



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS  
AND ACTIVITY GUIDE  
FOR THE  
*Dreaming Anastasia*  
SERIES

BY JOY PREBLE

*Brilliantly blending Russian history, romance, magic, and mythology* into an enticing adventure for teens, the *DREAMING ANASTASIA* series has been praised as a “well-paced roller-coaster ride of death-defying magical encounters” (Kirkus Reviews) and hailed as “a complex story of love, betrayal, and revenge” (Booklist).

In *DREAMING ANASTASIA*, Anne Michaelson begins to have unusual dreams and discovers that she is the only one who can save the daughter of the last tsar of Russia, Anastasia Romanov. Believed to be dead by the world, Anastasia has been kept captive all these years by the Russian witch Baba Yaga, and only Ethan, a handsome and mysterious eighteen-year-old, can help Anne free Anastasia.

Anne once again leaves behind her ordinary life in *HAUNTED* to join forces with the mysterious and gorgeous Ethan as their journey with the Romanov family continues. This time Anne is haunted by a classic figure from Russian mythology, a rusalka, a mermaid with a malevolent streak—and a particular interest in Anne, who tells her that Anastasia is still alive. As Anne and Ethan team up, her search for the rusalka’s identity reveals deep and startling secrets—including the true source of Anne’s powers.

In *ANASTASIA FOREVER*, having survived Baba Yaga and the rusalka, Anne finds herself bound by the witch to undertake a journey into the past, present, and future that will determine her destiny—and that of everyone she loves.

### *About the Author*

Joy Preble grew up in Chicago where—possibly because she was raised by an accountant and a bookkeeper—she dreamed of being a backup singer, but instead earned an English degree from Northwestern. She now lives in Texas with her family, including a basset-boxer mix rescue dog named Lyla, who never met a shoe she didn’t want to eat. Joy has also learned to use the phrase “y’all” without any hint of irony.

Visit Joy at [joypreble.com](http://joypreble.com)

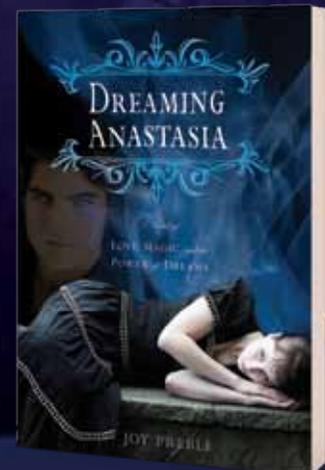
ENRICH YOUR BOOK DISCUSSION GROUP WITH THESE DISCUSSION QUESTIONS AND DELVE DEEPER INTO THE ISSUES PRESENTED IN THE *DREAMING ANASTASIA* SERIES. THE GUIDE IS FREE AND MAY BE PRINTED OUT OR PHOTOCOPIED FOR USE IN THE CLASSROOM, LIBRARY, BOOKSTORE, OR AT HOME.

# DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

FOR

## *Dreaming Anastasia*

1. At one point in *DREAMING ANASTASIA*, Baba Yaga tells Anne that “matters of blood are never simple.” How is blood a motif in this novel?
2. *DREAMING ANASTASIA* contains many “grll power” aspects. How many can you think of? Be specific.
3. Anne first sees Ethan at a performance of Swan Lake. While there, she comments internally about Prince Siegfried, “Seriously, how stupid was this guy that he couldn’t tell a black swan costume from a white one?” How does this comment recur throughout the story? That is, in what ways are characters’ perceptions incorrect or turned topsy-turvy?
4. Baba Yaga tells Anne, “Nothing is as simple as it seems.” How many aspects of that idea of duality can you find in *DREAMING ANASTASIA*? For example, Ethan looks like a normal teenage boy, but he really is not what he seems on the surface.
5. Anastasia tells Anne about her magic doll, the matryoshka, or nesting doll. The reader learns that in Russian, mat means mother. How is motherhood a running theme throughout *DREAMING ANASTASIA*?
6. Look up information about Russian matryoshka dolls and lacquer boxes and see how those items are used both literally and metaphorically in the novel.
7. How do you feel about the romance between Anne and Ethan?
8. In what ways does *DREAMING ANASTASIA* work as a folk or fairy tale?
9. Research the real Russian Revolution and the assassination of the Romanovs. In what ways is *DREAMING ANASTASIA* an alternate history of those events?



*DREAMING ANASTASIA*  
SOURCEBOOKS, 2009  
JOY PREBLE  
ISBN: 978-1-4022-1817-0



## PROJECT IDEAS

- On the Internet or in the library, research Russian lacquer boxes. Choose one of the folktales depicted on classic lacquer boxes. Find a copy of the tale online and read it. Then create a comic book/graphic novel version of the tale with a partner.
- On the Internet or in the library, read at least three different folktales of the witch Baba Yaga. Create a PowerPoint presentation that reflects the basic elements of those tales. Then create your own Baba Yaga tale, using those elements.
- On the Internet or in the library, read about Anastasia Romanov. Attempt to figure out what elements in *DREAMING ANASTASIA* concerning her are true and what elements are fictional.

### *Related Reads*

- *Nicholas and Alexandra* BY ROBERT K. MASSIE
- *Anastasia: The Last Grand Duchess* BY CAROLYN MEYER
- *Baba Yaga and Vasilisa the Brave* BY MARIANNA MAYER AND KINUKO Y. CRAFT
- *Fearless Girls, Wise Women, and Beloved Sisters: Heroines in Folktales from Around the World* BY JANE YOLEN AND KATHLEEN RAGEN
- *Russian Fairy Tales* BY ALEKSANDR AFANASEV
- *Babushka Baba Yaga* BY PATRICIA POLACCO
- *Baba Yaga* BY KATYA ARNOLD
- *Baba Yaga (A Russian Folktale)* BY MARGARET YATSEVITCH PHINNEY AND LYDIAN GREEN

### *Web Links*

<http://www.alexanderpalace.org/>  
[http://www.treasuresofimperialrussia.com/e\\_home.html](http://www.treasuresofimperialrussia.com/e_home.html)



# DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

FOR

## *Haunted*

1. *HAUNTED* adds the tale of the rusalka, a malevolent Russian mermaid. How does *HAUNTED*'s Lily compare with other fictional mermaids such as Hans Christian Andersen's *The Little Mermaid* or Ariel in the Disney version?
2. The Russian matryoshka doll continues as a theme in book 2. Discuss ways in which the novel uses the idea of "stories within stories and secrets within secrets."
3. Research the various incarnations of the rusalka in other cultures: Slavic vila, Irish banshees, nymphs, nix, Hylas and his water nymphs, etc. Compare those tales to how rusalki are used in *HAUNTED*.
4. During Ethan's absence between book 1 and 2, Anne has tried to pretend that things are normal by acquiring very normal boyfriend Ben. Discuss your thoughts about the love triangle between Ethan, Ben, and Anne. Who do you feel is best for Anne? Why is Anne so hesitant to give up Ben?
5. One of the ongoing issues for Anne is the implosion of her family after the death of her brother, David, from cancer. Discuss how major life changes such as death and divorce can disrupt the family dynamic. How have the deaths of loved ones affected both Anne and Ethan?
6. How does the character Baba Yaga continue to evolve in *HAUNTED*? Does her backstory, somewhat revealed here, make her sympathetic? Discuss her depiction in this series in comparison to other books and fairy tales in which she plays a part.
7. Discuss the themes of choice and destiny as they are reflected in *HAUNTED* and in the series as a whole, particularly—but not limited to—Anne and Ethan and their journeys.
8. At the end of the novel, Viktor escapes from Baba Yaga's hut with Anne's assistance and appears to have regained his immortality. This is our first glimpse of what he will become in *ANASTASIA FOREVER*—Koschei the Deathless. Research this Russian folklore character.
9. Tess plays a larger role in *HAUNTED*. What do you think about Tess as Anne's best friend?
10. The theme of women's power continues in this book. Discuss how the novel (and the series) uses the idea of feminine power and the female hero journey.



*HAUNTED*  
SOURCEBOOKS, 2011  
JOY PREBLE  
ISBN: 978-1-402-4468-1

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

FOR

# *Anastasia Forever*

1. Book 3 begins with Viktor's narration, imparting the secret of how he has re-created himself as Koschei the Deathless. The Soul Jar trope is one of the oldest and most popular literary devices—most notably with Voldemort in Harry Potter but occurring many other places. Research the Soul Jar trope to find other popular culture incarnations (books, movies, TV). Compare these with the role of Viktor in both this novel and the series as a whole.
2. Booklist has said that the series is “a complex story of love, betrayal, and revenge.” Explain how this last book brings all these stories to their conclusions. How is each a part of the larger story arc?
3. Fast-forward five years for the characters. What do you imagine Anne and Ethan doing? Where are they? What have they become? Are they still together? What about Ben and Tess? Anne's parents? Baba Yaga?
4. Russian fairy tales are famous for ending not with “they lived happily ever after,” but with “they lived as happily as they could.” How does the ending of *ANASTASIA FOREVER* reflect that vision?
5. Why is it Lily who ultimately must forgive Ethan? Why is it Ethan who ultimately needs forgiving?
6. The entire series has been a reverse fairy tale. Explain how this applies to Anne and Ethan and their romantic journey.
7. Research the ballet *Giselle*, which Anne and Ethan see in the past along with Viktor and Ethan's former love, Tasha. How is the story of *Giselle* a parallel to Lily the rusalka's story?
8. During *ANASTASIA FOREVER*, Anne finally gives in to the powers she has been given from Baba Yaga. Discuss this transition and how it changes her. If you have read the entire series, discuss Anne's transition to acceptance of her powers throughout the entire story arc.
9. Using a hero's journey archetype (Joseph Campbell's model is one popular choice), plot Anne and Ethan's hero's journey from book 1 through book 3.
10. Research basic character archetypes and choose one that you feel best reflects Tess's role in this book and the series as a whole. Demonstrate with examples.



*ANASTASIA FOREVER*  
SOURCEBOOKS, AUGUST, 2012  
JOY PREBLE  
ISBN: 978-1-4022-6875-5

FINALLY: ANNE AND TESS EAT A LOT OF CHICAGO DEEP DISH PIZZA FROM LOU MALNATI'S IN THIS SERIES. IF YOU CAN'T GET TO CHICAGO YOURSELF, HERE'S A QUICK RECIPE THAT LOU'S SON MARC MALNATI SHARED ON THE FOOD NETWORK!

#### INGREDIENTS

##### Pizza Dough

- 16 ounces water
- 1/8-ounce yeast
- 1/2-ounce salt
- 2 pounds bread flour
- 1/4 cup olive oil
- 1/4 cup cornmeal

##### Toppings:

- 2 cups tomato sauce, jar or homemade
- 2 cups shredded mozzarella
- 1/2 cup sliced mushrooms
- 1/2 cup spinach, shredded
- 1/2 cup grated Romano
- 1/2 cup sliced pepperoni
- 1/2 cup grated Parmesan

#### DIRECTIONS

In a mixer combine the water and the yeast and allow the yeast to dissolve. Add the remaining ingredients except for the cornmeal and begin to mix the dough using a dough hook on low speed. Once a ball is formed mix on medium speed for 1 to 2 minutes until the dough becomes elastic and smooth. Remove from the mixer and place in a bowl coated with olive oil and cornmeal. Allow the dough to rest for approximately 4 hours. Once the dough is rested, place on flat surface and dust with some flour.

Preheat oven to 425 degrees F. In a deep baking dish or deep dish pizza pan, spread the dough using your fingers at the bottom of the pan and make sure to have enough dough to come up the sides of the pan approximately 1/2-inch high.

Begin by placing a layer of the mozzarella cheese on the bottom of the crust. Add the tomato sauce and all of the toppings. Place in the oven for 30 to 40 minutes until golden and crispy.

Serve pizza straight from the oven to the table.

