

IGNITE THE SUN

HANNA C. HOWARD

EDUCATOR'S GUIDE FOR GRADES 7-12
CREATED BY JENNIFER JOWETT

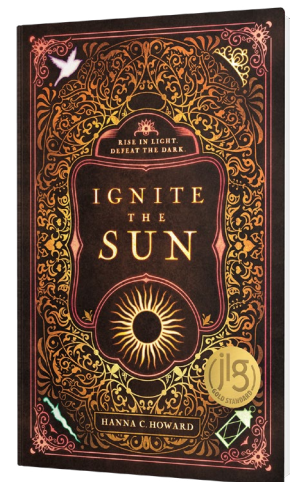
“NEVER HAD I SEEN COLORS LIKE THESE: COLORS THAT BREATHED, DANCED, SANG. BURNED” (255)

SUMMARY (BLINK):

Once upon a time, there was something called the sun ... In a kingdom ruled by a witch, the sun is just part of a legend about Light-filled days of old. But now sixteen-year-old Siria Nightingale is headed to the heart of the darkness to try and restore the Light—or lose everything trying.

Siria Nightingale has never seen the sun. That's because Queen Iyzabel shrouded the kingdom in shadow upon her ascent to the throne, with claims it would protect her subjects from the dangerous Light.

The Darkness has always left Siria uneasy, and part of her still longs for the stories of the Light-filled days she once listened to alongside her best friend Linden, told in secret by Linden's grandfather. But Siria's need to please her strict and demanding parents means embracing the dark and heading to the royal city—the very center of Queen Izybel's power—for a chance at a coveted placement at court. And what Siria discovers at the Choosing Ball sends her on a quest toward the last vestiges of Light, alongside a ragtag group of rebels who could help her restore the sun ... or doom the kingdom to shadow forever.



Ignite the Sun is:

- A YA fantasy adventure that is exciting and unique, right down to its metallic book cover
- An allegorical exploration of the struggle with anxiety and depression
- Perfect for readers 13 and up

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:



Hanna C. Howard spent most of her childhood wondering how she might avoid growing up, and eventually solved the conundrum by becoming an artist and a writer. She considers tea an essential food group, has more books than shelf-space, and thinks the ultimate geek triumvirate is Harry Potter, Lord of the Rings, and Doctor Who. She lives in Tulsa, Oklahoma with her husband, their two Disreputable Dogs, and one cat skilled in the Martial Arts.

FANTASY

The genre of fantasy is rich and varied. Settings include world-building that allows readers to explore imaginary places through characters as diverse as elves, nymphs, or talking animals. Often magic plays a prevalent role as does the conflict between good and evil.

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PRE-READING ACTIVITIES

There are several fairytale elements that occur within the novel. Yarrow shares a story in the prologue that begins with "Once upon a time, there was something called the sun (4). This is followed with curses and transformations on birthdays. Students will likely notice other fairytale connections as they read. Exploring these pre-reading activities to draw on students' existing knowledge, along with the pre-reading questions, assists students in connecting with the novel.

FAIRYTALES RETOLD: Divide students into small groups. Give each group one magazine and one fairytale. Tell students they must work together to recreate the elements of their fairytale using only ten photos/images from the magazine. They may consider including these elements: unusual character, strange settings, theme, magic, universal truth, happy ending, good vs evil. Students will likely explore images that work symbolically - a wallet for a bag of gold, for example. Have them glue the images to paper and write a short summary of the fairytale that incorporates each of their selected images. They could share their re-telling with the class.

90 SECOND FAIRYTALES: Have students work in small groups to retell a fairytale through video. They may act it out, create puppets, utilize images from a magazine or make drawings. The videos could be done as stop-motion, live action, etc.

PRE-READING QUESTIONS

1. Do you believe things are inherently good or bad?
Explain your belief.
2. What has been your biggest challenge in life thus far?
How did you overcome it?
3. What is your first memory of a fairytale or fantasy character? What do you remember most about it?

4. Would you agree that you have to go through dark times to appreciate the good aspects of life? Why or why not?
5. Describe a situation in your life when you were afraid.
What allowed you to get through this time?

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.8.4, 9-10.4, 11-12.4; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.8.5, 9-10.5, 11-12.5]

DURING READING

SIMILES, IMAGERY, AND FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE

Hanna Howard masterfully crafts sentences using comparisons as a way to add layered detail to this fantasy. Because similes allow readers to envision the world the author creates as they read, they are an effective way to develop imagery (definitions and a list of similes are provided below some optional activities).

ARGUMENTATIVE ESSAY: Have students select two similes (or give them a pair). They should write an argumentative essay comparing the two while considering which simile best describes or captures an image?

SIMILE STRIPS: Using the list of similes, cut them into strips and drop one off to each student, making sure that at least three students have the same simile. Have students draw the image. They should then compare their drawings with students who had the same simile, discussing and reflecting upon commonalities and differences. What enabled them to envision the simile? Where were the similarities? What caused their drawings to be different?

SKETCH NOTING: Have students find similes as they read. They should create a sketch noting page that illustrates these similes. Discuss which similes were most effective and easiest to envision.

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DEFINITIONS:

Figurative Language - using language in its non-typical way, allowing readers to see something in a new, unusual way

Imagery - vivid pictures created through words using sensory details or figurative language

Simile - comparison of two different things using like or as

SIMILE LIST	
the unwound strings of his fiddle sprawling like insect antennae into the air (4)	the bow flew over the strings like a flame dancing on the wick of a candle (124)
gray eyebrows look so much like caterpillars I half expected them to crawl right off his face (4)	as her words sank into me, warm and rich as steamed milk, everything else faded to insignificance (142)
kohl painted eyes glittered like jewels in deep water (14)	the hard expression loosened like dry earth beneath a sudden rain (168)
my anger and resentment building up like bracken clogging a bend in a river (43)	I felt like a fragile stem swaying alone in a strong wind (182)
we toppled over each other like rag dolls (46)	leaves fell away like feathers from a molting bird (229)
Milla hugged me briefly, her fleeting embrace like birds' wings (55)	I crumbled toward Yarrow, one knee banging the ground and the other jutting alongside me like a broken wing (233)
a worry for Yarrow seared like an open wound (59)	energy poured into me, as welcome as water to a dry throat (237)
a thousand horrible fates paraded like ghastly marionettes through my imagination (59)	Elegy was curled like a gray cat in an armchair by the cold hearth (241)

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.8.1, 9-10.1, 11-12.1; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.8.2, 9.2-10.2; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.8.1, 9-10.1, 11-12.1; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.8.1, 9-10.1, 11-12.1; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.8.5, 9-10.5, 11-12.5]

CONFLICT (LIGHT VS DARK)

Fantasies often explore the conflict (the struggle between opposing forces) between good and evil found within humanity and the world. Symbolically, this can be done through light and dark imagery.

Hanna Howard begins the novel with imagery meant to capture the tension between opposing forces. After reading the prologue, ask students to describe how the author shows light. By comparison, Chapter One immerses readers through descriptions of darkness. Have students share examples that they find after finishing the chapter.

- Light Examples: (fire in the hearth, laughter, Yarrow's eyes warm and sparkling, pipe glowing orange)
- Dark Examples: (day is dark, evening, description of darkness denser than tar, sweeping drive like a black river, black tunic, darkened window, obsidian band, dark moor, dark shape of carriage)

*Note that Siria is the touch of light here and she gathers a lantern to take with her to dinner (9)

Ask students to watch for the use of light and dark and how the imagery shows conflict as the novel progresses. They may also want to note how grays and violets are used and what these colors may symbolize in this conflict between light and dark. Students should discuss their findings.

Areas to consider:

- Siria drops the scrap of parchment (Linden's note) into the glowing embers, where it began to smoke and curl (15)
- The lights of Yarrow and Linden's cottage glow against the darkness as she leaves (16)
- Gildenbrook... blurred by like smudged charcoal (16)
- Queen Iyzabel's enchantment began within her seat of power and from there spread out over the kingdom like spilled ink (17)
- Vernal equinox (69) the point of spring when the sun is directly overhead and day and night are equal
- Description of the banshee - all in grays (116)
- Night Wyrms - a devil-like creature (134)
- Elegy's eyes are purple
- the mountains are purples and grays (184)
- violet-tinged clouds (194)

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- the color of the sky became more purple than blue, a gentle indigo (253)
- Leaving behind a sky covered in soft, purple cloud (260)

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.8.1, 9-10.1, 11-12.1; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.8.2, 9.2-10.2; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.8.1, 9-10.1, 11-12.1]

SYMBOLISM

Symbols represent ideas and qualities. Often authors have backstory for each of their characters. This backstory can include the history behind a name or what a name might represent. Ask students to look into the background of various characters' names. How does the background provide more insight into each character? How do the characters' names work symbolically? They may create a chart similar to the one below.

NAME	ORIGIN	MEANING
Siria	Persian	sun-bright, glowing
Nightingale	Anglo-Saxon (bird)	night songstress
Helena	Greek	bright, shining light
Yarrow	Old English (plant)	longstanding symbol of love, especially everlasting love, protective, healing
Ash	Old English (tree)	strength, power, longevity, endurance
Linden	Old English (tree)	love, fidelity, protection
Elegy	Middle French	lament for the dead

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.8.5, 9-10.5, 11-12.5]

THEME (COURAGE)

Courage is defined as strength in the face of pain or grief; the ability to do something which frightens one. Siria continues to recognize and develop courage throughout her character arc. Choose one of these quotes and write an essay explaining how courage defines her.

- It made me feel like I'd become everything I'd been taught to fear* (57)
- I've found you can do just about anything when you have no other choice* (109)
- Being afraid doesn't make you a coward... Everyone's afraid of things. It's how you react that makes you a coward* (122)
- You're not a coward. You're just not being as brave as you could be* (122)
- I could not - would not - be ruled by my fear. I could use it, I could heed its advice, I could even let it fuel me... but I could not allow it to control me* (153)
- But staying would neither make nor keep me brave* (208)
- What would I do now if I knew for certain I would soon be dead? If I knew I had nothing left to lose?* (253)
- I was a mere speck on the endless scroll of time* (254)

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.8.1, 9-10.1, 11-12.1; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.8.2, 9.2-10.2; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.8.1, 9-10.1, 11-12.1]

FAIRYTALE CONNECTIONS

Ask students to watch for elements of fairytales as they are reading and to make connections with other fairytales. They may choose to create a chart like this one. A few examples are offered.

QUOTE/EXAMPLE	CONNECTION
"Iyzabel cursed the knowledge some-time around your fifth birthday" (38)	Sleeping Beauty's curse befalls her on her birthday
"My satin slippers were long gone, lost somewhere in the canal" (54)	Cinderella loses her slipper at the ball.
Yarrow's runepiece becomes a boat (61)	Cinderella's pumpkin becomes a carriage
Witches are not born with magic; they have to steal it from someone, eating a magical person's heart (95)	Snow White's huntsman sent to get her heart

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.8.9, 9-10.9]

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HEROINE'S JOURNEY

There are several interpretations of Joseph Campbell's Hero's Journey, a story structure occurring universally. The 12 steps of the journey are often divided into 3 acts (Departure, Initiation, Return) though they are sometimes divided into 4 parts (Call to Adventure, Initiation, Transformation, Return). *Ignite the Sun* is divided into 5 parts. You might have students place each step of the hero's journey into those 5 parts.

1. Provide students with a list of the 12 steps of the journey and their definitions. You might show this TedTalk, which provides a short introduction on this monomyth, and ask students to take notes on definitions: https://www.ted.com/talks/matthew_winkler_what_makes_a_hero?language=en
2. Ask them to identify Siria's journey by providing quotes, examples, and page numbers for each step.

THE CALL TO ADVENTURE	DEFINITION	QUOTE/EXAMPLE	PAGE #
Departure	Heroine crosses threshold from the normal world to a new unusual world		
Trials, Tests, Allies, Enemies	Heroine faces challenges		
Approach	Heroine's worst fear must be faced		
Crisis/Ordeal	The biggest challenge/the darkest hour; faces death/dies and is reborn		
Treasure/Reward	A treasure is claimed (recognition/power)		
Result	Heroine defeats challenges or is chased by them		
Return	Heroine returns to ordinary world		
New Life/Resurrection	Heroine has changed and outgrown old life		
Resolution	Tangled plotlines are straightened out for a triumphant return		
Status Quo/Return	Heroine returns to ordinary world but as a different person than she started, maturing and transforming based on the journey		
Yarrow	Old English (plant)		
Ash	Old English (tree)		
Linden	Old English (tree)		
Elegy	Middle French		

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.8.1, 9-10.1, 11-12.1; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.8.2, 9.2-10.2; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.8.9]

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POST-READING QUESTIONS

1. Howard describes Siria seeing Milla, "Her dark eyes widened as they darted over my mouth and chin... and I saw her throw her head back and shout, 'There!'... My mother had pointed at me. She knew what they would do, and she had still tried to turn me in" (31). How strong must a force be to cause a mother to betray her own child? Explain.
2. Siria reflects, "Stronger than all these emotions... was my horror at the increasingly undeniable truth of what I was" (38). Why is the truth about ourselves so hard to accept? Why is it easier for someone else to see who we truly are than it is for us?
3. Siria realizes that what she learned at Gildenbrook was distortions of the truth and not reality. She reflects, "I had believed there were three kinds of people: rich ones like my parents and me and everyone else at Gildenbrook, vocational servants like Yarrow and Linden, and nymph servants like Merrall... and some deep unacknowledged part of me had believed that the second two types only existed to help people like me" (58). How are prejudices learned? What causes them to continue to exist?
4. Yarrow questions Siria, "Who do you think spread all the horror stories about nymphs and mages, and especially sun children?" (40). Why does a leader lie to stay in power?
5. Siria encounters an old man on the road, beaten by the Queen's soldiers and describes him, "This man was so swayed that he longed for the favor of the very woman responsible for his starvation and pain" (159) and others "who labored and starved for a queen who thought they were disposable, who only cared about their ability to produce her food and resources" (159). She wonders if the delusion is more powerful because of their physical weakness (159). What causes people to continue to respect and/or honor leaders who disempower them?
6. As Siria looks for support to go against the Queen, a woman responds, "Why should we die for people we don't even know, people who are too lazy to stand up for themselves?"

(225). To what extent do we have an obligation to help those who won't help themselves? Explain.

7. Yarrow encourages Siria to continue the fight, even if she can't save her people. She replies, "I think some costs will always be too steep?" (208) What costs are she referring to? Are there any costs too steep for freedom? Explain.

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.8.2, 9-10.2, 11-12.2; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.8.1, 9-10.1, 11-12.1]

POST-READING ACTIVITIES

1. **Compare/Contrast:** Have students compare and contrast several different versions of a fairytale. (Little Red Riding Hood options: <https://www.pitt.edu/~dash/type0333.html>)
[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.8.2, 9-10.2, 11-12.2]

2. **Debate:** Conflict can occur both internally and externally. Have students debate which conflict is stronger within *Ignite the Sun*.
[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.8.4, 9-10.4, 11-12.4]

3. **Research:** Siria is willing to sacrifice herself to save Umbraz. The author pulls from spiritual inspiration (see quotes below). Siria reflects, "I turned upon the bleached cliff that stood like the last sentinel of the world, overlooking sea, wood, and mountain and stood as straight as I could, raising my face eastward, and holding my arms out, palms stretched open. 'I am here' I said, and the first true ray of morning burned red over the rim of the world and fell upon me like a flame" (255). How does this quote reflect sacrifices made in spiritual stories? Write an essay persuading readers to your view.

- *Maybe you have to know the darkness before you can appreciate the light (Madeleine L'Engle, A Ring of Endless Light) Part 1*

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- *All the darkness in the world cannot extinguish the light of a single candle (St Francis of Assisi, the Little Flowers of Saint Francis of Assisi, 73) Part 2*
- *The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it (John, 1:5) Part 3*
- *For a while they stood there, like men on the edge of a sleep where nightmare lurks, holding it off, though they know that they can only come to morning through the shadows (JRR Tolkien, The Two Towers) Part 4*
- *Into the darkness they go, the wise and the lovely (Edna St. Vincent Millay, Dirge without Music) Part 5*

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.8.9; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.8.1, 9-10.1, 11-12.1; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.8.9, 9-10.9, 11-12.9]

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Jennifer is a 7th/8th grade teacher who enjoys reading, writing, traveling, dogs, and chocolate (in any order).

Her classes continue to morph in response to students' interests and the many new books published.