

Shadow of the Wind - Discussion Questions

Carlos Ruiz Zafón

Author:

[Carlos Ruiz Zafón](#) was born on September 25, 1964 in Barcelona, Spain and grew up under the shadow of Gaudí's Sagrada Família cathedral, just a block away from the family home. At the age of thirteen, he wrote a six-hundred-page science fiction novel; it was never published. After studying with the Jesuits of Sarria and attending university, he became one of Spain's most successful advertising writers.

Ruiz Zafón returned to his passion for writing novels in the early 1990s in the field of young adult literature. He debuted as a novelist with the publication of *The Edge of the Cloud* in 1993, a mystery that was awarded the Primero Edebe prize. Also published that year was *The Prince of Shadow*, about a diabolic prince who grants wishes at very high personal prices.

In 1994, he moved to the United States to reside in Los Angeles, where he began work as a scriptwriter. His work on young adult novels continued, however. *The Lights of September*, which came out in 1995, focuses on a toy maker who lives in a haunted mansion alongside mechanical creatures and ghosts from the past.

[The Shadow of the Wind](#), his first novel for adults, was published in 2001 in Spain and became an international bestseller, including stays at number 1 in both Spain and Germany. It is the first of his books to be translated into English; released in the United States in April, 2004, it reached number 22 on the *New York Times* bestseller list.

The Shadow of the Wind is actually the first of four novels about gothic Barcelona. Besides his novels and screenwriting, Ruiz Zafón also writes for the Spanish daily papers *El País* and *La Vanguardia*. He recently moved back to his apartment in Barcelona near the Gothic Quarter and the Portal de l'Angel, where the incarnation of the devil, Lain Coubert, first appears to Daniel in *The Shadow of the Wind*. He is working on his next novel, which is set in the city in the late nineteenth century.

Translator Lucia Graves is the author and translator of many works and has overseen Spanish-language editions of the poetry of her father, Robert Graves.

List of Awards for *The Shadow of the Wind*

- Joseph-Beth and Davis-Kidd Booksellers Fiction Award
- Borders Original Voices Award
- NYPL Books to Remember 2004
- Book Sense Book of the Year: Honorable Mention
- Horror Guild Award: Nominee
- Gumshoe Award
- Barry Award 2005

Discussion Questions:

1. What genre would you use to describe this book?
2. Daniel says of *The Shadow of the Wind*, "As it unfolded, the structure of the story began to remind me of one of those Russian dolls that contain innumerable ever-smaller dolls within." Zafón's ***The Shadow of the Wind*** unfolds much the same way, with many characters contributing fragments of their own stories in the first person point of view. What does Zafón illustrate with this method of storytelling? What do the individual mini-autobiographies contribute to the tale?
3. What is Ruiz Zafón trying to say about books?
4. What was unique about the Barri Gotic (Gothic Quarter, Barcelona) setting of ***The Shadow of the Wind***? In what ways did Zafón's setting enhance the story?
5. Discuss the threatening devil-like characters in the novel – Lain Coubert, Fumero, Zacarias (the dream angel), etc.
6. Discuss the angelic depiction of female characters in the novel – Clara, Bea, Daniel's mother.
7. What roles does Fermín play in the story?
8. What roles do Daniel's parents play in this story?
9. The Aldaya Mansion, the allegedly cursed Angel of the Mist, seems to be a character in its own right. It has a life of its own, creaking, moaning, and breathing fire in its belly. How did this Mansion influence the book and its characters?
10. "What role does the Sugus candy play in the novel? Why are Fermin and Daniel never without them?"
11. Julian once wrote that coincidences are the scars of fate. There are no coincidences, Daniel. We are the puppets of our unconscious." What does that statement mean? What was Nuria referring to?
12. Why does the author set the story in the midst of the Spanish Civil War and its aftermath?
13. Nuria Monfort's dying words, meant for Julián, are, "There are worse prisons than words." What does she mean by this? What is she referring to?
14. What is the relationship between Daniel and Julián Carax?
15. Julián Carax's and Daniel's lives follow very similar trajectories. Yet one ends in tragedy, the other in happiness. What similarities are there between the paths they take? What are the differences that allow Daniel to avoid tragedy?

16. 'Books are mirrors: you only see in them what you already have inside you.' (Julián Carax). Do you agree with Carax's statement to Jorge Aldaya? Why/why not? In what ways was this your experience while reading *The Shadow of the Wind*?
17. What do you think do the Montblanc Meisterstück fountain pen or the "Victor Hugo" pen, as Daniel fondly calls it, symbolizes?
18. Julian never finds out why his relationship with Penelope was so taboo. To the end, everyone wanted to protect him from the real facts. If you were Julian, would you want to know?
19. Daniel says, "Once, in my father's bookshop, I heard a regular customer say that few things leave a deeper mark on a reader than the first book that finds its way into his heart." What book was that for you? Are there any forgotten books you would like to rescue from obscurity?
20. What does the title of the book refer to? What is "The Shadow of the Wind?"

Soundtrack:

There is a soundtrack for *The Shadow of the Wind*, composed by Carlos Ruiz Zafón. It is available to **download free** (<http://www.carlosruizzafon.co.uk/shadow-music.html>) for personal use in mp3 format.

References:

- <http://butterybooks.com/bookclubpartyideas/the-shadow-of-the-wind-by-carlos-ruiz-zafon/>
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