

A READING GROUP GUIDE *for* The STOCKHOLM OCTAVO



8 TOPICS TO PONDER WITH OTHER READERS

1. THE OCTAVO

The Octavo indicates that much of life is pre-determined but the Seeker has the opportunity to influence outcomes. Which characters in the book embraced this philosophy and took charge of their destiny — with or without the Octavo? Which didn't, and let fate takes its course? How does the OCTAVO help to advance the story? Did you find yourself wondering about your own OCTAVO?

2. DIVINATION

Mrs. Sparrow claims to have the gift (and burden) of the Sight. Have you ever had an experience with divination? Were the predictions relevant and accurate? Do you believe in fate, free will, or (like the Octavo) a combination of both?

3. STOCKHOLM

The entire novel (aside from backstory and some exposition) takes place in the Town. How does the setting enrich the story? What smells, tastes, and other details bring the setting to life?

Do you think the city of Stockholm acts as a character in the novel? If yes, what affect does it have on the other characters?

4. FOLDING FANS

Possession of the fan Cassiopeia is a major motivation of the novel. What power and symbolism does the fan have and why? What other tools did women have at their disposal in this period? What did you think about the way fans are used by the Uzanne? Do you think the handling of the fan could be taught and used in the way that The Uzanne proposes? Why do you think the fan disappeared from use? Is there a modern equivalent of this must-have 18th century accessory?

5. THE EIGHT

Once the Seeker identifies the eight and their role in the Octavo, they have the opportunity to influence their significant event. Did you know who Emil's eight were before he did? Who are your favorite characters among Emil's eight? What are their flaws and strengths? Which of their actions reveal the most about them? What event do you believe comes as a turning point for that character? Could you identify the eight from a significant event in your own life? Has a person with only a peripheral connection to you ever played a part in a significant event?

6. HISTORY

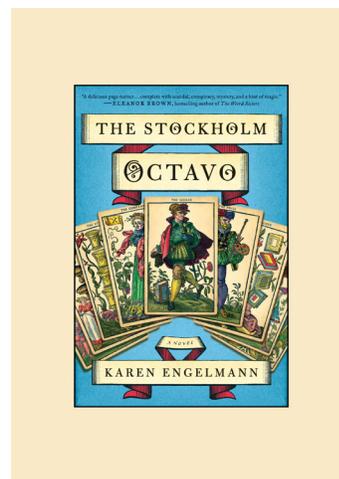
Do the historical facts enhance your enjoyment of the story? After reading this book, are you more interested in the history of Sweden and the events of this period? What did you think about King Gustav III? Do you read historical fiction to be informed or entertained? Do you expect a work in this genre to be 100% accurate? Did the book change the history or did the history change the story?

7. MAGIC

In the 18th century, magic was broadly accepted as a part of life —astrology alchemy, divination, séances, conjuring the devil and more. Do you think many people today believe in various forms of magic? How many would admit their belief? What magic practices remain? Describe the influence of herbs and potions — both magical and medicinal— used in the novel. What about the use of herbs and potions — magical and medicinal— today?

8. LOVE & CONNECTION

How does the meaning of love and connection change for Emil over the course of the novel? Does it change for other characters? How did you feel about the conclusion of the novel? Does Emil find love and connection? What is the role of isolation (personal, cultural, geographical) in the novel? Do you think that the actions we take and the choices we make have a ripple effect? How far might that ripple spread?



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