

A TEACHER'S GUIDE TO SIX OF CROWS

ABOUT THE BOOK

Enter the Grishaverse with the #1 *New York Times* bestseller *Six of Crows*, now on Netflix as part of the original series *Shadow and Bone*.

Ketterdam: a bustling hub of international trade where anything can be had for the right price—and no one knows that better than criminal prodigy Kaz Brekker. Kaz is offered a chance at a deadly heist that could make him rich beyond his wildest dreams. But he can't pull it off alone. . .

A convict with a thirst for revenge.

A sharpshooter who can't walk away from a wager.

A runaway with a privileged past.

A spy known as the Wraith.

A Heartrender using her magic to survive the slums.

A thief with a gift for unlikely escapes.

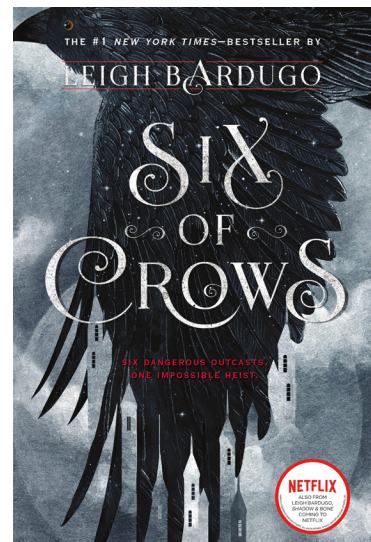
Six dangerous outcasts. One impossible heist. Kaz's crew is the only thing that might stand between the world and destruction—if they don't kill first.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Leigh Bardugo is the *New York Times*-bestselling author of *Ninth House* and the creator of the Grishaverse, which spans the *Shadow and Bone* trilogy (now a Netflix original series), the *Six of Crows* duology, the *King of Scars* duology, *The Language of Thorns*, and *The Lives of Saints*—with more to come. Her short stories can be found in multiple anthologies, including *The Best American Science Fiction and Fantasy*. Leigh grew up in Southern California and graduated from Yale University. These days she lives and writes in Los Angeles.



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PRE-READING ACTIVITY:

Using *Six of Crows* to Activate Prior Knowledge and Build Connections

As a pre-reading activity, have students complete an anticipation guide structured in the following manner:



Before Reading	After Reading	Statements
		Commitment to duty and honor should always outweigh individual needs or desires.
		In a survival situation, you must make decisions that are best for yourself and those you love, even if harm may come to others as a result.
		If you can justify your actions, the outcome doesn't matter.
		Showing weakness or vulnerability is never a smart approach.
		Seeking revenge is acceptable if you have a good reason to do so.



1. Instruct students to complete the guide by placing a plus sign (+) in the box next to the statements with which they agree, and a zero (0) next to those with which they disagree. They must commit to agreement or disagreement—there are no conditional responses. Students should be assured that there are no correct or incorrect positions.
2. Once they have had the opportunity to complete the guide, read each statement aloud and have students who agree stand or raise their hands. Each student should be permitted, if they wish, to provide their rationale for agreeing.
3. Repeat the process after students have read *Six of Crows*, giving them the opportunity to provide their rationale for keeping or changing their position.

EXPLORING *SIX OF CROWS* THROUGH DISCUSSION

The following questions may be utilized throughout the study of *Six of Crows* as targeted questions for class discussion or, alternatively, they can be used as reflective writing prompts.

1. As the novel opens, readers learn that jurda parem has been manipulated to enslave and weaponize the Grisha. How does this knowledge set the stage for the action to come?
2. Kaz is described by Inej as dressing like the upstanding merchants, a picture of restraint. When he tells Inej, “I’m a businessman. No more no less,” she retorts by calling him a thief, to which he responds, “Isn’t that what I just said?” Reflect on Kaz’s statement. Though on the surface, Ketterdam has a bustling economy and is a center for trade, in what ways does Kaz recognize that he is not so different from many of the merchants doing business there?
3. As Inej tries to wring little bits of decency from Kaz after learning he hasn’t made any plans to hurt Geels’s girlfriend, Kaz tells Inej, “When everyone knows you’re a monster, you needn’t waste time doing every monstrous thing.” How does this statement impact Inej and help her better understand Kaz’s complexities?
4. The motto of the Dregs is “No mourners, no funerals.” What does this mantra imply about the gang’s philosophy toward themselves, each other, and life in general? Are there ways in which the meaning changes for them by the end of the novel?
5. Throughout the novel, readers are offered flashback sequences that help frame the relationships among Kaz’s team, including the initial interaction between Kaz and Inej when he purchases her indenture at the Menagerie from Tante Heleen. When explaining his intentions, Kaz tells Inej, “I need someone who can be invisible, who can become a ghost. Do you think you can do that?” Why does Inej feel like she’s already a ghost? How has her time aboard the slaver ship and at the Menagerie left her feeling this way? Citing examples from the text, what are some of the ways in which Inej shows her agency?
6. Consider Kaz’s role as the leader of the Dregs in the Barrel in Ketterdam. How does his reputation and being known as Dirtyhands help make him seem almost larger than life? In your opinion, what makes him such a force, and is he worthy of the self-given moniker “bastard of the Barrel”?
7. Early in the novel, Jesper shares that he “always felt better when people were shooting at him.” Though he proclaims that he doesn’t have a death wish, how does his feeling that gunplay gives him clarity and focus contradict this statement?
8. Why is Kaz’s investment in Inej and the request that Inej become a member of the Dregs such a shrewd one? Do you find her to be more or less than he expects? In what ways?
9. Though at a basic level, this is a heist story, upon further examination it is so much more. Use your experience reading the book to complete the following statement: “*Six of Crows* is a story about . . .”
10. For Kaz, a “quick death was too good for Pekka Rollins.” As he considers his calculated plan to revenge the loss of his family, he thinks, “Brick by brick, I will destroy you.” How does this promise and motivation to devastate Pekka Rollins drive Kaz? Though he claims it lets him sleep at night and keeps Jordie’s ghost at bay, are there ways that his obsession with Pekka ultimately harms Kaz? Are there ways in which it impacts his team, too?
11. While caring for Inej and seeing how her injuries have impacted Kaz, Nina thinks, “She wouldn’t wish love on anyone. It was the guest you welcomed and then couldn’t be rid of.” Consider Nina’s personal experiences up to this point—in what ways have love made her life more challenging? How does love complicate matters for each member of the Crows crew?

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12. Every member of the crew has a different motivation for joining the team's prison-break mission and heist. Choose your favorite character and examine their motivation in depth. How do their desires reflect larger themes of the novel? Do their priorities change as the events the novel unfold?
 13. Inej remembers her father telling her, "Many boys will bring you flowers. But someday you'll meet a boy who will learn your favorite flower, your favorite song, your favorite sweet. And even if he is too poor to give you any of them, it won't matter because he will have taken the time to know you as no one else does. Only that boy earns your heart." Why is this memory such an important one, and in what ways does it help guide her choices in regard to her future?
 14. Inej had once offered to teach Kaz how to fall. "The trick is not getting knocked down," Kaz told her with a laugh. "No, Kaz," she'd said, "the trick is in getting back up." How do these two contradictory statements by Inej and Kaz make it easier to understand the differences in how they each approach life? Are there ways in which Inej's Suli platitudes have changed Kaz's approach?
 15. While Nina wages war on Brum and the drüskelle as revenge for all the pain they caused Ravka and her people, Matthias tells her, "They fear you as I once feared you. As you once feared me. We are all someone's monster, Nina." Do you believe Matthias's words to be sage ones? In what ways do we make monsters out of that which we do not understand?
 16. Throughout *Six of Crows*, many characters exhibit acts of bravery. Consider the individual actions of these characters. Who do you believe to be the most courageous? Use evidence from the text to support your opinion.
 17. Inej shares a Suli saying: "The heart is an arrow. It demands aim to land true." Her father had liked to recite this when she was training on the wire or the swings. "Be decisive," he'd say. "You have to know where you want to go before you get there." While it certainly applies to love, are there other ways that being decisive is critical?
 18. Matthias tells Nina, "We all carry our sins, Nina. I need you to live so I can atone for mine." Consider Matthias's character development. In what ways has he grown throughout the course of the story? Why is atonement for his actions so critical to him?
 19. Kaz and Inej are also known by their respective nicknames: Dirtyhands and the Wraith. In what ways do these nicknames fit who these characters are in the Barrel? In what ways do they differ from their true selves? Are there ways in which their dual identities transform over time and reflect larger themes in the novel?
 20. Consider the variety of dynamic settings in the novel and name the three places you believe to be most important to the story. Using evidence from the book, explain why you find them to be significant to the overall story structure.
 21. While feeling like she's dying from withdrawal from jurda parem, Nina begs Matthias to "Stay till the end." What does Matthias's promise of "And always," as well as returning her to her home in Ravka, indicate about his commitment to Nina?
 22. The novel is rich with extraordinary and memorable characters. Who are your favorite or least favorite characters? Given the story is told through five different characters, what are the greatest benefits to the multiple points of view? What may be the rationale for the omission of Wylan as a narrator in this large, ensemble cast? Do you anticipate that changing in the continuation of their story?
 23. Kaz tells Inej, "Stay in Ketterdam. Stay with me . . . I want you to stay. I want you to . . . I want you." Why isn't this request enough for Inej? Do you believe she is right to feel that Kaz's offer of a conditional self with "armor" is not enough?

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24. Consider Kaz's cane, Inej's knives, Jesper's guns, and Nina's caramels. What do these possessions symbolize for each of these characters? How are each of them impacted when they are without them?
 25. After thinking about Nina's sacrifice to save their crew, Jesper considers his guilt for not stepping up to take the drug as well and thinks he had "long since stopped thinking he had the makings of a hero." Do you agree with Jesper's assessment of himself, or do you see ways in which he has proven to be heroic? Offer examples from the book as evidence of your position.
 26. Among other things, this is a story about family. How does examining the dynamics of the individual relationships within the story (including but not limited to Kaz and Inej, Jesper and Wylan, and Nina and Matthias) help each of them to ultimately better understand what they mean to each other? In what ways does their individual knowledge of who they are change throughout the course of the novel? How do each of them come to understand that this chosen family doesn't easily fit within the narrow definition of "family" as they previously defined it?

USING *SIX OF CROWS* TO EXTEND STUDENT LEARNING EXTENSION ACTIVITIES AND WRITING PROMPTS

1. Bardugo's motley crew of characters must overcome the challenges in their daily lives by also maneuvering the obstacles placed in their way by events in the past, both recent and distant. After a class discussion, draft a reflective essay in which you analyze how each of the characters manage this task. Think about how it affects their interpersonal relationships in the story, how it causes them to change or to adapt as the story unfolds, and how things for them might have been different in other circumstances of time and place. Finally, consider how you must manage this same challenge in your own life.
2. The six main characters are all outcasts who have either chosen to leave or been forced to flee the homes of their childhood. While they come together from unique and different backgrounds, they are united by the fact they've each had to fend for themselves and have been forced to survive on their own as teens in a world filled with cruel adults. Throughout the novel, each of the six struggles in different ways to either find a way to return home or to accept the fact they can never do so. In the end, they must redefine the concept of "home" altogether. Considering the events of the novel, as well as the individual choices of each of the characters, offer a written analysis of how they do so.
3. The main characters must not only overcome the events surrounding them but they must also overcome aspects of their own backgrounds that we could easily argue are overwhelming, oppressive, and unfair. Use a poster, short video, or some other medium to emphasize the personal traits that help these characters overcome the parts of their identity that are not of their doing but must be dealt with as they move on with life.
4. Though at times it feels that all will be lost and though they are often oblivious to it due to their painful pasts, Kaz, Inej, Nina, Matthias, Jesper, and Wylan are driven by hope—whether as nuanced as dreams for a better life, as personal as hopes to get out of a dire situation, or as primal as simply surviving another week, or day, or hour. Develop a virtual "hope chest" for a character of your choice in which you place symbols or embodiments of their hopes and dreams and correlate them with the things that are obstacles for achieving them. Connect this to a journal entry in which you identify objects or symbols that serve as sources of hope for you and that help to drive you to overcome obstacles.

5. Working in groups, brainstorm about which “crimes” were committed by the characters. Then, work together to act as the prosecution or defense for the selected characters, while also acting as the jury for other groups from your class. Use several sources to research the case, including the novel and Internet resources on judicial proceedings and the roles of the participants in a trial. All the while, be writing a persuasive piece to complement the trial work. Additional resources for literary mock trials can be found at www.readwritethink.org.

6. The language that an author uses is essential to communicating the intended meaning. Select four quotes from *Six of Crows* that seem to signify key ideas that Bardugo hopes that readers take from the text. These quotes might be spoken by characters or taken from the narration. Page numbers should be included. Then, develop a chart with the following four columns:

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|---------------|--------------------------------|
| • Quote | • Relevance to the Novel |
| • Page Number | • Intended Meaning for Readers |

The intended meaning should have relevance not only to the characters in the text but to the lives of anyone who reads the book.

7. The complexities of the characters, their relationships, and the situations in which they find themselves provides an opportunity to dig deep in the text in order to examine and answer one of the following writing prompts:

- Compose an essay that analyzes the dynamics of loyalty and examines the consequences of unquestioned loyalty or betrayal using examples from the book.
- The difference between hero and villain is not always clear. Are there ways in which Crows from the Dregs are symbolic of humanity as a whole? Using textual evidence, craft an essay where you make a case for a particular character. Do you see them as a hero, a villain, or a combination of both?
- Consider Nina’s relationship with Matthias, Jesper’s relationship with Wylan, and Inej’s relationship with Kaz. How does their complex past complicate matters for each of them and how do they ultimately deal with that? Do you believe that those who know our history and have a stake in it are always more connected to us than others who don’t? Why or why not? In a journal entry, examine one of your personal relationships. How does having shared history with someone connect you to them, and what are the greatest challenges and benefits of your relationship?
- The novel is rife with villainous characters. Select the one you find most fascinating and craft a short essay explaining what it is about this individual that strikes a chord in you. Be sure to consider and offer specific details from the novel about this character’s past indiscretions and behaviors that make them intriguing.
- Bardugo uses the mistrust of the Grisha to amplify and question the human tendency to misjudge and fear that which is unusual or that we do not understand. The Fjerdans are offered as an extreme example of following an ideology that did not allow for differences or special gifts. In societies that value independence, we often see creativity, inventions, great literature and art, and knowledge. Write an essay about the benefits of independence and individuality. What can happen when differences are accepted and valued?

This guide was created by Dr. Rose Brock, an associate professor at Sam Houston State University.
Dr. Brock holds a PhD in Library Science, specializing in children’s and young adult literature.

WHERE TO START

Are you ready to explore the Grishaverse, but not certain where to begin?
There is more than one place to commence your journey.

BEGIN AT THE BEGINNING



If you like to read in chronological order, start with the Shadow and Bone Trilogy and meet Alina Starkov, Sun Summoner and Ravka's only hope for salvation.

OR START WITH A HEIST



You can certainly start with the Six of Crows Duology and we promise you won't be lost. Here you join up with Kaz Brekker's crew of thugs and thieves. This duology takes place two years after the end of the Shadow and Bone Trilogy, but focuses on a new set of characters and different plots in a different country.

THE ADVENTURE CONTINUES



This epic duology picks up back in Ravka, one year after the end of the Six of Crows Duology. While you can start here, we recommend reading the other books in the Grishaverse first if you want to avoid spoilers.

AFRAID TO COMMIT?



Want to start reading, but don't have any knowledge of the other books? Try one of these beautifully illustrated collections of Grisha folktales and fables from every corner of this world. You can pick up *The Language of Thorns* without any knowledge of the rest of the books or *The Lives of Saints* if you've already started exploring the Grishaverse.