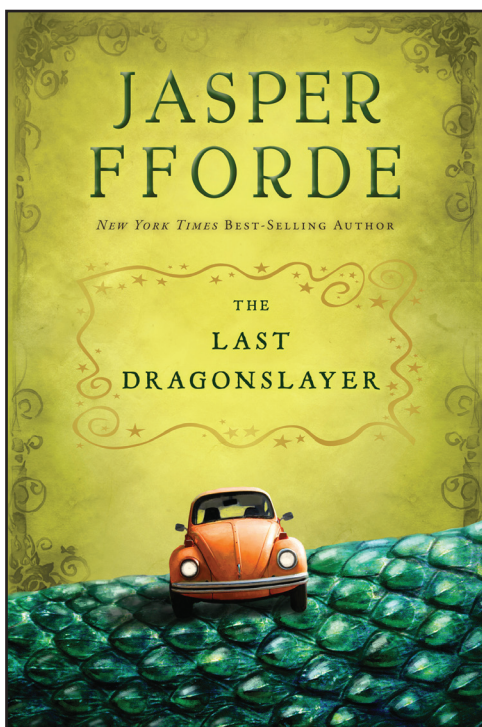


The Last Dragonslayer by JASPER FFORDE

New York Times Best-selling Author



Book Summary:

In the good old days, magic was indispensable – it could both save a kingdom and clear a clogged drain. But now magic is fading: Drain cleaner is cheaper than a spell, and magic carpets are used for pizza delivery. Fifteen-year-old founding Jennifer Strange runs Kazam, an employment agency for magicians – but it's hard to stay in business when magic is drying up. And then the visions start, predicting the death of the world's last dragon at the hands of an unnamed Dragonslayer. If the visions are true, everything will change for Kazam – and for Jennifer. Because something is coming. Something known as . . . Big Magic.

Discussion Questions

Before reading *The Last Dragonslayer*, write down the answers to the following questions. After you have finished the book, go back and evaluate your answers.

- Look at the cover of *The Last Dragonslayer*. What do you think it is going to be about? Why? What elements of the cover design back up your answer?
- Read the short prologue. What do you think Jennifer Strange was once famous for? Do you think she is no longer famous? Why?
- Why do you think the author, Jasper Fforde, choose to name the protagonist Jennifer Strange? From her name alone, what do you think Jennifer is like?
- Jennifer Strange lives in a place called the Kingdom of Hereford. From the name alone, what do you think it's like?

After reading *The Last Dragonslayer*, answer these questions.

- As orphans, Jennifer Strange and Tiger Prawns take a lot of pride in their names. Why do you think names mean so much to them? Do you think each character's name is appropriate for him or her? Why or why not?
- Moobin, Full Price, and Lady Mawgon were once considered great wizards and could perform magnificent feats of magic. Now they work for Kazam and are relegated to menial tasks such as unclogging drains for a fee. How has this affected them? Does it justify their attitudes and sense of self?
- In what ways is the Quarkbeast more loyal and dependable than the adults in Jennifer's life? Cite specific examples from the book to support your answer.
- How do you think that Jennifer handled the news that she was the Last Dragonslayer? If you were in Jennifer's position, would you have handled it differently? If so, how?

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- How do Mr. Zambini's disappearance and that fact that Jennifer is an orphan prepare her for her duties as the Dragonslayer?
- Tiger put himself in danger by alerting all of the Kingdom of Hereford to the time and date of the Dragondeath. Do you think this was a smart move? Why or why not? Do you think that he had a right to do this?
- Brian Spalding spent years waiting for the next Dragonslayer to find him and relieve him of his position. How do you think he felt when the Last Dragonslayer was an almost-sixteen-year-old girl?
- Jennifer Strange became famous overnight. List at least three pros and three cons to her instant and surprising fame.
- Can you name any instances in today's world when instant fame has led to both positive and negative outcomes? Does Jennifer's experience in dealing with her newfound notoriety and the media attention help or hinder her? Why?
- Does the Kingdom of Hereford remind you of anyplace that you know or have read or learned about? Why? List at least three similarities and three differences between the two places.
- In what ways did Brian Spalding convey the history of dragons, the dragon pact, and the duties of the dragonslayer to Jennifer Strange in an effective and beneficial fashion? In what ways were his methods disadvantageous?
- What qualities and characteristics do you think a Dragonslayer needs?
- Maltcassion lectured Jennifer about evolution and how "nature adores a joke," then told her the story about how the beautiful sklhrrg beetle evolved into the dung beetle. Do you think that Maltcassion was right—does nature adore a joke? Why or why not? What other characters in the book eventually suffer a fate like the dung beetle? How?
- Mother Zenobia told Jennifer that "the Mighty Shandar was the most powerful magician the planet had ever known." How is this statement both true and false?
- Even though everyone in the Kingdom of Hereford wanted to know about the events in the Dragonlands, the press often hindered Jennifer's work. Do you think that the press had the right to hound Jennifer and follow her every move? Why or why not?
- What effect does Maltcassion's dwindling magic have on the wizards? What about the citizens of the Kingdom of Hereford?
- Sir Matt Griffon was an honored and experienced knight, and most people in the Kingdom of Hereford believed he should have been appointed the Dragonslayer. Do you agree with them? Why or why not? Would the fate of the Kingdom of Hereford have been the same if Sir Matt Griffon had taken over as the Last Dragonslayer?
- In your opinion, which character was Jennifer's biggest nemesis? Why? Who was her biggest ally?
- Even though most of the old magic was diminished from the Kingdom of Hereford, the Dragonlands were protected. Why do you think it was one of the only areas that remained enchanted?

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- Within hours of being known as a Dragonslayer, Jennifer was offered endorsements from Yummy Flakes and Fizzi-Pop. She really needed the money, yet she put her duties as a Dragonslayer first. Do you think that this was hard for her to do? Why or why not? Would it have been bad if Jennifer decided to take an endorsement before meeting Maltcassion?
- Gordon van Gordon placed the ad for a Dragonslayer's assistant in the newspaper and answered the ad himself. Was it wise for Jennifer to trust him? Did he ever give her any signs that he was untrustworthy? How would things have unfolded differently if Jennifer had not allowed him to be her apprentice?
- Do you think that the Consolidated Useful Stuff Land Development Corporation ever had the people of the Kingdom of Hereford's best interest at heart? Why or why not?
- Even after Jennifer learned that the Dragonpact wasn't a pact at all but really a ruse to imprison the dragons in the Dragonlands, she still upheld her duties as a Dragonslayer. Why did she do this? If you had been tricked like this, would you have been able to do the same? Why or why not?
- Do you think Maltcassion's sacrifice and the birth of Feldspar Axiom Firebreath IV and Colin benefited the citizens of the Kingdom of Hereford? Why? Describe how the Kingdom of Hereford is different after these events.
- Does the Big Magic seem good or bad for the future of the Kingdom of Hereford, its people, and the dragons?
- Do you think that Jennifer Strange was a good Dragonslayer? Why or why not?

Exhorbitus Extension Activities

At the end of the story, Jennifer Strange gives the entire Dragonslayer merchandising rights to the Troll War Widows Association. Create and illustrate a collection of clothing, food, drinks, and knick-knacks that depict Jennifer Strange—Dragonslayer.

Gordon van Gordon wrote—and answered—his own ad for a Dragonslayer's apprentice. Now that you know what is truly required of a Dragonslayer's apprentice, create a new advertisement for this position.

Pretend you are a producer for *The Yogi Baird Daytime TV Show*. You have been given the job of prepping Yogi for a follow-up interview with Jennifer Strange. Write out five questions that you think he should ask Jennifer.

Write and design a pamphlet for Kazam Mystical Arts Management. Be sure to include biographies and contact information for the wizards that work there, details on what type of jobs they do, and recommendations from previous clients.

Using cues from the books, create a map of the Kingdom of Hereford and the Dragonlands. Show where important places from the book—such as Kazam, Zambini Towers, the Consolidated Useful Stuff Land Development Corporation, the Dragonstation, and King Snodd's castle—are located.