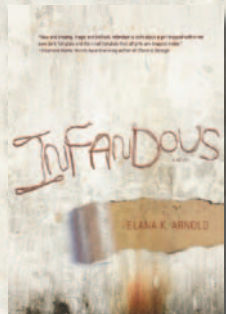




ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Elana K. Arnold is the author of several books for young readers. She lives in Long Beach, California, with her husband, two children, and a menagerie of animals. *Infandous* is her first book for Carolrhoda Lab™. Visit her online at www.elanakarnold.com.



Infandous

Elana K. Arnold

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DISCUSSION GUIDE

"Raw and dreamy, tragic and brilliant, *Infandous* is both about a girl trapped within her own dark fairytale and the cruel fairytale that all girls are trapped inside."

—Stephanie Kuehn, Morris Award-winning author of *Charm & Strange*

Infandous

A NOVEL

ELANA K. ARNOLD

*“Once there was a mermaid who
dared to love a wolf. Her love for
him was so sudden and so fierce that
it tore her tail into legs.”*

Sephora Golding lives in the shadow of her unbelievably beautiful mother. Even though they scrape by in the seedier part of Venice Beach, she’s always felt lucky. As a child, she imagined she was a minor but beloved character in her mother’s fairy tale. But now, at sixteen, the fairy tale is less Disney and more Grimm. And she wants the story to be her own.

Then she meets Felix, and the fairy tale takes a turn she never imagined.

*“Things don’t really turn out the
way they do in fairy tales. I’m
telling you that right up front, so
you’re not disappointed later.”*

Sometimes, a story is just a way to hide the unspeakable in plain sight.

Topics for Discussion:

1. Disney lies to people, according to Seph. What reasons does she have to say that?
2. How does Seph’s Venice Beach compare to the Venice tourists think they know?
3. Seph is in awe of her mother’s beauty and compares her to a mermaid. What, as Seph sees, are the benefits of being a mermaid? What are the drawbacks?
4. While describing what happened after Marissa tore her ACL, Seph wonders if she is her own mother’s Achilles heel. What are some candidates for Seph’s Achilles heel? Do you have an Achilles heel?
5. Marissa, Seph, the body builders, and the girls in bikinis all perform as local color, part of the landscape of Venice Beach. What roles do the characters play in their own lives? In each other’s?
6. How does Seph see men? How are her relationships with her mother and her female friends different than with men or boys?
7. Shadows are important in *Infandous*. Consider places where shadows appear. What might shadows imply? What might be in the shadows?
8. Seph thinks that some people are only supporting characters in life. What does she mean by that, and who decides that they are? Which characters would Seph say are clearly the “main characters” in their own lives?
9. Anagnorisis is a Greek word that means “the awareness of the way things really are.” What are some moments of anagnorisis for Seph throughout the book?
10. The name “Rebecca” means “beautiful snare” and Naomi means “pleasant” or “agreeable.” Do the sisters live up to the meanings of their names? Why or why not?
11. *Infandous* is an archaic word that describes something so awful that it’s unspeakable. However, Seph thinks everyone knows the unspeakable even if it’s not said. What are some examples of the unspeakable throughout the book?
12. Seph thinks that people connect to art because of real-life circumstances that align with artwork. What problem does she see with the museum visitors, including herself, connecting to the Gods and Lovers sculptures in chapter ten? Do you agree with her?
13. Rebecca once told Seph that she was a humanist. Why does this begin to annoy Seph? What would you consider Seph’s philosophy to be?
14. Seph enjoys watching Jordan work, and compares his attitude toward his job to Lolly’s at her job. What does Seph envy about them?
15. How are Seph’s infandous wolf stickers and the surfboards like myths?
16. In what ways is making art a source of power for Seph?
17. In the end, Seph decides not to share her terrible secret with her mother. Do you agree or disagree with her decision? Why?
18. Look at the progression of protagonists in the myths. How do they change from story to story? How does this change mirror Seph’s journey?
19. Whose perspectives are myths often told from? What parts of myths are missing, and how does Seph fill them in?
20. Seph tries on various skins in *Infandous*—that of Annie when she is with Felix, that of a privileged daughter when she is with Naomi, that of a sexual performer when she kisses Marissa at the party. Yet the book ends with a selkie shedding her skin and walking naked up the beach. What do you think of Seph’s experimentation in various skins? Do other characters in *Infandous* put on or take off skins? Do you?