



The Impossible Destiny of Cutie Grackle

by Shawn K. Stout

ABOUT THE BOOK

When an unkindness of ravens starts following Cutie Grackle, she begins to wonder if the family curse really exists and what it has to do with her.

Struggling to keep her stomach from constantly grumbling with hunger as she makes her way around Smitte Mountain, Cutie follows the raven-delivered trinket clues that pull her into the past and help her unravel her destiny and do what her mother could not: break the family curse.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Define destiny and discuss its meaning. Describe how you feel about destiny and what you believe your destiny is. How is destiny influenced by choices?
- Do you believe in curses? How do Cutie and, later, Galen come to believe in them?
- What part does Toot Jefferson play in Cutie's life? How does her leaving set up Cutie's need to be even more self-reliant?
- Discuss the significance of the ravens and the magic they provide throughout the book. How do they play a role in Cutie's search and her life? Describe the backstory of how the ravens became enmeshed in the curse.
- Figurative language plays an important part in the narrative of the story. Select two to three examples and describe how they contribute to the narrative and why they work so well in that particular section of the book.
- Discuss the novel's structure and how the raven narratives contribute to the pace and revealing of the story's information. Could the information have been delivered as well in a different structure, such as moving from beginning to end in order? Explain your ideas.
- Describe Cutie Grackle and the characteristics that make her able to survive and find her destiny. How do the people around her affect her ability to do so? Discuss the effects other people have on her life and how they facilitate or impair her ability to thrive.
- Discuss whether the map at the front of the book is helpful as you read. Is it necessary? Explain.
- Describe the situation where Cutie has the opportunity to steal and discuss her feelings about it. Is stealing ever justifiable? Why or why not?
- Explain the butterfly effect Galen describes. Look up the meaning. What butterfly effect takes place in the story? How do you feel about the idea of the butterfly effect?
- Why do Cutie and Galen become friends? What kind of person makes a true friend? Do friendships change over time, and do you think Cutie and Galen will remain friends?
- Describe how Horace's love of art affected his relationship with his family as a young boy. How does this love of art come full circle after the curse is lifted?

- Discuss Charlie and his personality. What is his relationship with Horace and are they friends? How does Charlie play a part in the curse and why is he protected from it?
- How does the book define *luminary*? Is that something anyone can be or do? Do you feel you can be a luminary?
- Cutie has several opportunities to reunite with her mother in different ways. How does she have to be satisfied with these ways and is she happy about it?

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Shawn K. Stout is the author of several books for young readers, including *A Tiny Piece of Sky* (Philomel/PRH), which was a Bank Street Best Children's Book. Shawn holds an MFA in Writing for Children & Young Adults from Vermont College of Fine Arts. She lives in Maryland with her family. Visit her at ShawnKStout.com.