

THE SONGWEAVER'S VOW

BY LAURA VANARENDONK BAUGH

DISCUSSION GUIDE

CHARACTERS

What did you think of Euthalia? How did she grow throughout the book? What do you think were the most defining moments in this process?

Let's talk about other characters. Which were your favorites? Who surprised you? Did your feelings change about any characters as you read? If so, which ones, how, and why?

How does the past shape characters' decisions? Does this benefit or hinder them?

Loki — evil incarnate, or misunderstood antihero? How do you feel about him, and why?

STRUCTURE

Did you engage with the story immediately, or did it take some time to get involved? Did you find the plot predictable or surprising?

Who (or what) was (or were) the antagonist(s) in this story?

What emotions did you feel as you read? Did you find this story satisfying? Upsetting? Cathartic? Why?

Is the ending satisfying?

What was your favorite scene or dialogue? Why?

THEMES

What themes did you discover in the story?

What symbols did you find as you read? Did you feel they added depth to the story or its themes?

What kind of structure did the story have? Did it return to particular settings or scenes? Was there similarity or contrast to heighten intensity or meaning?

Have you read other books by this author? If so, how does this compare to others in theme?

THE MYTHS

This story is a retelling of the Greek myth of Eros and Psyche. What parallels did you notice? Did you find it effective to set the location in a different time and place than ancient Greece? How did you read the intersection of Greek and Norse mythologies?

What other myths or legends have you seen in new settings?

Were you previously familiar with the Norse myths referenced in this book? If so, did they add or detract from this particular story?

THE TASKS

Psyche was set by Aphrodite a number of tasks to complete in the original legend.

1. Sorting an enormous pile of seeds (assisted by ants)
2. Collecting wool from the dangerous sheep
3. Bringing water from the River Styx
4. Returning from the underworld with a box containing the beauty of Persephone

What parallels can you see with Euthalia's journey?

FUN TIDBITS

VIDAR'S BOOT

Vidar's smashing entry into Eljudnir and kicking of snakes is not entirely incidental. In Norse myth, Vidar has a magical boot, made of all the scrap shoe leather in the world, with which he braces against the jaws of Fenrir when he fights and kills the great wolf at Ragnarok. While we don't see that boot in action in the worlds-ending battle, it gets a nod in the snake-stomping scene.

THE NORNIR

Urd = what once was

Verdandi = what is coming into being

Skuld = what shall be

While the three Nornir are not strictly associated with past, present, and future, there is a certain connection with each, and the author subtly played with their names and roles. Note that Urd generally speaks of the past, Verdandi generally speaks in present tense of what is happening now, and Skuld speaks more of decisions for the future.

Euthalia shook her head. "Tell me clearly — can this be stopped?"

"No," Skuld answered. "The future must be paid."

"But it need not be paid now," said Verdandi.

They watched her, waiting. The words caught at Euthalia. "Then it can be put off?" she asked breathlessly.

"It is not hard to change the pattern of a cloth not yet woven."

"How can I stop it?"

Urd smiled, calculating. "How was it started?"

THE REUNION

When Vidar finds stricken Euthalia in Helheim, he reaches down to her and she reaches up, and they are described exactly like the famous Antonio Canova sculpture of Eros and Psyche. (You can see it on the author's [Pinterest page](https://www.pinterest.com/pin/165014773820176733/) for the subject, <https://www.pinterest.com/pin/165014773820176733/>).