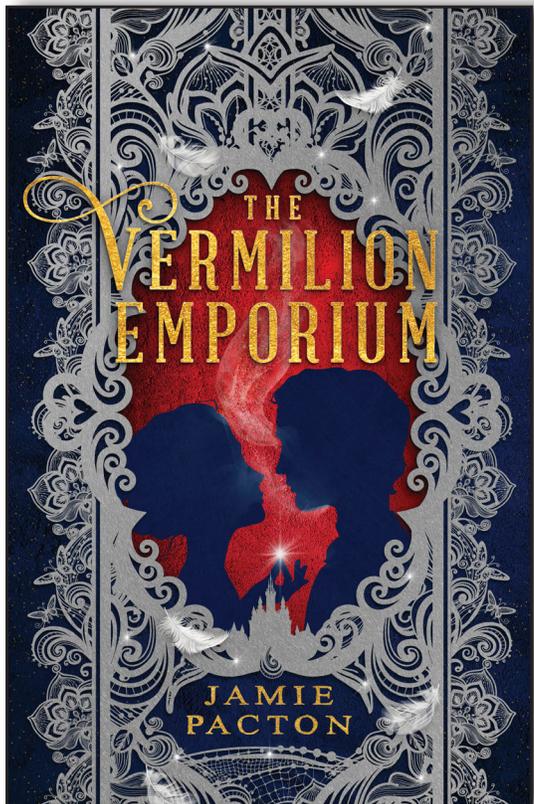


READING GROUP
GUIDE

Vermilion Emporium

by Jamie Pacton

ABOUT THE BOOK

The heart-wrenching story of *The Radium Girls* meets the enchanting world of *Howl's Moving Castle* in a story of timeless love and deadly consequences.

On the morning Twain, a lonely boy with a knack for danger, discovers a strand of starlight on the cliffs outside Severon, a mysterious curiosity shop appears in town. Meanwhile, Quinta, the ordinary daughter of an extraordinary circus performer, chases rumors of the shop, the Vermilion Emporium. When Quinta meets Twain outside the Emporium, two things happen: One, Quinta starts to fall for this starlight boy, who uses his charm to hide his scars. Two, they enter the shop and discover a book that teaches them how to weave starlight into lace. As Quinta and Twain search the Emporium for the secret to starlight's origins, however, they discover the secret might not have been lost—but destroyed. And likely, for good reason.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- How is telling Twain and Quinta's stories in alternating chapters an especially effective way to reveal more about their characters? Discuss why the novel opens with Twain. Would you also consider Quinta a main character? Identify the antagonists in the novel. What is their role in advancing the plot?
- Why is Twain Vernier interested in leaving Severon? How does he intend to get money for passage?
- Twain is grieving the death of his younger brother, Zand. Does he blame himself for Zand's death? Why?
- Explain what Twain means when he tells Quinta, "We all have rooms too dark to walk in" (p. 51). What are his "dark rooms"? Identify her "dark rooms."
- Describe Quinta Aurore. Why does she want to join the Severon Witches Society? Quinta believes that magic is the key to power, prestige, and fashion. What is her primary reason for wanting magic? What does she do with it when she finds it? Discuss how her view of magic changes by the end of the novel.
- What is the power of the starlight and moonshadow? Why does Quinta wear the bottle of moonshadow on a ribbon around her neck? Where might Quinta find the key to the power of the moonshadow? How are starlight and moonshadow used for both good and evil?
- At what point does Quinta learn that the moonshadow killed her mother? Debate whether this is a cautionary revelation.

- What is the power of the starlight song? Explain why Twain is the only person who can hear the song.
- Discuss the scene where Twain and Quinta meet. What do they have in common? Describe their differences. At first, they are tentative with one another. Twain isn't a trusting person, but he really needs to trust Quinta. When does he begin to trust her?
- At what point do Twain and Quinta reveal their feelings for one another? How are they both surprised at the idea of "love"? What is the ultimate test of their love? How is it love that gives Twain the strength to save Quinta's life?
- What is significant about the Orpiment palace? Explain the Vermilion Emporium. What are Twain and Quinta's reactions when they are granted entrance to each?
- Quinta thinks the Emporium smells like time, Twain says it smells like loss, and Quinta says it smells like memory. What specific scenes from the novel show that the Emporium represents time, loss, and memory? Twain and Quinta are told that the Emporium becomes what it needs to be. Chart the many times the Emporium changes and why the change is needed.
- Who are the scholars? What is their role in Severon society? Twain's parents and Zand were scholars. Debate whether his parents were disappointed that Twain wasn't a scholar. Who are Gustave and Henri? What is their role in the story? Cite evidence that they are "evil" characters in the eyes of Twain.
- Discuss the scene where Twain and Quinta meet the Casorina. How does she sense that they have a secret? Explain her special interest in them. Why is she so interested in having a starlight gown for the Scholar's Ball? What is her reaction when she sees that Quinta has made herself a starlight gown? Discuss what her reaction reveals about her character. Explain her role in bringing the novel to a conclusion.
- While exploring the Emporium, Quinta wonders, "If bodies were the books of our lives, what would her spine say?" (p. 59). For each character in the novel, write a title for the spine of the book of their life.

ABOUT THE CREATOR



Jamie Pacton is an award-nominated young adult and middle grade author who writes swoony, funny, magical books across genres. *The Vermilion Emporium* is her YA fantasy debut. When she's not writing, she's teaching college English, obsessively reading obscure history, hiking, baking, or playing video games. Visit her at JamiePacton.com.