

Beastly Beauty

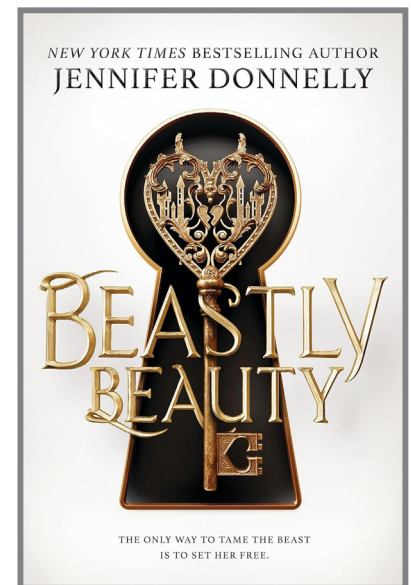
AUTHOR

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SCIS: 5490839

ISBN: 9781761525025

RECOMMENDED FOR: Lower to Mid Secondary



SYNOPSIS

What makes a girl ‘beastly?’ Is it having too much ambition? Being too proud? Taking up too much space? Or is it just wanting something, anything, too badly?

That’s the problem Arabella faces when she makes her debut in society. Her parents want her to be sweet and compliant so she can marry well, but try as she might, Arabella can’t extinguish the fire burning inside her—the source of her deepest wishes, her wildest dreams.

When an attempt to suppress her emotions tragically backfires, a mysterious figure punishes Arabella with a curse, dooming her and everyone she cares about, trapping them in the castle. As the years pass, Arabella abandons hope. The curse is her fault —after all, there’s nothing more ‘beastly’ than a girl who expresses her anger—and the only way to break it is to find a boy who loves her for her true self: a cruel task for a girl who’s been told she’s impossible to love.

When a handsome thief named Beau makes his way into the castle, the captive servants are thrilled, convinced he is the one to break the curse. But Beau—spooked by the castle’s strange and forbidding ladies-in-waiting, and by the malevolent presence that stalks its corridors at night—only wants to escape. He learned long ago that love is only an illusion. If Beau and Arabella have any hope of breaking the curse, they must learn to trust their wounded hearts, and realise that the cruellest prisons of all are the ones we build for ourselves.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jennifer Donnelly is the author of *A Northern Light*, which was awarded a Printz Honor and a Carnegie Medal; *Revolution* (named a Best Book by Amazon, *Kirkus Reviews*, *School Library Journal*, and the Chicago Public Library, and nominated for a Carnegie Medal); the Deep Blue series; and many other books for young readers, including *Lost in a Book*, which spent more than 20 weeks on the *New York Times* bestseller list. She lives in New York’s Hudson Valley.

STUDY NOTES

- Before reading the story, discuss the book cover and title. Some things to include in your discussion could be:
 - What does the image on the cover represent to you?
 - What symbolism can you identify in the cover artwork?
 - What genre do you expect this book to be?
 - What classic folktale does the title remind you of?

- What happens in the classic folktale?
- After reading the text at the bottom of the artwork, what have you learnt about what is likely to happen in this novel?
- Who do you predict might happen to the protagonist?
- What do you hypothesise what might happen in this story?
- Where and when do you expect this story to be set, and why do you think this?
- Having read the prologue and first chapter, what have you learnt about the setting and characters?
 - In small groups, create a character outline for each character so far encountered, and place them on an interaction map that details their relationships. Which characters do you expect to be important to the whole story, and which do you expect to only make a more fleeting appearance?
- In the prologue, Lady Espidra has a set of magical playing cards, where the pictured characters can move, can see the world around them and can even bleed, but can't leave the boundaries of their cards. What can we infer about both Lady Espidra and the world in which she lives from the interactions and behaviour of the various cards?
 - Write and illustrate a short story featuring a set of magical cards like the ones Lady Espidra has in the prologue.
- As a class, discuss the names of the main characters in the story. What is the meaning of the word 'beau'? What is the meaning of the word 'belle'? Which language/s do we find these words? What does the two main characters having these names imply about both the genre, and the events that occur? Can you identify any other names that have clues as to the action within the novel?
- Food, cooking, and an enjoyment of good quality produce and meals plays an important role within the story. As a class, discuss the different times and places when good food is central to a plot point, and the different ways in which it furthers the action. Some further discussion points could include:
 - What would you most be tempted by at a feast?
 - What are the foods that the Court Ladies are repulsed by and why do you think this is the case?
 - Why might having an abundance of good food be so important to setting the scene in a medieval world?
- When you first read the description of the clock, what was the aspect of its design that first struck you and had the greatest impact on you? Were you surprised to discover the true nature of the figures on the clock?
- When Arabella casts out her emotions, she rids herself of the ones which can empower and enhance her as well as the ones which can damage and harm. Emotions, however, as Arabella finally comes to realise, are rarely single sided but instead have multiple facets, such that the same emotion can both empower and hinder in different circumstances. As a class, discuss the different facets of the various emotions in Court Ladies, and the different ways in which these emotions can frequently help us as well as damage us.
 - Individually, use the points covered during your discussion to help you write an analysis of the roles of three of the court ladies in Arabella's life, both before and after she has acknowledged that they are a part of her. Include evidence from the text to support your assertions.
- If you had to write a moral to this story, what would it be? Write a one or two paragraph explanation of why you chose this particular piece of advice to be the moral to this story, and all the ways people would benefit from heeding it.
- What is some advice regarding emotional regulation, acceptance, and taking responsibility for one's own choices and behaviour that Arabella might have benefited from prior to her emotional fracturing?
 - Cast yourself in the role of a fairy godmother or benevolent aunt, and write the young Arabella a letter filled with sensible advice and supportive wisdom that might have helped her avoid her predicament in the first place.
- Re-read Chapter Sixty-Seven. Do you believe that this is true? Why/why not? As a class, discuss what truths we can learn from lies, and how we can identify the lies in the first instance.
- In small groups, try to build a bridge out of a packet of spaghetti, a glue stick, a piece of A4 paper and a roll of sticky tape. Your bridge should be able to span a one metre gap between tables, and safely support a filled pencil-case, juggling ball or other small item in the middle of its span. After completing this challenge, write a recount of the activity, discussing what was easiest, what was the hardest part, and whether it helped you mentally envision the difficulty of the bridge building challenge faced by Arabella and Beau.
- When does the author choose to use direct address within the novel, and why do you think she chose to do so at

these points within the action specifically?

- In small groups, discuss the different instances of direct address, and analyse their role and location within the overall narrative framework.

AUTHOR OF NOTES
RAE CARLYLE