

The House With Chicken Legs

Synopsis

All Marinka wants is a normal life, but this isn't easy when you live in a house with chicken legs and your grandmother is Baba Yaga, whose job is to guide the dead into the next world. And one day Marinka is expected to become the next Guardian of The Gate between this world and the next, although she just wishes that her house with chicken legs would stay somewhere long enough for her to make some friends.

But when Marinka befriends Nina, the spirit of a young girl who refuses to go through The Gate, she discovers a shocking secret that changes everything. And as her world is turned upside down, Marinka learns that the life of an ordinary girl isn't necessarily any simpler than the life of a Yaga. Can Marinka escape her destiny, or will she be able to find a new way to live between two worlds?

Discussion Topics

1. What does Marinka think about the prospect of becoming Guardian of The Gate? How does she show her feelings about this?

2. At different times in the story, Marinka tries to make friends with Benjamin and Salma. What's your impression of Benjamin and Salma? How are their characters different? Which one do you think is the better friend for Marinka – and why?

3. What similarities do Nina and Marinka share? How do you think they help each other?

4. What is the shocking discovery Marinka makes and how does she find this out?

What does Baba Yaga tell her after she makes this discovery? How would you react in Marinka's situation?

5. How does the Old Yaga help Marinka? You may find it useful to think about:

- the stories the Old Yaga tells Marinka
- the questions she asks and the advice she gives
- how the Old Yaga behaves.

6. The house with chicken legs is as much of a character in the story as Marinka and Baba Yaga. What's your impression of the relationship between Marinka and the house? You may find it useful to think about:

- How Marinka treats the house and the way it behaves towards her.
- What you learn about their relationship when Marinka was younger.
- The impression you get of the house's personality and how this changes.
- How Marinka and the house act towards each other after Baba Yaga has gone through The Gate.
- How Marinka reacts when the house is set on fire.

8. 'In this universe full of possibilities there has to be another way of making things right, without being forced to accept a fate I don't want' (page 289). Think about the end of the book. Do you think Marinka has managed to achieve this?

Further Reading

- The Girl Who Speaks Bear – Sophie Anderson
- The Monstrous Child – Francesca Simon
- Who Let the Gods Out? – Maz Evans
- The Train to Impossible Places – P.G. Bell
- Sky Song - Abi Elphinstone
- I The Storm Keeper's Island - Catherine Doyle
- Odd and the Frost Giants - Neil Gaiman
- The Graveyard Book – Neil Gaiman
- The Thirteen Treasures – Michelle Harrison