

Discussion Guide: *Beyond Seven Forests*

1. At the beginning of the story, before you know much about Renia, what can you tell about her personality from the way she speaks to her examiners at her trial?
2. Of the various reasons Renia gives for turning “traitor,” which do you find the most compelling and why?
3. How has Renia’s status as a noblewoman shielded her from certain wartime hardships? In what ways has that status not protected her?
4. Which of Renia’s skills did you find most surprising or interesting, and why? What drove her to develop that skill?
5. How are Renia’s actions guided by her feelings about her home and her family? Pick one decision she makes and trace it back to the influence of her mother, her father, or her brother.
6. How has her assault in June affected Renia in both practical and emotional terms?
7. Renia and Adya don’t spend much time getting to know each other in a conventional sense. How do they learn about each other through actions over the course of the three days they spend together?
8. How is Renia’s relationship with Emi different from the one she develops with Adya? What are some key differences between Emi and Adya, and what might they have in common?
9. How does Renia use folktales to contextualize her life and signal her deeper emotions to the reader?
10. How does the narrative build tension even as it gives away certain outcomes? At what part of the story were you in the most suspense about what would happen next? What part surprised you most?