be to have pairs or groups of students act out or present a story as a playlet, even including simple props or costumes. Audio or video examples of storytelling might help students understand the art.

Using Local Resources

Fun in Your Own Backyard

Mary hungers to see the ocean and risks her life to find out what it’s like. Have students create a multimedia presentation about your local area for someone who had never been there. Students could present:

- Photographs
- Video clips on computers (if available)
- Maps (topographical, geographical, political)
- Points of interest
- Historical facts
- Posters

The intention is to give a sense of what life is like in your area to a complete stranger. Local libraries, Chambers of Commerce, tourist bureaus, and students’ own knowledge are all sources of information.
Suggestions for Further Reading

*The Forest of Hands and Teeth* is Carrie Ryan’s first book, although she has other works in progress. Action/adventure novels involving supernatural and post-apocalyptic themes are numerous and popular today. Here are some suggestions you might like to check out:


  (sequel to come: *Catching Fire*, September 2009)


About archetypes in literature:

### Correlations to National Standards

#### For Grades 9–12

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<tr>
<th>Content Area</th>
<th>Standard Number</th>
<th>Standard Objective</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<td>Languages Arts: English</td>
<td>NL–ENG.K–12.1</td>
<td>Reading for Perspective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Languages Arts: English</td>
<td>NL–ENG.K–12.2</td>
<td>Reading for Understanding</td>
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<tr>
<td>Languages Arts: English</td>
<td>NL–ENG.K–12.3</td>
<td>Evaluation Strategies</td>
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<tr>
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<td>NL–ENG.K–12.4</td>
<td>Communication Skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Languages Arts: English</td>
<td>NL–ENG.K–12.5</td>
<td>Communication Strategies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Languages Arts: English</td>
<td>NL–ENG.K–12.6</td>
<td>Applying Knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Languages Arts: English</td>
<td>NL–ENG.K–12.8</td>
<td>Developing Research Skills</td>
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<tr>
<td>Languages Arts: English</td>
<td>NL–ENG.K–12.12</td>
<td>Applying Language Skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mathematics</td>
<td>NM–NUM.9–12.1</td>
<td>Understand Numbers, Ways of Representing Numbers, Relationships and Number Systems</td>
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<tr>
<td>Social Studies: World History</td>
<td>NSS–WH.5–Era 4</td>
<td>Expanding Zones of Exchange and Encounter 300–1000 CE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Studies: World History</td>
<td>NSS–WH.5–Era 5</td>
<td>Intensified Hemispheric Interactions, 1000–1500 CE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Studies: United States History</td>
<td>NSS–USH.5–12</td>
<td>Contemporary United States (1968 to Present)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Physical Education &amp; Health</td>
<td>NPH–H.9–12.2</td>
<td>Health Information, Products and Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Education &amp; Health</td>
<td>NPH–H.9–12.5</td>
<td>Using Communication Skills to Promote Health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problem Solving</td>
<td>NM–PROB.PK–12.4</td>
<td>Monitor and Reflect on the Process of Mathematical Problem Solving</td>
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<tr>
<td>Science</td>
<td>NS.9–12.3</td>
<td>Life Science</td>
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<td>NS.9–12.6</td>
<td>Science in Personal and Social Perspectives</td>
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<td>Theater</td>
<td>NA–T.9–12.1</td>
<td>Script Writing by Planning and Recording Improvisations Based on Personal Experience and Heritage, Imagination, Literature and History</td>
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<tr>
<td>Theater</td>
<td>NA–T.9–12.2</td>
<td>Acting by Assuming Roles and Interacting in Improvisations</td>
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