

# Study Guide for THE NECROMANCER'S APPRENTICE

By Beverly Twomey



**Georgie would do anything to help his father – even learn the dying art of necromancy.**

Twelve-year-old Georgie works hard to care for his grieving father while keeping his nosy younger cousin out of trouble. But when his father begins to decline even further, Georgie decides to bring back the one person who could do it all, his deceased mother.

The local Necromancer is an awkward and solitary man with an ancient black cat and a literal skeleton in his closet. With a few words, he can cause a dead sparrow to fly, stop an animated skeleton in its place, and even speak to the dead themselves. Georgie is quickly swept away into a world of skeletal horrors, abandoned graves, and wizard duels where woodland creatures arm themselves against the undead. But can he convince the Necromancer to resurrect his mother in time?

Perfect for fans of Diana Wynne Jones and T. Kingfisher, *THE NECROMANCER'S APPRENTICE* is a whimsical take on the process of grieving and learning to live again.

**Recommended Ages: 10+**

The author kindly recommends that educators present and promote mental health resources such as grief counseling services, and depression care alongside this material.

## The Necromancer's Apprentice Discussion Questions

1. Georgie and his father are attending a funeral. If you've been to one, what sort of traditions, rituals, or customs did you notice? Does everyone wear black? Do they bring flowers? What emotions did you or others have when you attended?
2. The Blacksmith's grief affects him in physical ways, often requiring Georgie and Aunt Elisa's help. Are there times when you find it difficult to do chores? How do you feel once you've cleaned something that has been neglected for a long time?
3. The Necromancer arrives. His house is full of a variety of things including pinned butterfly collections, dead plants, etc. When you imagine the house of a wizard, what sorts of things do you expect to find inside?
4. Georgie makes a big decision in this chapter. What are some of the reasons why Georgie chooses to pursue necromancy? What do you think of his choice? What types of consequences might he face? If you were to make a bargain with a wizard, what would it be? Would you ask for a super power? Would you want to solve a big problem? What would it cost?
5. The Necromancer contradicts himself by reanimating the bird. Do you think he was lying about being able to bring people back to life? What might this mean for Georgie's quest?
6. The Necromancer teaches Georgie his first spell. What do you think the words mean? How would you pronounce them? Listen to a recording with Google Translate. Were you close?
7. The Necromancer explains that emotions are important in the art of Necromancy. Are there any emotions that you think would be stronger than others? If a skeleton is bound with the emotion of sadness, how might it respond? What about anger? Or joy?
8. Georgie and Ellory discover the secrets of Yoric's Crypt. What are some of your favorite spooky legends? Do you know the true history behind them?
9. Yoric's grave celebrates the coming of fall and the harvest with a festival. What are some of your favorite ways to celebrate autumn?
10. Georgie's family is changing in a big way. How did the news make you feel? Does it make you look differently on the Blacksmith's actions in the earlier chapters?
11. Families can look very different from person to person. They can be made up of cousins, grandparents, parents, step-parents, guardians, friends, or local, cultural and religious communities. Reflect on what family looks like for you.
12. Georgie finally gets to have a heart-to-heart with his dad, the Blacksmith. Talking about our feelings can be hard, even for adults. What stuck out to you about this conversation? Did the Blacksmith react in the way that you expected him too?
13. Ellory solves her mystery! Did you figure it out alongside her? Or was it a surprise? What do you think this revelation means for the Necromancer?
14. The Creature arrives with a rather spooky and unsettling appearance. Were you surprised? What kinds of monsters does the Creature remind you of?
15. What do you think of the Necromancer's revelation in this chapter? Do you think he made the right decision? How do the Necromancer's choices contrast with the Blacksmith's? What do you think the Necromancer will do now that he is literally chained to the Creature?

## INDIVIDUAL / SMALL GROUP PROJECTS

### Writing Projects

- Choose a scene and write it from the point-of-view from a different character than Georgie's.
- If you were to have a magical familiar, like the Void, what would it be?
- Consider how you would write magic based on emotions. Choose an emotion and describe the magical effects / describe what it looks like

### Research Projects

- Research local autumn festivals and celebrations in your area. Suggestions include Halloween, Thanksgiving, The Day of the Dead, Diwali, and the Moon Festival.
- Research the history behind your favorite scary story, cryptid, or spooky song.
- Research burial and funeral traditions from different cultures.

## LANGUAGE STUDIES

### **PUNS**

The book titles on the Necromancer's shelves are puns. Puns are defined as "a joke exploiting the different possible meanings of a word or the fact that there are words which sound alike but have different meanings." For example grave is both a term for seriousness as well as it is for a burial spot.

Can you come up with any other titles that you might find in the Necromancer's library?

### **IDIOMS**

The Necromancer has a skeleton in his closet. Literally. The term, 'skeleton in the closet' is an idiom. Idiom is defined as, "a type of phrase or expression that has a meaning that can't be deciphered by defining the individual words."

Other such idioms include: Costs an arm and a leg, at the drop of a hat, better late than never, under the weather etc. What other idioms can you think of? Are there any that would be particularly useful for a Necromancer?

### **POETRY**

The book contains two poems, Herbert's Riddle and The Dance of the Strands. What point of view does each poem utilize? What is the rhyming structure? The author specifically wrote The Strands Song as a homage to the famous children's song, Ring Around the Rosie. Research the history of this song and other nursery rhymes. Some of them might be darker than you'd expect.