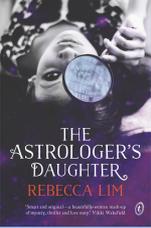


|   |                               |   |
|---|-------------------------------|---|
| <b>Title:</b><br>The Astrologer's Daughter<br> | <b>Author:</b><br>Rebecca Lim | <b>Recommended:</b><br>Year levels 8-10 |
|---|-------------------------------|---|

**About the author:**  
A Melbourne-based writer and illustrator, Rebecca Lim began her career as a commercial lawyer. Since launching herself as a full-time writer, she has produced numerous novels for young adults, including the Mercy series. Her novels have been translated into several languages.

**Synopsis:**  
Avicenna Crowe, the astrologer's daughter, doesn't want to follow in her mother's footsteps, but when her mother disappears she must use her inherited skills to solve the mystery. She soon discovers that the disappearance is not the only mystery in their lives. Despite her determination to be independent, Avicenna reluctantly accepts help from a number of unlikely sources which opens up a new world of friendship and trust. As each piece of the puzzle is put in place, the unsolved riddles in her mother's astrological readings start to come together with surprising results.

### BEFORE READING

1. Research Astrology. What is it? When did it begin? Why do you think some people believe in it?
2. Sometimes in life we are confronted with a choice as to the direction we go. Whose footsteps would you choose to follow and whose would you prefer not to? Explain your decision.
3. If you could find out what the future held for you, including your time of death, would you want to know? Make a list of the arguments for and against knowing the future. Present your point of view, orally or in writing.

### WHILE READING

1. For each chapter, note the following on the table below:

| Chapter | Key moment in the chapter | Examples of language devices such as metaphors, similes... | Recurring motifs/symbols |
|---------|---------------------------|--|--------------------------|
|         |                           |  |                          |

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2. Why do Simon and Avicenna need each other?

3. Avicenna is alienated by others, but she also alienates them. Explain how and why she does this.
4. Each section of the novel opens with an astrological symbol and a prediction. Track the significance of these throughout each section and find quotations in the novel that reflect the same idea.
5. Explain the following extracts from the novel, identifying any literacy devices (such as metaphors) in the extract.
  - a) 'People always attach themselves to Mum...Some new animal. That's me' P. 5
  - b) 'Basic Premise #1: *Simon Thorn knows where I live...*before he sets foot on the stairs.' P. 52
6. There are times where we read Avicenna internal 'voice', in italic. How does this 'voice' contrast with the 'voice' she portrays for others? (For example: Page 42) R,
7. The novel begins with a quote by John Donne: 'To leave this world behind, is death' Consider the double meaning reflected in this line. How does the story present these two aspects (literal and metaphorical) to the reader?
8. What objects and images do we see repeated in the novel (for example compasses, scars). What is their significance?
9. Every now and then Avicenna recalls her mother's advice (P. 61, P.64) Does she always follow her advice? Make a note of where she does and where she does not. What is the outcome?
10. What does Avicenna learn about her judgement of people in the novel? How does it change the way she behaves?
11. What choices does Avicenna make that surprise you?

## **AFTER READING**

### **Character**

1. While the title, *The Astrologer's Daughter*, suggests that this is what defines Avicenna, it is not the only thing that she is. Describe the sort of person that she is both physically and emotionally.
2. Simon is portrayed as perfect by Avicenna. Is she correct?
3. While she is independent, Avicenna must learn to depend on others also. Who does she rely on and what does she learn about them?
4. Avicenna is not as tough as she appears to be. Find evidence to suggest she is vulnerable.
5. What techniques are used by the author to create character that we like and that we dislike? Does our response to a character change? Why?
6. Explore the possible reasons why Joanne puts Avicenna's chart in all her books and must connect her readings of other to Avicenna.

### **Style and Structure**

1. The novel uses a combination of writing and visual texts. Explain how the visual helps the reader to understand the story.
2. As you read, create a glossary of new or unusual words and look up their meaning. Here are some to get you started

| Word               | Meaning | Usage |
|--------------------|---------|-------|
| Visceral (P.40)    |         |       |
| Tympan (P.183)     |         |       |
| Enervated (P. 285) |         |       |

3. What does a 'red herring' mean when we look at mystery stories? The writer creates a number of 'red herrings' in the novel. What are they and why does she include them? When do we dismiss them and on what basis?

## Themes

### Secrets

1. What does Avicenna learn about her family that she did not know before her mother disappeared? How might that change the way she sees herself?
2. Avicenna is not the only character with secrets. What other secrets are being kept in the novel? Why are they kept secret and how does that affect the person keeping the secret?
3. Some secrets are kept simply because to tell others would make them too real. Consider which of the secrets kept in this novel might fit into this category.
4. How does not knowing the answer to a secret or mystery affect different characters?

### Loss

1. Both Simon and Avicenna experience loss in the novel. In what way are their losses similar and how are they different?
2. How has loss altered people in the novel? Consider characters like Joanne.
3. Some lost things are physical and some are not. What physical things are lost in the novel and how do they connect to the non-physical sense of loss?
4. Wurbick works for Missing Persons. While his job is to search for Joanne, who else would you describe as 'missing' in the novel and why?

### Duty / Inheritance

1. In what way do the characters in the novel feel a sense of duty to others? Consider Simon and his mother; Avicenna and her mother; Hugh and his uncle.

2. Explore the connection created between Avicenna / Simon and Avicenna / Wurbik. What part of their relationship is duty and what part is simply choice. Is there a difference?
3. Avicenna is reluctant to 'inherit' anything from her mother. What does she inherit? Which aspects are welcome and which are not?
4. Avicenna work with her mother's client is not just about a sense of duty to her mother? Do you agree?

## **RESPONDING**

1. Sometimes it is easier to isolate ourselves than have others do it to us. Discuss.
2. Astrological readings are purely for selfish endeavours. Do you agree? Write an argument for or against this statement using evidence from the novel to support your response.
3. In the novel Avicenna doesn't read her own astrological chart. Imagine that she does? What do you think she would find. Write an explanation of her chart. Consider the way that she explains other charts in the novel and try to reflect the same style.
4. In our moment of loss, we can also gain. Discuss
5. Things are not always what they appear to be. Do you agree? Use evidence from the novel to support your answer.
6. Create your own astrological chart and reading. Use the images in the novel and your earlier research on astrology as a guide.
7. Avicenna's mother tells her that things cannot be unseen. What do you think Avicenna would choose to unsee and why?
8. Throughout the novel, the writer gives us detailed images of locations in her home town. IT allows us to visualise the areas the Avicenna visits and where she lives. Re-read the descriptions around Avicenna's home and create a map of the area. Draw a map of your own area and swap with a friend. Write an account of their journey home offering details of the places they see along the way.