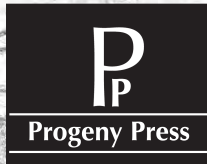


Shadow Spinner *Study Guide*

by Virginia Zeller

For the novel by Susan Fletcher

CD Version



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Shadow Spinner Study Guide

A Progeny Press Study Guide

by Virginia Zeller

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Synopsis

Shadow Spinner is a fresh and unique version of the story of the Arabian Nights and the 1001 Tales, but it focuses on the story teller and the people around her rather than retelling her stories, as most version do.

The Sultan's wife has betrayed him with a lover, and so the Sultan has killed the two of them. Unwilling to be alone, but believing that all women are betrayers, the Sultan marries a new girl each day and kills her before morning. No young woman in his kingdom is safe.

Then Shahrazad, the daughter of the Sultan's own vizier, volunteers to be his wife. In the morning, facing death, she asks the Sultan if she can tell her younger sister one last story before she dies. The Sultan agrees, and listens as Shahrazad tells her story to Dunyazad. But as Shahrazad sees the sun rising, she breaks off her story at a particularly exciting spot, promising to finish it the next night if she still lives. The Sultan, entertained and intrigued, grants Shahrazad her life for one more day. And so begins a tense and uncertain pattern—each night Shahrazad tells a story, but if it does not please the Sultan, death awaits.

But after two and a half years, Shahrazad is running out of stories. . . .

So *Shadow Spinner* begins with Marjan, a crippled orphan storyteller who goes with her Auntie Chava to sell jewelry to the few women who remain in the Sultan's harem. When the children gather around her, she naturally begins to tell them a story, just as she imagines her hero Shahrazad does. One of the listeners is Dunyazad, and when she realizes this is a story she has never heard, Marjan is summoned before Shahrazad and taken into the harem.

Once in the harem, Marjan learns the Sultan's mother is just as dangerous as the Sultan himself, and she wants Shahrazad, and all who help her, to fail and die. When Shahrazad tells Marjan's story to the Sultan, they discover the story is a favorite of the Sultan's from his childhood and he looks forward to hearing the *full* story again—but Marjan knows only the small bit she has already told Shahrazad! They must find the blind beggar who first told the story to Marjan—but it is death to leave the harem! As they search for a way out of their deathtrap, they each learn the power of stories . . . when there is truth in the tale.

Chapters 3–4

Vocabulary:

Context and multiple definitions:

Some words have more than one meaning and we must use the context of the sentence to determine which meaning the author intends to use. This can be particularly important when the word is being used as a metaphor or to create a picture for the reader. For instance, the word *peppering* can mean “sprinkling or seasoning as with the spice pepper,” “showering with shot or missiles,” “or hitting with rapid repeated blows.” However, in the sentence, “Uncle Eli came, hobbling toward us in the twilight, *peppering* us with questions. . .” none of the definitions above literally fits the context of the sentence. But by using the context of the sentence we can determine that the author is using the definition “showering with shot or missiles” to create a picture of Uncle Eli asking a lot questions very quickly.

In the exercises below, all of the definitions listed are true for the underlined words. Choose the *closest* correct meaning for the underlined word after looking at the context within the sentence.

1. _____ “Eli came hobbling toward us..”
 - a. fettering
 - b. hampering, impeding
 - c. moving along unsteadily or with difficulty

2. _____ “sent it clattering across the tiles..”
 - a. making a rattling sound
 - b. talking noisily or rapidly
 - c. moving or going with a clatter, to cause a clattering noise

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3. _____ “Uncle Eli was always crowing about how he had discovered me.”
 - a. making a loud shrill sound as of a cock
 - b. uttering a sound expressive of pleasure
 - c. bragging exultantly and blatantly

4. _____ “Eli funneled the coins into a leather purse.”
 - a. To have or take the shape of a funnel
 - b. passed through as if through a funnel
 - c. moved to a central channel

5. _____ “then gently traced my eyebrows with her fingers.”
 - a. traveled over
 - b. sketched with a drawing instrument
 - c. followed the footprint, track or trail of

6. _____ “threw her arms around me, enveloping me.”
 - a. mounting attack of enemy’s flank
 - b. enclosing or enfolding completely
 - c. placing and sealing in a paper envelope.

7. _____ “She assailed me with a rough-napped glove.”
 - a. leaped upon
 - b. attacked with violent blows
 - c. flew about me

8. _____ “She . . . herded me to the first chamber.”
 - a. gathered, led or driven like a group of animals
 - b. called and whistled
 - c. struck and whipped

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9. _____ “Auntie Chava admonished me on the virtue of patience.”
- indicated duties or obligations
 - gave friendly earnest advice or encouragement
 - expressed warning or disapproval to
10. _____ “skittered across the marble floor.”
- glided
 - twitched and skipped lightly
 - banged and clattered
11. _____ “the shapes of two slave girls wielding long ostrich feather fans. . . .”
- management
 - handling as a tool
 - exerting one’s authority
12. _____ “She seemed to spill over the edges of the massive cushion she was sitting on.”
- let out, divulge
 - become wasted or lost
 - spread profusely or beyond bounds
13. _____ “Her neck fell in folds over her pearls.”
- act of falling with speed by force of gravity
 - pouching and falling out
 - lose greatness
14. _____ “The woman started to say something, but then snapped her mouth shut, seeming to consider.”
- a brief, sharp, irritable speech or retort
 - an abrupt closing
 - a sudden sharp breaking

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Questions:

1. How long has Marjan lived with Auntie Chava and Uncle Eli?
2. Why did Marjan and Auntie Chava have so much money when they came back from the harem? What will the money be used for?
3. From what culture or religious background are Uncle Eli and Auntie Chava?
4. What religion and culture is Marjan?
5. Why does Marjan find it hard to sleep the night after she visits the harem?
6. Describe the comb that Auntie Chava gives Marjan. Why is it so special?
7. What is the Sultan's mother's name and title and what is the meaning of the saying about mothers?

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8. Describe the Khatun—what sensory images are used to describe her?

Thinking About the Story:

9. What does the law say about Jews having Muslims as slaves? Why is this true? Who is the ruling class?
10. Why does Marjan feel sad to leave Uncle Eli and Auntie Chava and their home of “threadbare carpets, . . . cracked tiles . . . and faded cushions,” where she has to work hard?
11. An *analogy* is a comparison of two things through which the unfamiliar item or concept is compared to something familiar. To what does Marjan compare the Khatun? Based on Marjan’s analogy and her meeting with the Khatun, write down three words to describe what kind of person the Khatun is.
12. What does Marjan tell the Khatun the reasons are for her being summoned to the Harem? Why does she say this? What is the Khatun’s reaction?

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13. *Point of view* is the “eyes” or perspective through which the reader sees the action of a story. *First-person narrative* tells the story from the point of view of one of the characters, and facts and feelings are limited to that character’s knowledge. The personal pronouns *I, my, mine*, etc., indicate first-person narrative. *Third-person narrative* is told from an objective viewpoint. Third-person narrative can be *limited*, telling only of the actions, thoughts, and feelings of one or a few characters, or *omniscient* (all-knowing), able to tell what all characters are doing, thinking, and feeling. From what point of view is *Shadow Spinner* told? Give examples to verify your choice.
14. *Foreshadowing* is a hint an author gives to suggest to readers what will happen later in a story. Foreshadowing increases suspense because it “hints” that something exciting or momentous is going to happen. Susan Fletcher prefaces each chapter with “Lessons for Life and Storytelling.” Examine the first four chapters of the book and pinpoint the words in the “Lessons for Life and Storytelling” sections that seem to cast a shadow and identify the events they foreshadow in the chapter that follows.

Chapter One:

Chapter Two:

Chapter Three:

Chapter Four:

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15. *Author techniques:* Remember, a *metaphor* is a figure of speech that creates a picture by saying something is something else (for example, “he became a lion when angry”). *Similes* are a figure of speech in which words such as *like* or *as* are used to more clearly indicate that a comparison is being made to something else (for example, “he fought like a lion”). *Anthropomorphism* [an-thro-po-mor-fism] is a technique by which an author gives human or animal characteristics to inanimate objects (for example, “the trees stretched their limbs in the warm, early morning sun”). After each of the following sentences from the book, fill in which technique the author used in that sentence.

a. “I wanted to ask so many things I couldn’t squeeze them all into a single question; they spilled into a stream of questions that started small and flowed out to cover the rest of my life.”

Author technique: _____

b. “I closed my nostrils from the inside—breathed through my mouth—but the revulsion crawled down my throat.”

Author technique: _____

c. “. . . my mind was moving slowly, like wading through a pool of deep water.”

Author technique: _____

d. “I felt as if I were blindfolded, groping my way through a maze of hidden traps.”

Author technique: _____

Dig Deeper:

16. In a general sense, *perspective* is the personal evaluation of the significance of something, generally based on a person’s own experiences or circumstances. The night after Marjan returns from the harem, she worries about the story of Julnar that Shahrazad was going to tell the Sultan: “It was a boring tale! I could

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see that now, though I had not before. It would never save her!” Why does Marjan have this perspective about her story? What does she say about the story the next morning after she learns that Shahrazad lives? What event changed her perspective?

17. In the “Lessons for Life and Storytelling” at the beginning of Chapter 3, Marjan says, “Sometimes, when you wish for a thing and then it comes true, you discover that maybe you didn’t think through your wish all the way to the end.” What did Marjan wish for at in the middle of Chapter 3 that came true? How did her perspective change when she realized her wish was about to come true? How did her perspective change again when she was taken into the harem?

18. What does Auntie Chava say about the tongue in Chapter 4? How does this compare with what the Bible says about the tongue in Psalm 34:13, Proverbs 10:19, and Proverbs 21:23?

19. When speaking of her words, Marjan says, “The trouble was, I couldn’t resist letting them out. They made a turmoil in my mouth until I did.” What does Marjan mean by this? Explain Marjan’s meaning. Where is her true turmoil? See Psalm 39:1–3. Compare and contrast this with Marjan’s situation.

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20. In Chapter 3, Auntie Chava says that she wants only a few things—what are they? How does this compare with what the Bible says in 1 Timothy 6:6–11?

Optional Activities:

1. Continue examining each “Lessons for Life and Storytelling” section throughout the book for foreshadowing.
2. In Chapter 3 we see Marjan’s opinions about several things change radically as she gains a different perspective of them. Read Matthew 6:31–34; 7:12. Discuss how these two passages relate to our perspective on how we should treat other people and worrying about the future.
3. Begin keeping track of things Marjan has strong ideas about, and then keep track of how her perspective changes later after she has more information.

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10. The original plan was for a carpet seller to take them to the harem rolled inside carpets, so the girls could get safely in with the cleaned carpets. However, the guards insist the carpets be unrolled, and the carpet seller refuses to unroll them, so they have to leave and are unable to get the carpets into the harem. The Khatun may have told the guards to search everything because of her suspicions, or this may be one of the ways the sultan protects the harem from unwanted visitors.

Dig Deeper:

11. He is speaking to her of lack of forgiveness and her bitterness over past wrongs. He is explaining to her that holding onto her anger and injury can poison her soul and life.

12. Marjan does think the Sultan needs to forgive, or at least he needs to hear a lesson on forgiveness. Answers may vary. Marjan seems to hold onto deep anger against her mother for injuring her foot—she has never forgiven her mother. Jesus teaches us our forgiveness is tied in some way to the way we forgive others. If we have accepted forgiveness from God, we should be willing to forgive other people. Be kind to one another, forgiving just as Christ is forgiving.

13. Answers will vary. When the storyteller asks if she advocates punishment, Marjan says she wants *justice*. She wants Princess Jauharah to be punished for her actions toward Badar Basim. Marjan thinks it is unfair that Badar Basim forgives the princess to the extent that he wants to marry her.

14. Answers may vary. Justice means being fair, morally right, equitable. It also carries with it a sense of righting a wrong—of making certain that wrong is corrected and things are made as good as they were before the wrong was committed. Punishment means to inflict a penalty for an offense. Punishment does not necessarily deal with the victim of the offense at all, it simply penalizes the offender. Answers for the scenarios may differ; accept reasonable answers. a. justice—the victim, the store, does not lose the hair clip or its value, and Krystal spends time and effort making up for her offense; b. justice or punishment—it could be justice for repaying the bills, although the parents sued; it also could be punishment for the fine and for suing for pain and suffering. c. punishment—the men are sent to prison and the victims of the crime are not compensated for the crime.

Chapters 18–20

Vocabulary:

Sentences will vary. 1. Wearing shoes or other footwear.

2. to abate; to fall from a high level to a lower level

3. to smile in a smug, self-satisfied, taunting manner

4. dead bodies

5. make a hole in a ship to sink it; to destroy

6. the washing of one's body in a religious rite

7. a device that restricts movement; self-control over one's actions or thoughts

8. can be used up or gotten rid of in service; not of much worth

9. to wrap, restrain, or envelop with cloth

10. a messenger or agent entrusted with carrying information

11. deep sadness from affliction, hardship, and grief

12. part of the body is mutilated, disfigured, or crippled.

13. lightweight, weak

Questions:

1. She expects to see gloating, but sees only fear. Soraya has been proud and scornful in the past, and Marjan is astonished.

2. Soraya sneaks some food to her, then Shahrazad brings her food.

3. She tells Shahrazad that she was motivated by Shahrazad's example. She also tells Shahrazad she admires her.

4. Mitra comes to free Marjan.

5. She is to go to the roof and be let down outside the palace walls in a pigeon basket. Then she must go to the storyteller's house. Shahrazad tells Marjan that she will get Marjan to a safe place, a strange place.

6. Guards searching for Marjan come up to Zaynab's rooftop and discover her lowering Marjan in the basket. They begin to raise the basket back up and Marjan slips out and falls to the ground below. Then she runs.

7. She is taken to the house of her mother's old servant and friend, Farah.

8. Abu Muslem is a shadowy figure who leads women to safety out of the city for a price. She finds Zaynab's letter, which has the word *vizier* in it; the vizier's robe is in the chest; and he knows the story of Badar Basim, which is a story

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only the Sultan and an advisor knew when the Sultan was young. When the woman comes to get Marjan from the storyteller's room, she tells Marjan she is following Abu Muslem's orders. All this leads Marjan to the conclusion that they are the same person.

9. Marjan had listened to her mother telling her stories.

Thinking About the Story:

10. Soraya comes to feed Marjan. The Khatun has beaten Soraya and Soraya realizes that no one is safe from the Khatun's wrath, and she will be next to be killed if she becomes the wife of the Sultan.

11. Answers may vary. When her first son died, the Khatun began to hate and distrust other women and worked hard to protect her sons from them. She has convinced herself that all other women are deceitful and plotting. If Shahrazad has deceived the Sultan and taken a lover, it would simply confirm to the Khatun that she is right to hate all other women—it would give her an excuse and justification for the way she feels and acts.

12. Shahrazad brings food, tends Marjan's wounds, apologizes and thanks Marjan, finds out the details of the story, and says goodbye.

13. He is wounded by the betrayal of his first wife, by bitterness, lack of forgiving, and self-hate. Shahrazad is trying to help him open his heart to forgive and trust again and to admit he was wrong.

14. Shahrazad says that there is nothing wrong with loving—it is hating that is wrong.

15. Ayaz gives Marjan his own savings and tells her it is a loan. He probably is not expecting to be repaid because he may not see her again, or she will be unable to earn enough to ever repay him.

16. Abu Muslem told Farah about some things he'd read about Marjan in a letter. This must have been the letter from Zaynab sharing what Marjan had told her and how bitter Marjan was.

17. Marjan cries for her mother, for her anger, for all the women and all the misery. Answers will vary about why. She finally remembered, or allowed herself to remember, the love her mother gave her, and she finally forgave her mother for not being perfect.

Dig Deeper:

18. Just knowing we are wrong does not make us right, and the Sultan is no different. He knows he has done wrong, but he has done nothing to change it. From these verses we can assume the Sultan has worldly sorrow—he recognizes he has done wrong, and he feels sorrow about it (assuming that is what causes his nightmares), but he has not changed or repented. Shahrazad says, "he can't overcome his pride." The scriptures say, "Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret." It brings change and humility before God.

19. Answers may vary. The definitions for *repent* will fall along two lines: a) to turn from sin, or to feel so remorseful that we change bad behavior; and b) to feel regret, sorrow, remorse. To just feel regret, sorrow, and remorse does not change anything; this is the worldly sorrow that leads nowhere. But to turn from sin, to change and improve is the godly sorrow; it recognizes error, turns its back on it, and moves toward the good. The key words may be *turn*, *change*, or something similar. We also recognize that the verses are speaking not just of "being better," but of repenting and turning toward God, the source and author of our salvation.

20. Marjan lists unforgivable deeds as: murdering innocent women, threatening to kill you if you weren't entertaining enough, imprisoning you by magic in a shape not your own and trying to starve you, maiming you so people would pity you for the rest of your life and no one would marry you. Marjan cannot understand how Shahrazad could love and, apparently, forgive the Sultan. The Matthew passage tells us we are to forgive, almost forever! The Romans verses tell us that while we were sinners and enemies of God, Christ Jesus died for us and saved us from God's anger; and the Colossians verse tells us that we are supposed to forgive others as God forgave us. That means, with the Romans verse, even if they are our enemies! The 1 John verse tells us that not only does God forgive us if we repent, but he also cleans away all our sins.

21. Answers will vary but may mention that when you've been hurt badly, it is easy to become bitter or angry, not just at the person who hurt you, but at everyone; it can become difficult to trust or forgive anyone. Marjan; the Sultan; and the Khatun, his mother, all can be described as crippled in their hearts.

22. Marjan says that hate and hurt are a terrible vicious circle that will never stop until someone forgives. The Bible teaches us that hate blinds us, bitterness is from the devil, mercy and peace-loving are from God, and killing, fighting, and hate are from wrong and selfish motives.