

# *These Feathered Flames*

## Teacher's Guide

Inkyard Press | April 20 2021 | Hardcover, 496 pages | \$18.99  
Age 14+ | 1335147969

### About the Book

When twin heirs are born in Tóurin, their fates are decided at a young age. While Izaveta remained at court to learn the skills she'd need as the future queen, Asya was taken away to train with her aunt, the mysterious Firebird, who ensured magic remained balanced in the realm.

But before Asya's training is completed, the ancient power blooms inside her, which can mean only one thing: the queen is dead, and a new ruler must be crowned.

As the princesses come to understand everything their roles entail, they'll discover who they can trust, who they can love—and who killed their mother.



### Content Warnings:

Death of a parent, emotional and physical abuse, on page death, fantasy violence.

### About the Author

Alexandra grew up in London and now lives in Los Angeles. She loves writing in all formats, from novels to screenplays to graphic novels, always centring on fierce women and morally grey characters, often with a bit of magic and murder.



### Themes:

Young Adult  
Reunited Family  
Growing Up  
Protecting Loved Ones  
Telling the Truth  
Tradition vs. Change  
Duty to Country vs. Duty to Family  
Doing wrong to do right  
Learning from your mistakes  
Sacrifice  
How we're shaped by our past  
The Hero's journey

Want to connect with the author? Alexandra is also available for **virtual school visits!** Contact her here: [aoverauthor@gmail.com](mailto:aoverauthor@gmail.com) for more information.



## Discussion Questions

The following questions have been compiled to help facilitate discussion around the book, but remember that the focus of their answer is based on reader interpretation of the text—what does the reader take away based on their own experiences and knowledge—rather than there being a right or a wrong answer.

### Spoilers ahead!

1. The people of Tóurin have grown to fear the Firebird. Why do you think they have this fear when the Firebird is only doing what needs to be done? Is their fear justified? Why or why not?
2. Asya and Izaveta have not seen each other for ten years. Examine the expectations of each sister for the other. How are those expectations met or not met?
3. Izaveta is intent on gaining power and influence in the court and is willing to sacrifice anything to get it. Do you agree with her ambition? Are there things that you would not be willing to sacrifice for power and influence?
4. Do you think that magic should have a price? Why or why not?
5. The Order of the Captured Flame was willing to go to extreme measures to ensure their beliefs were upheld. Do you think their actions were justified? Were there better ways they could have approached the situation? Why do you think they didn't use those methods?
6. There are many ceremonies, celebrations, and traditions in Tóurensi society. Which one did you like best? What was its significance within the plot of the story?
7. Should Izaveta be forgiven for what she did? Why?
8. Asya eventually comes to accept the duties of the Firebird. How does she find peace with the grim task that she needs to do? Do you agree with her choice?
9. If you were in Izaveta's position, would you do anything different? Why or why not?
10. If you were in Asya's position, would you do anything different? Why or why not?



# Project Based Learning

## Essays:

1. Choose one of the following themes and write an essay describing how it was shown in the novel.
  - Reunited Family
  - Growing Up
  - Protecting Loved Ones
  - Telling the Truth
  - Tradition vs. Change
  - The Hero's journey
  - Family legacies
  - Belonging
  - Duty to Country vs. Duty to Family
  - Doing Wrong to do Right
  - Learning from your mistakes
  - Sacrifice
  - How we're shaped by our past
2. Using google, find two or three versions of the Russian Firebird folktale and read them. Write an essay discussing the ways in which *These Feathered Flames* is similar to and differs from these original tales.
3. Find a poem and write an essay describing how that poem is linked to *These Feathered Flames*. You may choose to make connections between a specific character or one of the themes of the story.



## Creative Writing:

1. **Rewrite:** Choose a scene from the book and rewrite it from the other sister's point of view. Once you've rewritten the scene, write two or three paragraphs that assess the following: What changes? How does the other sister react to the situation? Why do you think the author chose the POV that they did?
2. **Found Poetry:** Photocopy several non-consecutive pages of *These Feathered Flames* and create blackout poetry. Once you've created your poems, can you link them to the story? How? Analyze the poems and how they help to deepen your understanding of the novel.
3. **Interview:** You're now an award-winning journalist. Write out an interview between you and a character. Write 10 questions to ask your character. Then, answer each question as you think the character would respond.
4. **Journal Entries:** Write 4 diary entries that a character would write that include details about the story. Be specific and really delve into the characters thoughts and emotional reactions to what is happening in the story.

## Creative Writing (cont.):

5. **Write a letter:** Write a letter to one of the main characters asking questions, making a complaint or a suggestion, or writing your opinion about something that happened in the story. Include all the elements of a friendly letter (date, greeting, body, closing, & signature).

Bonus: write the character's response.



## Multi-media:

1. **Music:** Design a playlist for Asya or Izaveta that contains five songs. Using textual evidence from both the songs and the novel, explain each of your choices. If the song is for a specific scene, explain why that song fits that scene.
2. **Casting Call:** Using a casting call template, write up character descriptions/casting calls for Asya, Izaveta, Nikov, Tarya, Sanislav, and Kyril. Provide either a photo or a drawing of what you think they might look like
3. **Newscast!** Become a reporter for Tóurin's hottest evening news. Create a video where you do a thorough report of events unfolding in the castle. Interview key witnesses and let the people of Tóurin know what's going on with their government!
4. **Podcast:** Create a 4 minute podcast detailing why everyone should read this book.
5. **Trailer:** Either using clips you find online or filming yourself create a mini-trailer for *These Feathered Flames*. What moments do you want to include to make people interested but without spoiling the ending too much?



## Bonus:

1. Who do you think should be the next queen of Tóurin? Make a campaign poster for your chosen character.
2. Draw out a scene from the book Pictionary style. Can your classmates guess the scene?
3. The language of Tóurin is inspired by Russian, with some changes. Can you make up a few new words? What do they mean?

Special thanks to wonderful teacher Katja Passerotti for putting the discussion questions and project based learning together!

## Paired Texts

If you're planning to incorporate *These Feathered Flames* into the classroom and looking for some texts to pair with it, here are some ideas for texts to discuss in tandem or to read next. You can also use the themes on page one to help find paired texts.

### Shakespeare:

***Hamlet:*** Both deal with succession of royalty in the aftermath of a questionable death.  
Common themes: Truth vs. lies, doing wrong to do right, protecting loved ones, duty to country vs. duty to family.

***Macbeth:*** Ambitious Royals! Both deal with intense political machinations and both rely on a supernatural force (the three witches & the Firebird) to maintain balance.  
Common themes: Duty to country vs. duty to family, how we're shaped by our past, sacrifice, learning from your mistakes.

***King Lear:*** More ambitious royals, plus sisters who are vying for the throne and a questionable parental figure. Would be a great comparison of family dynamics in the two texts.  
Common themes: Duty to country vs. family, family loyalty, ambition, family legacy.



### Classical Texts:

***Grimm's Fairy Tales:*** *These Feathered Flames* is based on a Russian folktale and contains references to other Russian folklore. How does that compare to the Western European folklore and fairy tales we know well?  
Common themes: Truth vs. lies, protecting loved ones, fairy tales.

***Chekhov's Short Stories:*** *These Feathered Flames* is set in a fantasy Russia, but how does real Russia look in comparison?  
Common themes: Duty to country vs. duty to family, Russian culture, history.

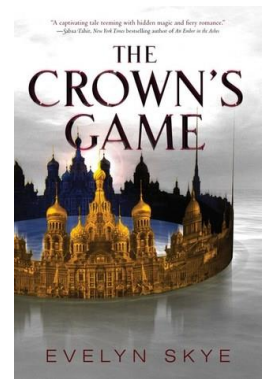
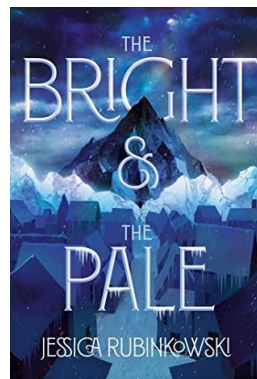
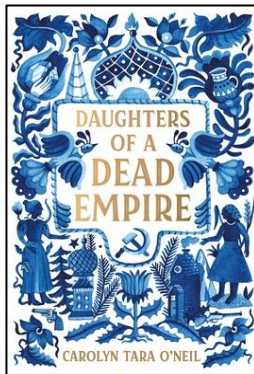
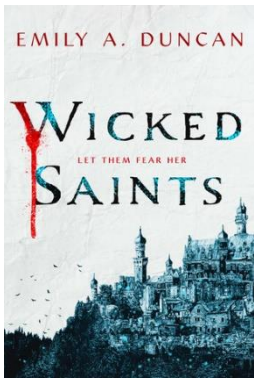




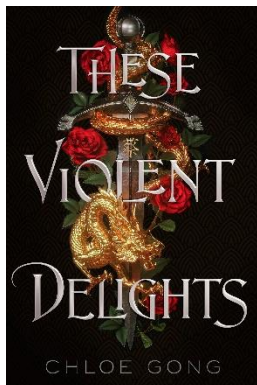
## Young Adult - Paired Texts

On this page you'll find more young adult fantasy books to either pair with *These Feathered Flames*, or to recommend to your students afterwards.

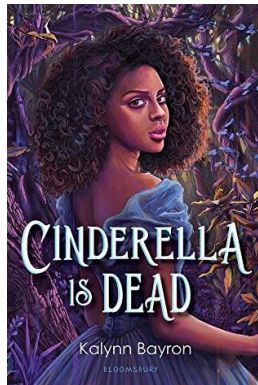
### Russian Inspired Worlds:



### Retellings of Fairy tales, Myths and Folklore:



*Romeo and Juliet*



*Cinderella*



*The Count of Monte Cristo*



*Snow White & Rose Red*



*Persian Folklore*

### Complicated Family Stories and Sibling Relationships:

