

Serafina and the Black Cloak Study Guide

Serafina and the Black Cloak by Robert Beatty

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Plot Summary

NOTE: This study guide refers to *Serafina and the Black Cloak* by Robert Beatty (Kindle Edition).

In Robert Beatty's *Serafina and the Black Cloak*, the year is 1899. Serafina, the main character, is a twelve-year-old girl who secretly lives in the basement of the Biltmore Estate with her father, a gifted mechanic who works there. Serafina is a different looking girl. She has only four toes on each foot, and she is missing bones. The missing bones give her the ability to squeeze into very tight spaces. Serafina also has large amber eyes and loves to catch rats. One evening, she is catching rats in the manor when she sees a mysterious man in a black cloak with a young girl who is wearing a yellow dress. The girl manages to escape the man's grasp and runs away. He chases the girl, and Serafina follows. Just as Serafina is ready to attack the man, he wraps the cloak around the girl and she vanishes. He then sees Serafina and starts chasing her. Serafina runs and hides. She survives the night.

Serafina's father finds her the next morning, and she tells him what happened. He thinks that she is imagining things. He is also preoccupied with work as the machine that provides electricity to the estate is not working. Angered and frustrated by her father's response, Serafina defies him and goes upstairs, a place where she is not allowed to go. She wants to tell someone what happened so that she can help the missing girl. There she sees the Vanderbilts and their guests. Serafina notices one man, Mr. Thorne, who entertains the guests while they wait for their horses. Thorne has talents that surprise a man who appears to be a good friend of his.

Even though Serafina tries to stay hidden, Braeden sees her. Braeden is the twelve-year old nephew of George and Edith Vanderbilt. Braeden lives with his aunt and uncle because his parents are dead. Serafina and Braeden introduce themselves to each other. Serafina starts to tell him what happened to the girl in the yellow dress when a woman runs out crying that her daughter, Clara, is missing. Serafina realizes that Clara is the girl in the yellow dress. The boss of Serafina's father sees Serafina, but she manages to escape. She goes to warn her father that they are going to search the house, including the basement, to find the missing girl.

As they cover up evidence that they live there, her father tells Serafina the story of how he found her. She is not his biological daughter. The news upsets her and leaves her confused. They cannot talk about the matter because the men come to search the area. She evades them and goes to look for Braeden. She goes to the stables and gets caught again. Braeden comes just in time to save her. She makes up a story as to who she is and ends up in Braeden's carriage. His aunt and uncle are sending him away for his safety. On the way, however, the Man in the Black Cloak attacks the carriage. He wants Braeden. However, he ends up taking one of the footmen, a young boy named Nolan. Braeden and Serafina have to stay in the carriage for the night.



A rescue party arrives the next morning, but Serafina hides. After they leave, she starts to go back to the estate. She takes a path that does not directly lead her to the mansion. She hopes that it will lead her to a deserted village. She finds a graveyard and also some cubs. She plays with the cubs and feels as if they are welcoming her home. Suddenly, the mother comes and attacks her. Serafina escapes, but she is lost. Finally, she follows the river, and her father finds her. He warns her to stay out of the matter and stay safe, but Serafina does not listen.

That evening, Serafina goes to Braeden's room. The Man in the Black Cloak comes to the door, but he cannot get in the room. Instead of taking Braeden, he takes another child. Serafina is already beginning to suspect that Thorne is the Man in the Black Cloak, but she does not have any real evidence. She gets Braeden to help her search the rooms of the guests, but they do not find the Black Cloak. Braeden, who likes Thorne, does not believe that Thorne is connected to the Black Cloak.

Due to the atmosphere at the Estate, Edith Vanderbilt plans a gathering. Thorne impresses everyone with his talents, and George Vanderbilt invites him to have drinks later with his close friends. As Serafina's suspicion of Thorne grows, she finds out that Braeden is going to go with Thorne the next morning and stay at his place for his safety. She knows she has to act in order to save Braeden.

That evening, she lures Thorne to the cubs' den, knowing that the lioness will attack him in order to save her cubs. The plan works, but then the lioness turns to attack her. When they look each other in the face, the attack stops. Then, the Black Cloak starts to speak to Serafina. It wants her to put it on. She does for a short while. The cloak offers her power and fame. When she puts the hood on, she sees all of the people the cloak has absorbed. Instantly, Serafina takes off the cloak. The Black Cloak fights Serafina, and she tries to destroy it. Then Thorne, who is not dead yet, fights her. From out of nowhere Braeden's dog comes and attacks Thorne. The lioness comes to help. They kill Thorne.

In the meantime, Serafina fights the Black Cloak. She finally manages to destroy it and when she does, all of the absorbed people appear. She recognizes Clara and Nolan. A Russian girl who had also disappeared is there, too. There is a woman who seems to need help. Serafina goes to assist her and when she does, she finds out that this is her mother. She is a catamount and when the Man in the Black Cloak took her, he only took the human part. The lioness was her cat part, and the cubs are Serafina's half-siblings.

As the story ends, everyone goes back to the estate. However, Leandra, Serafina's mother, chooses to stay in her cat form. She goes back to take care of her cubs. Serafina tells Braeden about her identity, and the Vanderbilts make plans to make the basement more comfortable for Serafina and her father. They accept her and her father as part of the household.



Section 1: Chapters 1 - 6

Summary

Chapter 1 of Robert Beatty's *Serafina and the Black Cloak* (Kindle Edition) begins when Serafina wakes up in the middle of the night while her father still sleeps. Serafina is a twelve-year-old girl who secretly lives with her father in the basement of the Biltmore Estate,

Serafina gets up and starts hunting for rats, something that she does every night. She catches two. One bites her. She does not like it when rats bite her, but the bite does not phase her. Instead of killing the rats, she lets them go. In the past, she would kill the rats and present them later to her father. It is her job to catch rats as she is Biltmore Estate's Chief Rat Catcher, a title her father gave her when she had asked whether she had a job like others on the estate. She roams around the house at night, undetected, looking for rats, but her father forbids her to go into the forest. She argues with him about a lot of things, like eating her grits, but she knows that he is serious about this and listens to him.

After letting the rats go, Serafina goes upstairs. As she returns to the basement, she hears a noise. Following the sound, she sees a man wearing a black cloak and nice shoes. He has a child with him, a young girl. The girl escapes, and he chases her. Serafina knows that the man is going to harm the girl and that she should try and help the girl. She is about to attack the man when he begins to cover the girl with the black cloak. Just as the cloak covers her, Serafina sees the girl's eyes pleading for her to help her, but there is nothing she can do. The girl disappears. While Serafina tries to take this all in, the man in the black cloak sees her and comes towards her, telling her the same thing he told the girl - that he was not going to hurt her.

In Chapter 2, the man in the black cloak chases Serafina. She runs upstairs into the main kitchen where she feels safe because she is in her territory. She looks for a place to hide and finally chooses a drying rack constructed by her father. She is able to squeeze in it because her collarbones do not connect to her other bones as they should. In addition, she only has four toes on each foot instead of five. The Man in the Black Cloak comes into the laundry room. Serafina stays quiet and still.

In Chapter 3, Serafina's father finds her. She tells him what happened, but he does not believe her. His reaction angers her. Instead of going back to the workshop in the basement as her father tells her to do, she goes upstairs. She feels as if she must tell someone about what happened, but she also disobeys him out of spite. She still remembers what her father had said about the importance of remaining hidden, so she continues to hide as she watches the Vanderbilts with their guests. While they wait for the horses to come, a man named Thorne serenades them with the piano. One of the other guests, Mr. Bendel, finds it surprising that he can play so well. Thorne is a man of



many talents. After he plays, the two men banter, and Thorne admits that he is not as good at horseback riding as Bendel.

Serafina is watching all of this when Braeden, the Vanderbilts' nephew sees her. After he asks if she is lost, they introduce themselves to each other. His dog is with him and does not seem to like Serafina. She starts to tell him what she saw, but she is interrupted first by Thorne who wants to know whether Braeden is coming with them. Then, her father's boss sees and grabs her.

At the same time a woman runs out asking whether anyone has seen her daughter, Clara. Serafina realizes that this is the girl she saw the night before. George Vanderbilt appears and orders a search of the entire house. While he is talking, Serafina notices the shoes of the men and realizes that they are wearing the same type of shoes that the Man in the Black Cloak wore. News, though, that they are searching the entire house moves Serafina into action because this means that they will also be searching the basement. She gets out of the grip of her father's boss and runs downstairs to warn her father.

In Chapter 4, Serafina runs to her father's workshop to warn him that the search party is coming. He starts to erase the signs of their presence. While he is doing all of this, Serafina questions him about why he is ashamed of her. He tells her to follow him. While they hide, he tells her that he is not ashamed of her and then proceeds to tell her that he is not her real father. He had found her in the forest. When no one would take her, he took care of her and raised her. Officials came to take her away later, and he assaulted them and ran away, getting the job at the Biltmore Estate. He and Serafina have hidden out there ever since. He tells her that he does not know anything about her mother. Just as they are talking about Clara again, there is banging at the door. Someone is ordering for it to be opened.

In Chapter 5, Serafina's father opens the door and explains how the dynamo generates electricity. Serafina escapes by crawling along the ceiling. She thinks about what her father told her and finds it all unsettling. She also thinks that she needs to find Clara, even though her father has told her to stay out of the matter. She looks for clues and finds the glove that the man in the black cloak had worn, but dismisses it as a clue. As she goes to the main level of the basement, she wonders whether Braeden is really her friend. She ends up hiding in the Winter Garden and then into the Billiard room. She's about to leave there when the footman comes in with one of the maids. They talk about Clara's disappearance and the fact that she was a pianist. The footman shows the maid a secret entrance. He mentions that Clara had on a yellow dress and Serafina wonders how he knows this. She decides to look for Braeden at the stables. She almost makes it there, but it is intercepted by a man named Mr. Crankshod. Braeden arrives just in time to save her.

In Chapter 6, Braeden goes along with Serafina's story that she is the shoeshine girl and tells her to get into his carriage. It is uncomfortable for her at first because she does not know where to sit. Also, the dog does not seem to like her. They talk about Clara's disappearance. It turns out that she was not the first child to disappear. Braeden tells



her about a Russian girl who had also disappeared. As they talk, she tells him that she lives in the basement and asks him to keep the information a secret. Just as he is about to speak, the horses scream. Serafina and Braeden discover that they are alone in the forest.

Analysis

The first section operates on a number of levels. First, its language and style establish a sense of conflicting tones. The tone is brisk, yet frustrated and ominous. At the same time, the section introduces one of the novel's major themes, the need to have an identity of one's own in order to find fulfillment. The section represents the theme through the idea of hierarchy and one's place in that hierarchy. Knowing and accepting one's place is part of one's identity. When people have this they do not look for anything else. They accept life as it is. When they do not, however, they feel unsettled and frustrated. This feeling leads them on a search to find answers.

Serafina's father now has his identity. He has worked on the Biltmore Estate for years. He has made a home for them in the basement. He has his cot installed. They have their meals together as a family and he has a meaningful job on the estate. He is responsible for the mechanical "contraptions on which the two-hundred-and-fifty-room mansion depended" (5). It has not always been this way for him though. Even though he still worked as a mechanic, when he was younger things were not working out of him as he felt that they were supposed to. He wanted to "meet a good woman, build a house in town, and have children..." (50) but he was big, sweaty from work, and could not communicate with the women he met. When the foreman and his wife celebrated the coming of their third child, it was too much for him and he went on his own journey which led to the discovery of Serafina. She helped him find fulfillment. "I knew then and there that I was hers, and she was mine, that we were kin now, and there was no denyin' it" (54). He has his family and he makes the sacrifices that one makes for a family. In his case, he gives up his personal freedom to take care of Serafina.

He tries to give this sense of family to Serafina and help her find her identity within its confines. When she wants to know whether she has a job like the other people on the Estates, he tells her that she does and gives her a title. She is the Chief Rat Catcher. The title makes her proud. "She remembered even now, two years later, how her little chest had swelled and how she had smiled with pride when he'd said those words: Chief Rat Catcher. She had liked the sound of that" (6).

That was two years earlier though. Now she feels as if something is missing in her life and faces frustration because her father does not give her satisfactory answers to her questions. "Over the years, her pa had taught her how to read and write pretty well, and told her plenty of stories about the world, but he was never too keen on talking about what she wanted to talk about, which was what was going on deep down in his heart, and what had happened to her mother...Sometimes, she wanted to reach down inside him and shake him up to see what would happen" (pp 8-9). She does not do it because they have a "pretty good life" and she knows that he does not want to be shaken.



In addition, Serafina has her place in the hierarchy of their life. She has a title. She is above the rats. It is this situation that creates the conflict that builds to the point at the end of the section in which Serafina breaks with her father and goes on her own journey to find her identity. She loves her father, but also loves having little arguments with him, "She couldn't imagine much else in the world - except maybe sleeping in the warmth of one of the basement's small sunlit windows - that was finer than a bit of banter with her pa" (2). When she sets the rats free she wants to follow them and explore. She only stays because her father has told her not to go there. Still, she does not simply accept his words. She wonders what is so bad out there and then she feels "strangely lonesom." (7.) Serafina is no longer the young kitten willing to follow her "mother."

With these feelings already rustling inside her, it is easy for the sighting of the man in the black cloak to set changes in motion. She calls him a rat, but he is not able to catch her. Instead, she becomes the prey and the one who cannot be a "dumb mouse" (25). Already her identity has come into question. Then she finds out that her father is not her father, which sets her into a tailspin causing her to rebel against her father. She confides in Braeden, telling him that she lives in the basement with her father and she enters the forest. Both things were forbidden by her father.

The theme of needing to have an identity to find fulfillment repeats itself when readers find out about Braeden's life. Even though the Vanderbilts have taken him in and given him a good life, he still searches for his identity. Unlike, Serafina, he knows who his mother and father are, but this is not enough. Like Serafina's father, the Vanderbilts try to create an identity for him by inviting other children to the house for him to socialize with. This, however, is not enough. Like Serafina, he must go on his own journey to come into his own.

Other important themes and motifs that appear in this section are that of family and friendship. What makes a family? Both Serafina and Braeden have, in essence, been adopted. Is Serafina's father any less of a father because he is not her biological father. The notion confuses Serafina, "She felt more unsettled and disjointed than ever. Suddenly, her pa wasn't her pat and Biltmore wasn't her home" (64). Later she thinks that she "barely even had a pa any more" (71). Can the Vanderbilts create a life for Braeden now that his parents have died or will he always feel like an outsider?

Equally confusing to Serafina is what makes a friend. Her father has always told her that the Vanderbilts and their guest were different from them. "...her pa loved her, so couldn't other people love her too?" (64). She refers to Clara as a friend in several instances. Then, when she meets Braeden she wonders whether she can think of him as a friend or if she is fooling herself as they are of different statuses in life. She admits that she does not know what a friend is. Yet, she goes against her father's orders to find out.

The narration presents a mystery, in keeping with the genre. Serafina finds clues and suspects in an attempt to solve it. While the glove that she finds tells her nothing, she makes notes of the shoes the men wear, as the Man in the Black Cloak wears the same type of shoes. This clue would seem to eliminate servants. She also listens for clues in what people say, and the narrator points out that Thorne plays the piano as well as



Clara. The ominous tone heightens when readers discover that another child has gone missing.

Discussion Question 1

Seeing the Man in the Black Cloak stirs Serafina into action. Do you think she would have continued to be happy with her present life if she had never seen him? Support your response.

Discussion Question 2

Was Serafina's father right to hide her past for all of these years? Why do you think he did so? Is she better off knowing the truth? Explain why or why not.

Discussion Question 3

Why do you think Braeden goes along with Serafina's story? What does this say about his character?

Vocabulary

banter, emblazoned, tantalizing, dogged, jolted, rummage, labyrinth, loathsome, specter, dexterous, camaraderie, mesmerize, sabotaged, writhing, conjure, prodigy, reprimand, ominous, accost, conspiratorial, trepidation, ruse



Section 2: Chapters 7 - 12

Summary

At the beginning of Chapter 7, Serafina, Braeden, and the Gideon are out of the carriage staring into the dark, quiet forest. They cannot see anything, but both Serafina and Gideon sense that there is something out there. The horses are also nervous, something that Braeden notices because they are moving their feet. He calms them. The sight of him doing so shocks and impresses Serafina. The two children wonder what scared the horses. Then they see that a large tree has fallen and is blocking their path. Suddenly, Mr. Crankshod - who had disappeared earlier - comes out of the forest demanding an ax. His assistant, Nolan, is eager to help. However, Crankshod wants to do all of the work himself.

While Crankshod chops, Serafina and Braeden look around. They discover that they are deep in the forest near an abandoned village. Serafina cannot help but feel as if they are being watched and feel that something bad is going to happen. She takes a look at the fallen tree and realizes that someone made the tree fall to block the road. She shows it to Braeden and he suggests that they turn around, but just as he does, another tree falls, this one blocking the route back to the estate. The men continue to work on cutting the first tree while Serafina goes into the forest. There she sees the Man in the Black Cloak and realizes that he is there to attack the carriage. She gets back just in time to save Braeden. The man in the black cloak continues his assault, but Nolan throws himself in front of Braeden and he takes Nolan instead. Serafina explains to Braeden that this is the same thing that happened to Clara. They also wonder what happened to Crankshod as they do not see him. At the end of the chapter, Serafina tells Braeden that the Man in the Black Cloak had really come for him.

Serafina and Braeden decide that they have no choice but to stay in the carriage for the night in Chapter 8 because it is too far for them to walk and their horses would not be able to navigate the dense trees in the forest. Braeden is sure that people will come looking for them when he does not arrive. His uncle had sent a rider ahead to their destination to say they were coming. Braeden shows that he knows more about animals and Serafina is happy that he sees her as an ally. They snuggle together to stay warm and she is glad that he does not say anything about her smelling like the basement as she fears he might. The dog is there also and she thinks that they are maybe even friends now.

Braeden asks her about living in the basement, and she tells him all about it. Then, they talk about the Man in the Black Cloak. Serafina tells Braeden that she is not sure whether the man is a ghost or a human. She remarks that he reminds her of a gentleman. Her observation bothers Braeden. After asking him not to reveal her secret about living in the basement, he falls asleep.



As Braeden sleeps, Serafina remembers things she had overheard his aunt saying about him. He loves his animals but he does not socialize well with other people. His aunt had thought that he was going through a phase that he would outgrow; but, Serafina does not think that this has happened. She figures that being different from the others gives her an advantage in gaining Braeden's friendship. She stays alert, in case the Man in the Black Cloak comes back.

In Chapter 9, Serafina wakes up the next morning. She and the dog hear the sound of other people approaching. She wakes Braeden up, slips out of the carriage and hides. It turns out that the people are members of a rescue party which includes Mr. Vanderbilt, Mr. Bendel, and Mr. Thorne. Braeden tells his uncle that they were attacked and Nolan is gone. Braeden also says that Mr. Crankshod has disappeared. Crankshod is with the rescue party now. He has told Mr. Vanderbilt that they were attacked by bandits. Braeden does not agree that this was the case, but Mr. Vanderbilt wants to send out a search party anyway. Neither Braeden nor Crankshod say anything about Serafina, even though Braeden looks for her, hoping that the dog can sniff her out.

While Serafina looks on, she tries to figure out if Crankshod is a good man. The dog barks at him. As everyone talks, the Russian ambassador, whose daughter has also disappeared stands separately - looking out on the road and sheds a tear. Serafina looks at Crankshod and Mr. Vanderbilt as suspects. She also thinks that it is strange that Thorne knows how to ride a carriage, which is the job of a servant. When everyone has gone, she feels anxious and misses her father, but she is interested in the forest because she was born there. She decides to explore. At one point she comes to a three-way split. She decides that two of the paths could lead to Biltmore. The third, however, could lead to the old village. This is the one she decides to take.

In Chapter 10, Serafina follows the third path and then comes to another fork in the road. She hears noises that sound like children playing and goes in that direction. She ends up running into ravens that seem to try to be communicating with her. They seem to be frustrated that she does not understand them and start diving at her with their claws. She does not know if they are trying to attack her or warn her of something. She runs and then finds herself in a graveyard. She finds graves with inscriptions. Many of them are dark and ominous, but she finds one that is not overgrown and surrounded by fog. There is an angel's face that she thinks is pretty. She reads the inscription which talks about character being defined by the battle one dares to fight, not whether one wins or loses. She wonders what type of battle and then looks at the sword the angel is holding. She touches it and cuts her finger. Then she sees something moving by the grave.

In Chapter 11, Serafina is scared, but curious. She gets closer to the movement to see what it is and discovers that it is not a moving corpse as she had feared, but a wildcat. Then another one appears. They start playing with her and she feels at ease, but it does not take long for her to be in danger nearby. The mother cat has come to protect her cubs and charges her. Serafina fights hard and survives. In evading the lioness, she has run through the forest, not paying attention to where she was going. When she stops running, she realizes that she is lost.



It starts to rain in Chapter 12, and Serafina starts to wish that she was at home with her father. As she watches the water flow, she realizes that water runs downhill into rivers and the river that this water would flow into was the one that flowed past Biltmore Estate. She follows it to get back home. She thinks about her father, and she misses Braeden and wants to see him.

She had hoped to get home before nightfall, but she does not make it. She crawls into a hole for protection and thinks that she is a failure because she had only found misery in the forests, not the answers she had hoped to find. Just then, she hears a wolf howl from afar. This does not bother her, but then she hears one howl that is closer. She stays still and sees a young wolf. Even though she stays still, it stares straight at her. Then both of them hear a noise. The wolf looks at her again and walks into the river and starts swimming towards its family on the other side of the river. Meanwhile, Serafina hears footsteps getting closer to her. She fears that it is the Man in the Black Cloak. The sound of a lantern adds to her fears as the Man with the Black Cloak had carried a lantern when he had taken Clara. She gets ready to fight.

Analysis

The primary element to note in this section is the extended metaphor that the author continues to develop. The metaphor is the comparison of Serafina to an animal. When the carriage first comes to a stop, both she and the dog sense that something is wrong, implying that she has animal instincts like the dog. Later, she feels as if she and the dog are on the same side. She, like the dog, knows how to hunt. She does not like to be hunted. As she goes deeper into the forest she creeps and crouches. Her senses do the work. When she attacks the Man in the Black Cloak, she charges and pounces, makes wild screeching sounds, claws and snarls fiercely.

When Serafina sleeps in the carriage, she curls up next to Braeden. She is used to sleeping in small places, like a cat. The metaphor becomes stronger when she is in the forest alone. When she comes across a group of ravens, she realizes that they are not talking to each other. They are trying to communicate with her. "But the ravens weren't just conversing with each other - they were looking at her, flying around her, trying to communicate with her. As if frustrated by her lack of understanding, several of the birds began diving at her with their claws" (134).

The cubs see something in her as well. "One of the cubs spotted her. Its ears perked up, and it stared at her, studying her. She thought that it would run away in fear. But it didn't. It gave her a raspy meow and ambled towards her as if it didn't have a care in the world" (142). As she plays with them, she is happy they they accept her. Indeed, being with them feels like a homecoming. It is interesting to note that when the lioness runs her away, she realizes that she is "completely and utterly lost" (144). She has, in essence been chased away from her home, her family, and part of her identity.

Serafina thinks about how she misses her other home with her father. She wants milk and catfish and her cozy bed. Also, like a cat, she hates the rain. She acts like an



animal when she hides from the wolf. "I'm one with the forest. I'm camouflaged and silent" (151). The wolf also seems to try to communicate with her. After it leaves she hides, thinking of what a rabbit would do.

The metaphor becomes even more interesting as it becomes obvious in this section that Braeden loves animals and has a special way to make them feel safe. He has not made friends with any of the other children who come to the house, yet he understands horses, his dog, and Serafina. Serafina, herself says that she knows that she is different and this difference could give her an advantage in gaining Braeden's friendship over the other children he has met. Given the extended animal metaphor, it could be her animal nature that he finds attractive and it could be his ability to calm animals that makes her so comfortable around him and willing to tell him that she and her father live in the basement. In fact, she is so happy to have him as a friend that she is "like a starved animal wolfing down a scrap thinking it had eaten a full meal" (149).

Serafina does not know whether Braeden feels the same way about her as she feels about him, but Braeden shows that he is a good friend as well as an intelligent boy in this section. He is rational when they discover that they are stuck in the forest. He develops a plan, to go back to the mansion, when they discover that the tree did not fall accidentally. He devises a plan for the night, sure that someone will come looking for them. He proves to be a good friend when he does not tell the others that Serafina exists and that she and her father live in the basement.

One of most important themes that appears in this section is the search for one's identity to find fulfillment. Serafina has left home and gone into the forest to find her identity. She already knows that she was born there, but there are still many other answers that she needs to find. This is why she cannot yet take the roads that go back to the estate. She is not ready to return home because she is still too early in her journey.

Braeden is also looking for his identity, and there are other similarities between him and Serafina as well. He tries to tell his uncle what happened, and his uncle does not listen to him. This is the same way that Serafina's father had not listened to her. In addition, Braeden does not have any friends.

It is interesting to note how Nolan shows his friendship in this section by the sacrifices he makes. He wants to help chop the tree to clear the path, but then he makes the ultimate sacrifice by standing in front of Braeden just as the Man in the Black Cloak is ready to take him. Thus, he sacrifices his life to save Braeden.

Several symbols appear in this section. Serafina sees herself when she sees the angel in the graveyard, as the name "Serafina" means angel. The inscription tells her how she can go about defining her character and later gives her the courage to fight Thorne and the Black Cloak. Symbolically, wolves guide people when they do not know where to go. This wolf shows Serafina what she needs to do as it crosses the river, thus making a rite of passage. Wolves are there to protect one as they explore a new path, but that person



must be willing to face their fears. Thus, it is not an accident that Serafina sees the wolf just as she feels lost, depressed, and like a failure.

Discussion Question 1

Why do you think the Man in the Black Cloak is after Braeden? Why do you think Nolan tries so hard to save him?

Discussion Question 2

Do you think that the Man in the Black Cloak is a ghost or a real person? Support your answer.

Discussion Question 3

Serafina thinks that she is a failure at the end of the section. What do you think? Support your answer.

Vocabulary

foreboding, impenetrable, skittishness, voluminous, impending, ally, valiant, lavish, mortal, eccentric, soirees, brazen, suppress, concealment, portly, emaciated, perished, obscured, agitation, illuminated, scalded, ambled, oblivious, delve, keen



Section 3: Chapters 13 - 18

Summary

Chapter 13 opens with Serafina realizing that the man with the lantern is her father. The two reunite, and he explains that he thought she had disappeared like the other children. She tells him that she did not disappear, but she got lost. He mentions that he hates wolves, but she thinks of the wolf as her brother and is glad that he made it home. Serafina's father tells her again that she should stay out of the forest to stay safe.

When they get back to the house, everything is locked and a search party has just returned looking for the missing children. The search party has not found anything. Serafina feels that she has to find the Man in the Black Cloak, but her father tells her to sleep and stay safe. She is not to go hunting. He must go to fix the dynamo which is still broken.

Serafina's father goes back to work, and Serafina thinks of Braeden. She decides to go to his room. When she gets there, she finds the door unlocked and Gideon protecting him. Gideon lets her enter. She is happy to be there, but she feels that she has to be on her guard. As she looks out the window and thinks that she is a creature of the night.

In Chapter 14, Serafina goes to sleep. Braeden wakes her up in the middle of the night. He was worried about her. She tells him what happened to her. He tells her that she is clever and brave. Braeden and Serafina talk about what Braeden sees when he looks at her. He tries to blow off her question by saying that everyone is different. When she persists, he admits that he has not made any friends who are human. He says that when he met her it was different than when he met other children his age. He had even resisted leaving to go away for his safety as his aunt and uncle wanted him to do. He was glad to see her with Crankshod and know that he could save her.

Serafina and Braeden agree that they are friends and are different from others, but that does not mean that anything is wrong with them. He gives her a dress as a present. It is one that his aunt had made for Clara. They talk about how his aunt had hoped that Braeden and Clara would become friends, but then they hear footsteps coming towards them in the hall. Braeden knows a secret way out, but Serafina says they should just be quiet and that Braeden should stay still. She joins the dog at the door and lets him know that they are in the fight together if it should come to that. The Man in the Black Cloak stops outside the door and the doorknob turns.

In Chapter 15, the man in the Black Cloak leaves once he cannot get into Braeden's room. The next morning, they find out that he took the pastor's son during the night. The news upsets Serafina because she had not stopped the Man in the Black Cloak. She continues to investigate and hears people talking about the events. As people refer to an evil creature of the night, Serafina wonders if this means that she is evil because she is a creature of the night. She also hears a conversation that involves Thorne. The men



are talking. Thorne is translating what is going on to the Russian ambassador. He says something though that upsets him.

Serafina gets Braeden and they go to the library to look up the words Serafina heard. It turns out that Thorne had called the ambassador “papa.” Serafina thinks that this is strange, but Braeden defends Thorne.

Serafina wants to search the rooms for the Black Cloak. Braden is reluctant, but agrees to help. However, they do not find anything. They make their way to his aunt’s room and hear her planning a gathering to give people comfort through the company of others.

During the Gathering, Serafina observes that Thorne does not look as fresh as usual. The request comes for him to play something and he says that he thought that he might play the organ. Braeden stops him by saying that he loves the piano as Braeden knows that Serafina is hiding in the organ. Thorne plays and then he proves to be an excellent storyteller as well. Mr. Vanderbilt thanks Thorne for being such a wonderful friend to Braeden and invites him to join him and some other friends for cognac and cigars. Serafina notices the look on Thorne’s face when he gets the invitation.

As everyone leaves, she signals Braeden to meet her. She knows that something is not right with Thorne.

In Chapter 17, Braeden and Serafina meet outside. She questions him about Thorne. He tells her what he knows of him, but defends him when Serafina suggests that he could be the Man in the Black Cloak. She continues to present her case and her suspicion that he absorbs his victims for their talent and knowledge. Braden still refuses to believe that it is Thorne. Then someone comes.

It turns out that the person is Mrs. Vanderbilt (Chapter 18). She asks Braeden who he was talking to, but he says that he was just talking to himself. Serafina manages to remind him to lock his door without Mrs. Vanderbilt knowing that she is there. As they walk to the house, Mrs. Vanderbilt tells him about their plan to send him away with Thorne to his house in Asheville the next morning. Serafina knows he will go and realizes that the Man in the Black Cloak will get what he wants.

Analysis

The first thing to note about this section is the attention it pays to differences, whether they be individual differences or differences based on social class.

One of the conflicts that Serafina faces is going against her father in trying to help save the children and find the missing ones who are disappearing from the mansion. He wants her to stay safe and reminds her that “they ain’t our kind of folk” (159). Why should she risk her life for these people? These are people who would not approve of her or her relationship with Braeden. She wonders what the Vanderbilts would say about her if they knew about her and she notes, “When she and Braeden were stranded in the carriage, they were together on the same side, they were as close as close could



be. But now that they were both back home again...he seemed further away than when she was lost in the mountains" (159).

Her father sees the "forbidden stairs and doors and corridors," between the workmen and the owners of the estate. Serafina can see outside of these confines, however. She knows that in spite of their class differences, she and Braeden have a connection and are friends.

The two young people are astute enough to discuss this when she is with him in his bedroom. Serafina is different, but not just because of her looks. She lives in the basement with her father. she is clever, brave, and a survivor. These are traits that Braeden does not see in the children he meets in his social class. Still, both of them know that she is not of his class and thus it is normal for Serafina to wonder whether or not they are and can be friends. Braeden assures her that this is possible.

He tries to help her feel more comfortable in his world by giving her a dress. It was not made for her, however, and in this case the dress cannot make the man. It is not enough to instantly transport into the world of the Vanderbilts. In fact, when his aunt announces that there will be a gathering, Serafina says that she will hide in the organ and Braeden says that he will sneak her food. Both of them know, and do not challenge the fact that she cannot attend the gathering.

Later, Braeden's faith in social standings becomes apparent when Serafina wants to search the rooms of the guests and narrows in on Thorne as the primary suspect. He is reluctant to search the rooms of the guest. The search party, however had no qualms in making Serafina's father open the door for their search. When Serafina tells him her suspicions about Thorne, Braeden does not want to hear it. He was good to his dog, he has many talents, his uncle knows him, so he must be a good man. Basically, he is saying that he is one of us, and even though he does not much about his history, it is okay. Just the fact that he is a gentleman is good enough.

Even Thorne shows the importance of his elevation in status when Mr. Vanderbilt invites him for drinks after the gathering. It is interesting to note that the quality that Mr. Vanderbilt values the most is Thorne's friendship with Braeden. This serves to show the character of the Vanderbilts. They are not snobs who are only attracted to people because of their title. It also foreshadows the fact that, in spite of her father's belief that the Vanderbilts are different from them, Serafina will be able to carve an identity that satisfies the expectations of society. At the very least, the Vanderbilts will accept those who have earned Braeden's friendship.

Discussion Question 1

What does the fact that Serafina's father is willing to go into the forest to find her say about his character? What does it say about his relationship with Serafina?



Discussion Question 2

What does being a creature of the night mean to you? In what ways is Serafina such a creature? In what way is she different from the perception of such creatures?

Discussion Question 3

How is Throne transforming, both mentally and physically? What is the reason for his transformation? Support your answer.

Vocabulary

exhilarate, perturbed, cinch, despair, incessantly, palpable, contorted, envision, grotesque, exquisite, seething, recoiled, somber, solace, haggard, depict, disheartened, ventilation, oblige, exasperation, incredulously, discombobulated, toll, garble



Section 4: Chapter 19 - 24

Summary

In Chapter 19, Serafina realizes that she must devise a plan quickly to catch the Man in the Black Cloak. She knows that she cannot get her father to help, as there is no physical evidence to support her theory. Also, her father was worn out from the pressure he was under to fix the dynamo. Even though she promises her father that she will not go out, she does so as soon as he goes to sleep. When Serafina goes outside, she realizes that she feels connected to the night. She wonders what this means about her identity. She comes up with a plan to bait Thorne. A note from Braeden telling her that he is leaving early in the morning with Thorne reinforces her resolve.

In Chapter 20, Serafina puts on the dress Braeden gave her. She goes upstairs and waits for Thorne to come out of the billiard room after spending the evening with Mr. Vanderbilt. Serafina is afraid and knows that she is risking her life, but she gathers her courage and steps out into the open when Thorne comes out of the room.

Thorne sees and recognizes Serafina in Chapter 21. Serafina knows that Thorne recognizes her. She also knows that he will want to absorb her for her abilities. She runs, and he chases her. She leads him to the cubs' den. She hides with the cubs, but he finds her because of her tracks in the snow. Just as he is about to attack her, the lioness comes and attacks him. Serafina is about to celebrate until she realizes that the lioness is ready to attack her, too.

In Chapter 22, Serafina cannot escape, so she prepares to fight. Just as the lioness is ready to lunge at her, the lioness looks Serafina in the face and snarls. Serafina realizes that there is a connection between the two of them.

In Chapter 23, the lioness studies Serafina. The lioness shows that she realizes that the connection exists with her body language. The cubs come, and Serafina realizes that they love her. She wonders what her connection is with the lioness and the cubs. She thinks that all of this is strange because she is a human who lives in a house and she wants to be back there with her father and Braeden.

Serafina goes outside and sees Thorne and the Black Cloak, but the Black Cloak is no longer on Thorne. Serafina knows that Thorne is not dead yet, but she decides that it is best to just let him die. She looks at the angel's blade and realizes that she has won. She still wants to know what the connection to the lioness means. Just as Serafina is asking the the heavens this question, she hears a voice.

The voice is coming from the Black Cloak. It entices her to put it on by telling her that she will know everything and be powerful. She tries to resist, but she ends up putting it on. When she does, it welcomes her and says that it is not going to harm her.



Analysis

The novel comes to a climax in this section. Serafina and Braeden cement their friendship by making sacrifices for each other. However, there is one rift in their relationship as Serafina believes that Thorne is the Man in the Black Cloak and Braeden does not. At the same time, Serafina moves toward finding her own identity.

Serafina knows that catching the Man in the Black Cloak is something that she must do alone. It is a battle that she chooses to fight, even though she may lose it. It is her battle alone. She cannot count on Braeden or her father. Still, she decides to do it, showing readers that she is on the side of good as opposed to evil. She herself realizes that there is darkness and a bright side to the forest, She can be the bright. She proves her friendship to Braeden in doing so. She is willing to make the ultimate sacrifice, her life in order to save him . Braeden also makes a sacrifice by stepping outside of social norms. He goes into the basement to leave Serafina a note saying that he is leaving. The basement would have been just as off limits to him as the upper floors are to Serafina. The people there were not his type of people. In addition, his actions show that he cares enough about her too communicate with her. This happens even though they do not share the same opinion regarding the identity of the Man in the Black Cloak, proving that true friendship can survive adversity.

It is interesting to note that this time, the Man in the Black Cloak is chasing a girl wearing a maroon dress, not a yellow one. The color of the dress symbolizes that Serafina will not be as easy to catch as Clara was. The color represents the fact that she is willing to sacrifice herself to get him as well energy, passion and action. He is not just chasing any ordinary girl and this is what makes her even more enticing to him. She is the only one he has chased and not caught. She has kept him from getting Braeden. Her abilities are very important to him.

The section also serves as another clue as to Serafina's origins and her identity. When she looks into the lioness' eyes, she sees a connection. The lioness feels it as well. Even though Serafina has yet to put the whole story together, feeling such a bond with the cubs and the lioness means that Serafina is part cat. This notion brings the idea of what makes a family into the section. The cubs, the lioness, and Serafina all feel that that there is a connection between them. However, is it possible for someone to be part of a family when they are different from them. Does Serafina have a real home? She is different from the lioness and the cubs. She is also different from the people at Biltmore Estate. Will she be able to reconcile her identity with what is becoming clearer to both her and the reader? She is part cat and part human.

Serafina has one last test to help her discover her core values. This test comes from the separation of the Black Cloak from Thorne. It is the Black Cloak that is the true force of evil and it is now beckoning her. She has a choice to make, to resist it or to succumb to its temptation.



Discussion Question 1

Why do you think that wearing the dress does not hide Serafina's identity?

Discussion Question 2

What difference does looking someone straight in the eye make? Do you think the lioness would have killed Serafina if she had not done this? Explain.

Discussion Question 3

Why do you think the book is titled Serafina and the Black Cloak instead of Serafina and the Man in the Black Cloak?

Vocabulary

stratagem, allure, infinite, hunker, chasm, pliable, malevolent, promenade, convulsion, nemesis, undeterred, ludicrous, euphoric, enigma, anguish, uppity, clenched, overwhelming, pulsing, welled



Section 5: Chapters 25 - 31

Summary

In Chapter 25, Serafina puts on the cloak and everything changes. She feels strong and confident. The cloak tells her that they can work together and become a great force. She sees its history and what it can enable a person to do. She is about to give in to its will, but then she puts on the hood and sees the souls of the people absorbed by the cloak. The people plead for her to help, and she knows that she must get rid of the cloak. She is trying to do so when a hand reaches out and grabs her ankle.

In Chapter 26, Thorne is still alive and it is his hand that has gripped Serafina's ankle. He does not want her to get rid of the cloak. The two start to fight. She fights with all of her might, but Thorne is stronger. Just as Serafina summons her last bit of strength to strike back, Gideon arrives and attacks Thorne. Then the lioness comes and helps. While all of this is happening, the Black Cloak tries to strangle Serafina. She manages to get it to the sword the angel is holding and slash the cloak off of her neck. She stabs it again with the knife, and the cloak dies. Gideon and the lioness are also victorious. As they start to leave the area, Serafina trips over the body of a little girl.

In Chapter 27, all of the missing children as well as some people whom Serafina does not know are now in the forest with Serafina. Serafina goes over to a woman she does not know. The woman wants to find her children. When Serafina looks at her face, it is like looking in a mirror. She asks the woman who she is.

In Chapter 28, the woman's main concern is finding her babies. Then the woman goes to the cubs' den, makes noises that call the cubs, and starts playing with them. Serafina fears that the lioness is going to come out and attack the woman, but there is no lioness. The woman seems to be happy. Then, she looks at Serafina and tells her that she is her mother, Leandra.

In Chapter 29, one of the Cloak's victims finds a tombstone with his name on it. Leandra explains that she is a catamount, as was Serafina's biological father. The Man in the Black Cloak had attacked her and killed her husband. In the process the Man in the Black Cloak had taken her human soul. However, he left the lioness part of her behind. She was pregnant and later gave birth. Serafina was the only one who had survived. Then Serafina's adopted father had found her. Leandra is happy to see that Serafina's father raised Serafina well. After they finish their analysis of Thorne's behavior and his need to take children, Leandra and Serafina embrace.

In Chapter 30, Serafina leads everyone back to Biltmore Estate. As she arrives, she realizes that Braeden has organized a search party that was ready to go and look for her. Everyone now sees her and knows of her existence. The Man in the Black Cloak's victims also show themselves. Braeden congratulates his dog on finding Serafina.



In Chapter 31, the missing children reunite with their parents. Serafina's mother is now in the form of the lioness. She realizes that she is not ready to join the world of the humans and she has her cubs to care for. She leaves, but as she does so, Serafina lets her know that she will come and visit. Then, Serafina unites with Braeden and fills him in. She sees her father and reunites with him. The Vanderbilts come to meet Serafina. They ask how she found the children. Serafina says that they got lost in the old graveyard. She tells them that she is the Chief Rat Catcher. They make plans to make the basement more comfortable for Serafina and her father. As the novel ends, Serafina sees herself as the protector of Biltmore Estate.

Analysis

The fact that people make choices that define their character becomes even more apparent in this section. Serafina knows that she is different from other children. She knows that she is of a lower social class than Braeden and that this difference can keep them apart. Now though, with the aid of the Black Cloak she can rise above all of this. It is an easy way to get what she has missed in her life thus far. It acts like a drug to lift her spirits and give her the power to do things that she doubts that she can do on her own. "She didn't feel nearly as confused, tired and discouraged as she had just a moment before...She felt rested, capable. Optimistic. She felt powerful. Wearing the cloak, she felt as if she could do almost anything..." (252). With the Black Cloak she could even have the family and friends she has always imagined having. "She'd have many friends and a large family of people who adored her" (253)

At this point, she is thinking that she can have all of these things without hurting anyone. In fact, she could use the power of the cloak to do good things. "...what good and beneficial deeds she could accomplish in the world. It seemed like it would be such a shame to waste the power. Someone had to use the cloak; it might as well be her." (254). Serafina's thoughts echo her earlier observations about good and evil and right and wrong. People may do things that they see as good, while others see their actions as something bad. She thinks that, by making the Black Cloak hers, she will do good. Readers, though, know that the Black Cloak is evil and that ultimately others will see her as evil, just as she sees Thorne as evil. The choice to wear the Black Cloak will lead her to a path of destruction just as it did with Thorne.

She still has the power of choice. Once she puts on the hood, she sees the reality of life with the Black Cloak - the souls of the people it has hurt all pleading for help. It would still be easy to succumb to the drug as the Black Cloak entices her. Serafina chooses to resist, even though it is hard to do so. "She shook her head, trying desperately to resist the cloak's powerful spell" (255). When she takes off the cloak, she feels tired. She is no longer optimistic, but she is determined to choose good over evil and say no to the Black Cloak even though it will not let go.

The section also highlights the sacrifices one makes for friends and family. Braeden sends Gideon to look for Serafina. In doing so, he makes a sacrifice to help his friend. Gideon is Braeden's trusted companion. When he sends him into the forest, he does not



know whether he will return or not. Still, he does it. Gideon sacrifices himself to help Serafina when he attacks Thorne. Even though Thorne stabs him, he does not give up. The lioness, who readers now know has a connection with Serafina and later find out is her mother, comes to protect her child. Thorne is still dangerous at this point because he is armed with the knife he used to slash Gideon. This does not deter the lioness, however. She risks her life to save her child. During the battle with Thorne, Serafina is sacrificing herself to save future victims. She even has to injure herself in the process.

At the end of the novel, the lioness makes another sacrifice. She has found her missing child, Serafina. The lioness loves Serafina. She also sees that Serafina's father has raised her well. She says that Serafina is "perfect in every way" (274). At this point, they have a lot of catching up to do, and it would be easy for her to coax Serafina to stay with her. When she goes to the Biltmore Estate, Serafina sees her mother "staring at the great house, studying the crowd of people and the dogs and horses gathered in front of it." (283). Her mother realizes that these people care about Serafina. This is her home and that even if she did choose to stay there, her presence would upset the balance Serafina has found. Thus, she decides to leave Serafina there.

Serafina's father also sacrifices himself in this section. When he realizes that Serafina is missing, he goes to the Vanderbilts for help. In doing so he has to overcome his fear of being discovered because doing so would "expose her existence and betray the fact that they were living in the basement" (279) He makes the sacrifice, though, to save his daughter.

Finally, this section shows that Serafina's journey is complete. She knows who she is and while she realizes that she has a home with the cubs, she also has a home at the estate. Her "Pa" is her father. Now that she knows who she is, she can come out and be seen. It is interesting to note that she is having the type of coming out party she might have read about or even seen at the estate. She is even wearing the type of dress such a girl would wear. However, it has been altered to fit her personality, a personality she is now proud of. The fact that the Vanderbilts welcome her and agree to do things on her terms, like making the living quarters in the basement more comfortable for Serafina and her father, proves that her identity is in line with societies expectations. She knows who she is and how she fits in the world and is comfortable with that. She does not try to move into places, such as upstairs in the estate, that are not in line with her identity or society's expectations.

Discussion Question 1

Why does Serafina put on the Black Cloak? Why does she take it off when she faces the people it had absorbed?

Discussion Question 2

In the beginning, Gideon did not like Serafina. Why do you think he is willing to sacrifice himself for her now?



Discussion Question 3

Is Serafina's newly found identity sustainable? Explain.

Vocabulary

awry, putrefy, potency, peripheral, debilitated, buoyant, visage, relent, emit, revulsion, emanate, lucid, exultation, guttural, reel, sinewy, beset, urgency, betray, harrowing



Characters

Serafina

Serafina is the novel's main character. She secretly lives in the basement with her father at the Biltmore Estate. She is a curious, stubborn, tenacious, and feisty girl who loves her father, but has a lot of questions about her life. During the course of the narration, she solves two mysteries: the identity of the Man in the Black Cloak and the mystery of her own identity. She is a catamount which means that she is part cat and part human.

Through Serafina, the novel explores several issues including good vs evil, the need to have an identity that matches society's expectations, and social status issues. She longs for a mother and what she thinks is a typical family. However, when she finds her real family, they do not fit her image of a typical family either. She gets mad at her father for keeping her identity a secret for such a long time. Later, she comes to realize that people do things that they think are right, while others may think they are wrong. The knowledge that her father thought he was doing what was best for her helps her accept him as her father once again.

As she discovers more about herself, she must struggle with whether she is good or evil. She has always thought of herself as being good. In fact, she continues to try to help stop the Man in the Black Cloak because she thinks that it would be evil to do nothing. Yet, she realizes that she is a creature of the night - something people associate with evil. In fact, the Man in the Black Cloak is also a creature of the night. Her journey allows her to make choices that define her in a manner that falls outside of these confines.

Finally, she knows that it is not normal to do so for a girl of her social status, but she makes friends with Braeden. The sacrifices they make for each other prove that their friendship is real.

At the end of the novel, Serafina is stronger than she was at the beginning. She had found her identity. Her identity is one that fits in with social expectations. She is still a creature of the night. She still likes living in the basement, but that does not mean that she must hide and stay beneath the others. She has value and has an important place in the Biltmore society.

Pa

Serafina's father is a simple man who, as a mechanic, deals with facts and what he can explain. At the same time, he has a big heart. His heart draws him into the forest, a place he fears, twice to find Serafina.

Pa loves Serafina so much that he sacrifices his own life and freedom to protect her. He protects her for years and takes time to ensure that she has the tools she needs, such



as reading and writing. He tries to get her to eat food that will make her strong. He also tries to protect her from people that he thinks may hurt her.

Pa tries to keep Serafina from the forest for two reasons. He knows that it can be dangerous, so he wants to physically protect her. At the same time, however, he wants to make sure that he does not lose her. He knows that she came from the forest. He even says that he does not want to lose her completely as he knows that she is growing up and finding her identity. He will lose her because she will no longer need to rely on him.

As the story develops, Pa warns Serafina of the dangers. However, he seems to accept that she will do as she will. He also faces his fear of being discovered and makes a sacrifice for her once more by going to the Vanderbilts to ask for their help when he discovers Serafina is missing.

At the end of the novel, Pa accepts that Serafina has come into her own. He is happy that she still loves him, even though Serafina knows that he is not her biological father. He also accepts her relationship with the Vanderbilts.

Braeden

Braeden, the nephew of George and Edith Vanderbilt, lives at the estate due to the death of his immediate family. He is the same age as Serafina and has a way with animals. He is close to the horses and his dog, but he does not make friends with children his own age. However, Braeden does like Mr. Thorne, and Serafina cannot convince Braeden that Thorne is the Man in the Black Cloak. She almost dies trying to prove Thorne's real identity to Braeden.

Braeden is the same age as Serafina, and the two of them have two major things in common. They are living with their adoptive parents, and they do not have friends. Both also come into their own and find their voices. At one point, Braeden's uncle does not believe him, as Serafina's father does not believe her. By the end of the novel, however, Braeden is organizing a search party for a girl whom no one has even seen.

Even though Braeden and Serafina have a lot in common, there is one big difference between them. They come from two different social levels. Braeden lives on the top floor of the mansion, and Serafina lives secretly in the basement with her father. Braeden proves to be trustworthy, and he does not reveal her secret. He does not let this difference stand between their friendship. He appreciates hard work, as seen by the fact that Thorne's comeback story impresses him. He also has an open mind and is willing to make decisions himself. He takes control when they are lost in the forest. Braeden is also willing to follow Serafina and search the rooms of the guests, even though this action is unconventional.



The Man in the Black Cloak / Mr. Thorne

The Man in the Black Cloak is the component of two entities, Mr. Thorne and the Black Cloak.

Thorne is a weak man who wants to be important. At one time, he was in high society, but he lost all of his money. The Black Cloak entices him because he wants to get back into this society. Thus, he makes a choice when he finds the Black Cloak. He chooses evil over good. Ultimately, he goes down an unsustainable path that leads to his destruction.

The Black Cloak is evil, and it becomes a drug for Mr. Thorne. It promises to take him to new heights. However, once he gets hooked, he needs the cloak more and more to function. He must take more and more children to draw from their youth, and he needs to take them more often. He fights to the death to keep his drug alive.

The fact that Thorne is able to fool everyone, except Serafina, makes a comment about society. Once a person is in high-society circles, people overlook the possibility that they can be evil. Titles and money blind people to the reality of evil. In addition to having animal instincts, Serafina is not a member of this world. Therefore, it is easier for her to see Thorne's faults. She is not swayed by the usual perceptions of good and evil.

George Vanderbilt

George Vanderbilt is Edith's husband and Braeden's uncle. He is calm and diplomatic when the children start to disappear. He hires detectives to work on the case. Vanderbilt is willing to listen to people and organizes searches when he sees that the searches will help calm everyone down. Since George Vanderbilt is an important person in the community, Thorne works hard to get into his circle of friends.

Even though Vanderbilt is at the top of high society, he entertains people other than those with titles. Comeback stories like Thorne's impress Vanderbilt. Also, like Edith, Vanderbilt wants Braeden to be happy. Thus, it is to Thorne's advantage when he tries to gain access to Vanderbilt's inner circle that Braeden likes Thorne.

Edith Vanderbilt

Edith Vanderbilt is the mistress of the estate and Braeden's aunt. She is a kind woman who willingly takes Braeden in when his family dies. She tries to do things to help him grow and to help enrich his life by bringing in children and activities that she thinks he will like. She laments that he keeps to himself and is only close to his animals. When the Biltmore guests are worried and saddened by the disappearance of the children, Edith organizes a gathering to help everyone relax. She understands the importance of community to keep everyone from feeling isolated.



When Edith discovers Serafina's existence, Edith extends kindness to the young girl.. Edith finds out that Serafina is happy living in the basement, and she does not try to change Serafina's mind. Instead, Edith makes the basement more comfortable for the girl and her father. Her actions show that Edith respects the will of others and she has the ability to come up with original solutions.

Clara

Clara is the girl whom Serafina sees the Man in the Black Cloak absorb. Clara is a good piano player and someone whom Braeden's aunt thinks that he would like to have as a friend. Clara does not appear a lot in the novel, but it is her initial appearance that spurs Serafina to begin a search for her own identity. Serafina goes against her father to investigate the disappearance of Clara. By doing so, Serafina learns about her personal ancestry/origins.

The dress that Clara is wearing when she disappears is yellow - a color that represents happiness, energy, and intelligence. However, it can also represent cowardice and mental illness. Braeden's aunt has a maroon colored dress made for Clara. Maroon represents sacrifice, as well as energy, passion, and action. These are the qualities Braeden's aunt wants to see in the girl that is right for Braeden. He sees that it fits Serafina better.

Mr. Bendel

Mr. Bendel is a carefree man who has no problem expressing his amazement regarding all of Thorne's abilities. In doing so, he gives Serafina the evidence that points to Thorne as the culprit. One important clue about Thorne's identity is that Thorne suddenly becomes a good piano player after Clara, who was also a good piano player, disappears.

Mr. Rostonov

Mr. Rostonov is Anastasia Rostonova's father. He is a caring parent who shows his grief over the disappearance of his daughter and his hope that she will return by staying at the estate. He gives Serafina an important clue about the identity of the Man in the Black Cloak by the way he reacts to Thorne when Thorne calls him "papa."

Leandra

Leandra is Serafina's mother. She is a catamount, and her soul was split in half when the Man in the Black Cloak attacked her, leaving her in the form of a lioness. Leandra is also the mother of the cubs that Serafina plays with when Serafina is lost in the forest. The cubs are Serafina's half siblings.



Leandra is a fierce protector of her children and cares about them so much that she decides to stay in her lioness form with her cubs. Serafina returns home after destroying Thorne and the Black Cloak and rescuing his victims. Leandra's cubs need her, and she sees that Serafina is fine. Entering Serafina's life now would only upset the identity that Serafina has found for herself. Leandra is wise enough to know this.



Symbols and Symbolism

The Basement

The basement represents a place of deep and dark secrets. It also symbolizes the underworld and basic instincts. It is here that Serafina follows her basic instinct to kill rats. Also, it is here that she first encounters the Man in the Black Cloak. She and her father are also keeping a secret that involves the basement. They are living there in secret.

Corn

Serafina's father tries to get her to eat her grits which are made of corn. Since her father is the one who is raising her, this makes sense as corn is a symbol of life and fertility.

The fact that she does not like to eat grits serves as a clue regarding her origins. While cats can eat corn, it causes stomach aches in some of them. This could be why she does not find eating grits agreeable.

The Upper Floors of Biltmore Estate

The upper floors of the mansion symbolize the cultural divide between the employees of the mansion and its owners.

The Biltmore Estate

The Biltmore Estate is similar to a castle. As such, it acts as a symbol for various aspects of Serafina's life. It represents the closed world in which she lives. With the exception of her father, Serafina is invisible to everyone. He always wants her to stay in their home in the basement to stay safe. He warns her not to venture out into the forest. While he keeps her there for her own protection, in a sense he is imprisoning her. She looks out on the world beyond the estate as a prisoner looks through the bars of their cells wondering what is out there and wishing to be a part of it.

On another level, the castle symbolizes awakening as heroines sleep until their Prince Charming arrives. Serafina's life changes when she meets Braeden (her Prince Charming). Someone has now seen her. She has a friend in Braeden, and he saves her several times throughout the novel. Braeden is there when Mr. Crankshod tries to find out Serafina's identity. Braeden sends his dog to find Serafina, thus saving her from Thorne's last attack. Then, Braeden organizes a search party to find her.

Castles represent luxury and high society. In the novel, through life at Biltmore Estate, readers see the differences between the classes. Serafina's father tells her that the



Vanderbilts and their friends are not their kind of people. This implies that Serafina cannot be friends with the upper class children. Thorne, who wants a place in high society, wants to impress these people to the point that he is willing to let the Black Cloak control him.

Finally, castles represent divine grace and strength. Serafina exemplifies divine grace and strength.. Her name means angel. In the end, she and the castle triumph over the evil forces around it.

Darkness

In the novel, Serafina's father not only tries to keep her safe, but he also works hard to fix the electricity generator that Thorne sabotages. When the machine does not work, the estate is thrown into darkness, a symbol of chaos, death, mystery and fear. Thorne wants to keep it dark just for these purposes.

When the children are in the forest, it is so dark that they cannot see anything. Once again, this allows Thorne to create chaos by making trees fall, coming from different directions, and creating fear and a sense of mystery.

Braeden's Dog

Dogs are symbols of loyalty and vigilance. Braeden's dog is loyal to him and will do anything to protect him. The fact that he helps save Serafina shows that he now sees her as Braeden's friend. Even though she is part cat, he fights to save her. Thus, he sacrifices himself for her, a sign of friendship.

The Forest

The symbolism of the forest works on several levels. It is mysterious and full of the unknown, and it is this very thing that make it a symbol for the place where young people must go to grow up. There, they are tested as Serafina is when she goes into the forest.

It is also a place where life flourishes which lends it to symbolize a mother. This symbolism is in contrast to the comforts of home, which is more connected to reason and intellect. Serafina finds herself torn between the two, which is consistent with her nature. She was born in the forest and this is where her mother lives. Yet, Serafina fits in with the comforts of home at the estate. There she can have warm milk and eat catfish. Her father is also very logical.

However in Biltmore Estate she is a human. It is only in the forest, which also symbolizes things that are outside reason and intellect, that she can reveal her true nature.



The Man in the Black Cloak's Glove

Normally, a glove is a symbol of high status and represents power and protection. The Man in the Black Cloak wears gloves, one of the clues that he is a gentleman. As he chases the children with his gloved hand, he shows his power. Also, he tries to allure the children with the glove - a symbol of protection. He tells them that he is not going to hurt them.

When he drops his glove, he does not go back to pick it up. This could have something to do with the idea that it is bad luck to pick up a dropped glove. Due to the glove's symbolism, none of the guests at the Biltmore Estate notice that Thorne wears his gloves to play the piano. Serafina, who is outside of that realm, however, realizes the darker symbolic meaning of gloves. Gloves are mysterious and hide things.

The Color of Serafina's Dress

Serafina's dress is maroon, a shade of red that represents sacrifice, energy, passion, and action. These are all traits that embody Serafina. It is interesting that maroon is the color Braeden's aunt chooses for a dress meant for Clara who wears yellow. Yellow usually represents joy, happiness, energy, and intelligence. However, it can also represent cowardice and mental illness.

Braeden's aunt has the maroon dress made for Clara hoping that she has the qualities associated with the color, as these would be attractive to Braeden. In reality, the dress fits Serafina's personality better. This is why Braeden gives the dress to her.

The River

Rivers represent life. The crossing of a river represents a rite of passage. It is interesting to note that while Serafina follows the river, the wolf she sees crosses it. Thus, the wolf has completed a rite of passage. Her father, however has only taught her to follow the river. This action will give her life. He has not encouraged her to cross it, which will allow her to become an adult.

Serafina's Name

The name Serafina means "Heavenly, Winged Angel." Serafina is the one that shines the bright light (through her decoy) that saves the children in the estate and destroys the evil forces. She sees herself in the the statue of the angel she finds in the graveyard. Serafina embraces the inscription on the statue by shedding blood. This is similar to what children do when they commit to a group to be friends forever or to keep a secret. In realizing the battle that she is to fight and being willing to do so, she defines her character and helps form her identity.



The Black Cloak

The Black Cloak represents evil, but it also a symbol of a drug. Like drugs, the Black Cloak promises to make people feel better or accomplish things that people do not think they can accomplish on their own. People do feel better at first. However, over time, drugs destroy people's bodies and minds and may even lead them to do bad things just to sustain their habit.

This is what happens to Thorne. He needs more children more often and will do anything to get them. In the meantime, his dependence on the Black Cloak (the drug) is destroying his body.



Settings

The Basement

Serafina and her father secretly live in the basement of the Biltmore Estate. It is more than just where Serafina lives. It is the place she considers to be her home. This fact becomes apparent at the end of the novel when Mrs. Vanderbilt asks whether Serafina is happy living in the basement. Serafina says that she is happy. The basement is part of Serafina's identity.

Symbolically, basements hold secrets. The basement in Biltmore holds the secret that Serafina and her father call it their home. It is also the place where the Man in the Black Cloak first appears in the novel and where he absorbs Clara.

In addition, it links to social status. During the time period of the novel, the floors in big houses separate social classes. Serafina and her father are in a lower social class than the Vanderbilts and the Vanderbilts' friends. Those in a lower social class live in basements, while the higher social classes live in the upper stories of the house.

However, at the end of the novel, it becomes the place Serafina chooses. It is not a place where society has placed her. The distinction is meaningful as it shows that Serafina has found her identity and is living her life on her own terms. The fact that the Vanderbilts agree that she and her father can stay there, but will make it nice for them, shows that it is an identity that suits society as well.

The Drawing Room

Serafina sees all of the guests of the Vanderbilts and the Vanderbilts themselves in the drawing room. This is an area of gathering. It is a place where one is supposed to behave in the proper social manner. Thus, it is where one displays their public persona. This is where Thorne first enchants everyone with his abilities. What occurs in the drawing room is significant because outward appearances matter so much that the people overlook the possibility of deviant behavior.

The Forest

The Forest is a place where Serafina's father forbids her to go. Yet, it is the place where she was born and she finally does go there as part of the journey to find her identity. When she does, she learns about her past and finds her mother. She also fights evil there. Thus, the forest has two sides. It can be dangerous, but good things can be there as well.



Braeden's Room

In is in Braeden's bedroom where he and Serafina have an honest talk about differences. It is also where they declare their friendship. Their actions are symbolic of bedrooms in general, as bedrooms represent places of love and locations where one can be their true selves.

The Graveyard

The graveyard is where Serafina gets the message that she is the one who should save the children at the estate. She accepts the challenge to save the children when she touches the sword of an angel she sees at the graveyard. The touch draws blood. Accepting the challenge defines her character and helps her find her identity.

The Cubs' Den

The cub' den is Serafina's second home as this is where her mother and her half - siblings live. Serafina guides Thorne to the den to destroy him.



Themes and Motifs

The Importance of Having an Identity that Coincides with Society's Expectations

In addition to being a work of historical fiction, *Serafina and the Black Cloak* is a coming of age tale. This is a story in which a young character makes choices and/or has experiences that begins or continues the process of maturation into adulthood. During this process, the character finds or defines their own identity. When that identity matches society's expectations, characters emerge as well-adjusted individuals. When they do not, characters have a turbulent life. Thus, it is important for people to take this step in life and reconcile their identity with the society of which they are a member.

Serafina's search for her identity starts early in life. For awhile, she is happy with how her father defines it for her. She is his daughter, and she has the title of Chief Rat Catcher. She believes that she has a pretty good life. When she turns twelve, however, things change.

Serafina has always been different from other children. She looks different and is very animal-like, a point that the author emphasizes through the animal symbols and metaphors he uses to describe Seraphina's movements and thoughts. Seraphina does not know who her mother is or anything about friendship, as friends do not even come to visit her father. These differences generate a lot of questions. Why does her father want to keep her hidden? Why does she not have other family members?

Finally, Seraphina stops accepting her father's explanation of her identity and starts making her own choices. She decides to help Clara, even though her father tells her to stay out of the matter. She begins to let people see her, and she becomes friends with Braeden, a Vanderbilt. She also goes into the forest, a place her father has always warned her to avoid. In making these choices, she matures and moves toward adulthood. She no longer hides, and her identity develops. Seraphina finds answers for her questions, and she works out how she fits into the world. Doing so is even harder for her than it is for most children due to the fantasy component of the novel. She is a creature of the night and has to battle with whether or not she is good or evil. Most people associate evil with creatures of the night..

Braeden needs to find his identity, too. Even though his aunt and uncle take him in, he is alone in the world after the death of his family. Now he has to fit into the identity George and Edith see as being proper for him. The problem is that he does not fit in. He is not interested in the children the Vanderbilts invite to socialize with him. Edith thinks that he will grow out of his interest in animals. However, even the servants think that he is strange, a loner.

Braeden begins to make choices that help him find an identity that fits in with society's expectations. He chooses to be friends with Serafina. He helps her solve the mystery of



the missing children. He even breaks social rules by helping her search the rooms of the guests. Finally, he becomes the man his uncle tells him he must become when he organizes the search for Serafina. At that point, society, sees his core values and talents.

Even though Thorne is now an adult, when he was younger, he had to make a choice after losing everything. At this point in life, he had problems aligning his identity with what society expected of him. He had become an alcoholic. His weak sense of self makes him an easy target for the evil Black Cloak. Thorne's weakness destroys him.

Family and Friendship

One of the motifs that runs throughout the novel is that of family and friends. Throughout the book, questions emerge. What makes a family? Do you have to be related by blood to be a family? Do you have to live together all the time? Do you have to live with your mother and father? Do the children have to have brothers and sisters to be a family?

Similar questions arise when it come to friendship. How can one tell whether or not someone is a friend? Can you be a friend with someone who is of a different social status from you or different in other ways?

Not only does the novel pose these questions about friends and family, but it also looks at the role sacrifice plays in the creation of strong family bonds and friendships.

Even before Serafina discovers that the man she calls "pa" is not her biological father, she questions why she does not have what she perceives to be a real family. She does not have a mother, nor does she have brothers or sisters. She is constantly in search of her mother. When Serafina finds her mother and her half siblings, they do not match what she had imagined either. Yet, she comes to realize that both her cat family and her Pa are her family. In essence, she has two families and two homes as noted by the fact that playing with the cubs is like a homecoming. She has another homecoming when she returns to the estate after defeating Thorne.

The story details how Serafina's mother and Pa both sacrificed themselves for her and how her family stays together in spite of adversity. Serafina's Pa sacrifices his life for her. He has fought to keep her and because of his actions, he does not have a normal life. He and Serafina must stay hidden. Serafina and her father have a rift, yet, in the end they come together. They love each other.

Serafina's mother also sacrifices her life to protect Serafina. She also fights to protect her cubs. In spite of the fact that this this side of her family is not human, they all realize and accept the fact that they are family.

The same type of sacrifice creates bonds between friends. Serafina makes sacrifices to help Clara and Braeden. Readers do not know whether Clara will turn out to be a friend, but Braeden shows that he is one. He goes against the norm by working with Serafina.



He keeps her presence secret. He sends his loyal companion, Gideon, out to find Serafina when he senses that she is in danger.

Gideon also shows what a good friend he is by sacrificing himself to save Serafina. Serafina in turn, earned his friendship earlier when she sacrifices herself for Braeden in the forest. One other possible friend, based on the sacrifice he makes, is Nolan, who sacrifices himself for Braeden and shows his concern for Serafina when he sees her injury after she defeats the Black Cloak.

Social Class Issues

Throughout the novel, the author explores the class system in 1899 as it manifests itself at Biltmore Estate. There are wealthy people who dominate the upper floors. The servants are there during the day to do their duties and have a social class of their own. Beneath all of this, Serafina lives with her father. Her father has an important role in the house, though. Through his mechanical abilities, he gives everyone modern comforts. Yet, he is invisible as a person, so invisible that he is able to live in secret with Serafina in the lower basement. There, they are even lower than the other servants.

Serafina's father constantly reminds her that the Vanderbilts and their friends are not their type of people, and Serafina herself thinks that there are social and physical barriers separating her and Braeden at times. However, she comes to realize that in the end, people are equal in that they all have the same needs. When she and Braeden are in the forest, they are the same. They fight together. They need shelter at night, and they need each other to stay warm. Clara may be rich, but her money is not doing her any good now. She needs help, and it does not matter about the social class of the person who is helping her.

At the end of the novel, the Vanderbilts accept Serafina, something her father thought would never happen. The fact that it does, however, could be due to the way the people in the novel obtained their social status. It was through work. These people value work. In fact, that was one of the things that made Thorne's story so compelling. He was down and out and made a comeback. George Vanderbilt invites him into his inner circle not just because of his talents. The fact that Braeden looks up to Thorne earns Thorne honor in the household.

Serafina also shows her value through her work. In bringing the children back, she has done something that not even New York detectives could do. Thus, it is not surprising that they accept her into their society.

The Comparison of Serafina and other Characters to Animals

Throughout the novel, the narrator uses images of animals to describe Serafina and her adversaries. For example, when Serafina attacks, she pounces and snarls. When she



has to hide, she makes herself think like a smart mouse. She likes to hunt, but she does not like to be hunted. In addition, she constantly uses the word “rat” in her thoughts about the Man in the Black Cloak and Thorne, as himself.

On the surface, readers may link the comparisons to her identity as the Chief Rat Catcher. She is proud to own that title, even at the end of the novel and she excels at what she does. However, readers must remember that in addition to this being historical fiction and a coming of age novel, it is also a fantasy novel and the references to animals serve as clues to the second mystery Serafina is trying to solve, that of her real identity. Due to her cat-like abilities, actions and thoughts, readers should not find it surprising she is a catamount. She likes to catch rats. She gets bitten, but the bites do not make her sick. She leaves them as offerings to her father. She curls up in small corners, and she likes milk and fish. She does not like corn, even though her father feeds it to her as a symbol of life. Cats can have stomach aches after eating corn.

Serafina also has an animal's instincts regarding danger. She can see well in the dark, and she senses that there is something wrong with Thorne, even though no one else does.

Serafina's animal side also comes into play as she questions good and evil. She is a creature of the night. She comes from the forest. She lives in the basement, a place representing natural instincts. All of these things are elements of darkness. Which way will she go as she forms her identity? Will she let her basic instincts take over, or will she rise and make the choice to be one of the bright things in the forest. Her name, meaning Heavenly Winged Angel, supports the notion that she will choose good over evil.

Good vs Evil

The novel explores many choices that characters make that result in the making of their identity and leads to their current lives. One of the important choices is whether to follow the path of good or that of evil.

When Serafina comes face to face with evil, she starts to look at good and evil from different perspectives. It is appropriate that she does so in this setting because she is looking for suspects in a crime. As she looks at people, she wonders whether people who do things that some may think are bad, really think they are doing good. For example, though Crankshod disappears a lot, he does come and try to clear the path and he is with the rescue party. Thus, everyone has elements of good and bad in their make-up.

The title of the novel and the contrast between the characters of Thorne and Serafina shows good and evil in the extreme. It looks at the notion of being good or evil as a choice that people make and how the choice can either lift people higher or destroy them. The title of the novel is not Serafina and the Man in the Black Cloak, it is Serafina and the Black Cloak because she has to make this choice. Will she submit to evil? Will she let it rule and destroy her as it does Thorne, or will she fight it and choose the path



of goodness? While evil does tempt her and she considers going down that path when she tries on the Black Cloak, she manages to resist. This is in contrast to Thorne who chooses evil. His choice leads him to a path of his own physical destruction.



Styles

Point of View

The narrative is written from the third-person point of view with a focus on Serafina's perspective. This choice is fitting as this is Serafina's coming of age story. The perspective creates a strong voice for Serafina. Readers feel her confusion, her frustration, her confidence, and her resolve when the narration goes into her mind. The point of view also reinforces the animal metaphor that extends throughout the novel. Serafina, herself, thinks like an animal. The narration shows how she acts like one as well.

Other characters express their thoughts when they speak to her. It is interesting that Serafina only speaks to people with whom she is comfortable. She speaks first to her father, then Braeden, then the Vanderbilts. In this way, style and substance support each other. The range of speaking partners increases as she moves forward in defining her identity.

Language and Meaning

There are several points to note when considering the use of language in *Serafina and the Black Cloak*. First, the language of the narrative employs a rather rich use of vocabulary used to create the ominous tone of the story. While it may be sophisticated for some middle-grade readers of the book, it is appropriately challenging for such readers. Second, as this is historical fiction, there are several era-specific terms that serve to educate the reader. For example, Serafina's father has to fix the dynamo, the first electrical generator. The narration uses terms such as "footman" which are not in use so much today.

In addition, there are words that Serafina uses that reveal her class and Southern upbringing. She calls her father "Pa," and she talks about vermin and haunts. Braeden even has to ask her to define "haunt." These words bring readers into the time period and the world of the region. In addition, the grammar is not always correct as the word "ain't" appears at times. Even though the author uses Southern vocabulary words, he does not use heavy accents. The language shows the difference between Serafina's and Braeden's worlds as such language is not used by the Vanderbilts or their guests.

Structure

The book's structure works on the plot level as well as on the thematic level. While the book is not divided into physical sections, it shows Serafina's search for her identity using Biltmore Estate as her home and the forest as the place that she must go to on her journey to find herself. She goes to the forest once and learns things. However, she has not learned enough to complete her journey. She follows the river instead of



crossing it. This interruption in her journey is appropriate because she is also solving a mystery. Serafina must return to the estate to complete this task. This, however leads her back to the forest where she can do both, solve the mystery of the disappearing children and that of her identity. For her, the two are intertwined. This is the battle she must fight to define her character.

Chapters often end on a “cliffhanger” in which a major plot element is left unresolved. This motivates the reader to continue reading to discover what happens next.



Quotes

Never go into the deep parts of the forest, for there are many dangers there, both dark and bright, and they will ensnare your soul.

-- Serafina's father (chapter 4 paragraph 90)

Importance: Serafina's father tries to keep her out of the forest because it is mysterious and full of dark things and he wants to protect her. On another level though, he knows that she was born of a mysterious force in the forest. He is afraid that if she goes there, he will lose her to it. Thus, he is also protecting himself, too. When Serafina realizes that she has an affinity with the forest and calls herself a creature of the night, she wonders whether she is evil and part of the forest's dark forces. However, she remembers her father saying that there is both dark and bright there. She realizes that she is the "bright," not the "dark." Once she realizes and accepts this as a fact, she is able to devise a plan to defeat the Man in the Black Cloak.

"Her pa had told her to leave them to it, that it wasn't any of her business, that they weren't her kin, but who was he to say who was kin and who wasn't?"

-- Serafina (narrator) (chapter 5 paragraph 10)

Importance: Serafina thinks this right after her father tells her that he is not her real father. Thus, he is not even related to her and at this point she is thinking that he has no right to say such a thing because he was not even her kin, if being kin means a blood relation. The question of who is kin and who is not kin supports the motif of family that runs throughout the novel. What makes a family a family? Who has the right to say that you are not family just because you are not related by blood? Is Serafina's father not her father because he is not her biological father or are there other elements that make people "kin?"

"How do you tell a friend from an enemy just by looking at them?"

-- Serafina (Narrator) (chapter 5 paragraph 89)

Importance: Serafina thinks this in regards to the people she is meeting. She has never had friends before and she has not seen her father with friends. As a result, the notion of friendship is new to her. What makes it even more complicated for her is that she has made a friend with someone on a higher social level. Is it possible that they can be friends? As the novel progresses this becomes a relevant question in terms of Thorne. Everyone assumes that he is a friend of the family because of his story, his talents, his social status and the fact the he is nice to Braeden. He, however is not a friend. Society assumes that people can be friends based on their social status. Yet, this does not even prove to be true with the children who come to play with Braeden. He is not interested in being friends with any of them.

"She was beginning to see how difficult it was to determine who was good and who was bad, who she could trust and who she had to watch out for. Every person was a hero in his own mind, fighting for what he thought was right, or just fighting to survive, but no



one thought they were evil.”

-- Serafina (Narrator) (chapter 9 paragraph 20)

Importance: Serafina is coming to realize that the world is not as simple as her father, who is a logical man, has taught her that it is and believes it to be himself. It is not black and white, Actions can seem wrong in one person's eyes, but right in another's. This knowledge helps Serafina get over her initial feelings that he father has done something wrong in not telling her about her history.

It made her think that maybe God intended for them to all fit together, like a puzzle made whole.

-- Serafina (Narrator) (chapter 9 paragraph 79)

Importance: This quote shows how Serafina is coming to terms with the idea of identity and social class. One needs people who can do a variety of things, and one person cannot do everything. Your talent, however, does not mean that you are any less than someone with another talent, even if society deems it to be so. It is the way it is supposed to be and what makes life work. This understanding of how life works is what helps Serafina continue to fight for people who, according to her father, are not her type of people due to their different social status. The quote also serves as a clue that something is strange about Thorne. He can do many things extremely well. Such a thing is not normal.

Our character isn't defined by the battles we win or lose, but by the battles we dare to fight.”

-- Inscription on Statue (chapter 10 paragraph 44)

Importance: Serafina sees this inscription on the statue in the graveyard and it becomes her battle cry and helps define her identity. In essence it is her spirit. She sees it on the pedestal of the statue of an angel which is symbolic because the name “Serafina” means “Heavenly, Winged Angel.” She takes this quote to heart when she fights Thorne and the Black Cloak. This is a battle that she dares to fight even though she knows that she is risking her life in the process..

It felt like a homecoming.

-- Serafina (Narrator) (chapter 11 paragraph 10)

Importance: This quote foreshadows the fact that Serafina is related to the cubs.

There were too many forbidden stairs and doors and corridors between them.”

-- Serafina (Narrator) (chapter 13 paragraph 42)

Importance: This quote shows Serafina's awareness of the social status that separates her from Braeden. In the carriage they had been on equal footing. However, in the house, there are physical things that show that they are on different levels.



Did evil creatures think of themselves as evil? Or did they think they were doing what was right? Was evil something that was in your heart or was it how people viewed you?"
-- Serafina (Narrator) (chapter 19 paragraph 33)

Importance: This quote shows the confusion and conflict that Serafina experiences as she tries to come to grips with her identity. She has already defined herself as a creature of the night. The problem is that everyone she sees as good defines creatures of the night as evil. She does not think she is evil. However, she wonders whether she is just fooling herself because no evil person sees themselves as evil. Is it possible that she is evil, even though it is not in her heart, because that is how people view creatures of the night? Defining her identity means answering these questions.

It was true that she was a creature of the night. But she would decide for herself what that meant. She had two choices before her: to slink away and hide, or to dare to fight."
-- Serafina (Narrator) (chapter 19 paragraph 35 and 36)

Importance: This quote shows Serafina working out her identity in her own mind and not depending on the views of others. She realizes that people have choices in life and she can craft her identity through the choices she makes.

She was so scared that it hurt to breathe. Her corset felt like Satan's bony hand gripping her around her chest and squeezing her tight. Her limbs were hot with the burning drive to flee.
-- Serafina (Narrator) (chapter 21 paragraph 10)

Importance: This quote shows Serafina's resolve to fight this battle due to her belief that the battles one is willing to fight makes one's character. She is scared, as shown by the imagery of how she feels now. The imagery of Satan's bony hand squeezing her creates an ominous tone. Yet, she is willing to go through with her plan, even though she may lose and doing so means death.

Feeling left out of the homecoming, Gideon barked.
-- Serafina (Narrator) (chapter 31 paragraph 23)

Importance: This quote shows that Serafina still sees her home as being with her father and living on the estate.