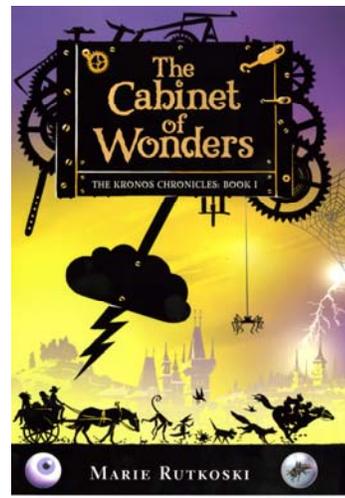


**FARRAR STRAUS GIROUX**  
**DISCUSSION GUIDE**

**Cabinet of Wonders**  
**The Kronos Chronicles: Book 1**  
by Marie Rutkoski



**Reading Level**  
**Grades 5 up**

**About the Novel**

Petra Kronos has a simple, happy life. But it's never been ordinary. She has a pet tin spider named Astrophil who likes to hide in her snarled hair and give her advice. Her best friend can trap lightning inside a glass sphere. Petra also has a father in faraway Prague who is able to move metal with his mind. He has been commissioned by the prince of Bohemia to build the world's finest astronomical clock. Petra's life is forever changed when, one day, her father returns home—blind. The prince has stolen his eyes, enchanted them, and now wears them. But why? Petra doesn't know, but she knows this: she will go to Prague, sneak into Salamander Castle, and steal her father's eyes back. Joining forces with Neel, whose fingers extend into invisible ghosts that pick locks and pockets, Petra finds that many people in the castle are not what they seem, and that her father's clock has powers capable of destroying their world.

This startling debut novel, about the risks we take to protect those we love, brims with magic, political intrigue, and heroism.

**Discussion Questions**

1. The author was inspired, in part, by one of the legends of the Astronomical Clock in Prague in which the clock's creator is blinded. Research the clock and its legends. Discuss how the legends influenced the book.
2. When Master Kronos returns home from Bohemia, he is blind, his eyes stolen by the prince. However, there are different ways of seeing and different ways of being blind. Give examples of characters that show extraordinary insight or perception. Can you think of some examples of other ways characters in the book were blind?
3. Petra puts herself in danger and takes a great personal risk to get her father's eyes back. Debate: Is this admirable or foolish? Why doesn't she tell anyone besides Tomik? Have you ever put someone else's interests before your own? What was the outcome?
4. What are Petra's reasons for refusing Tomik's offer to come to Prague with her? Do you think she made the right decision in leaving him behind?
5. Why doesn't Neel turn Petra over to the prince? What does he have to gain by not turning her in? Why do you think Petra trusts him?

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6. What role does Astrophil play in Petra's life? If you had a tin pet, what would it be? Describe its nature and/or personality.
7. After learning that Iris comes from royalty, Astrophil asks, "Whatever is she doing here? She should be holding ball dances and scheming to get her nephew on the throne, not working as a maker of dyes" (p. 133). Why does Iris avoid the courtly life?
8. After Iris suffers a particularly bad acid attack, Petra asks her why she doesn't just turn her magic off. Iris scoffs at this idea and tells Petra that there are compensations for having such powers (p. 143). Do you think this is true? Would you want a magical ability if it came with negative side effects like Iris's?
9. During Petra's first encounter with John Dee, he says to her, "The question you should be asking is this: ' Do we want the same thing?' " (p.180). Do Petra and John Dee want the same thing? At the end of the book, do you think John Dee is a friend or an enemy?
10. When Petra returns home with her father's eyes, instead of being happy Master Kronos is angry at Petra for stealing them back. Why is he so mad? Do you think he is right to be angry with her?



**About the Author**

**Marie Rutkoski** grew up in Bolingbrook, Illinois (a suburb of Chicago), as the oldest of four children. In high school, she was a member of the Young Adult Advisory Board at the Fountaindale Public Library in Bolingbrook. She later attended the University of Iowa, where she took Writers' Workshop classes and also studied with Pulitzer Prize-winner James Alan McPherson. After graduating, she lived in Moscow and Prague. Upon receiving her Ph.D. from Harvard University, she held dual appointments as a lecturer there in English and American Literature and Language, and in History and Literature. Ms. Rutkoski is currently a professor at Brooklyn College. She lives in New York City with her husband and cat. **THE CABINET OF WONDERS** is her debut novel.

**The Cabinet of Wonders**  
**The Kronos Chronicles: Book 1**  
by Marie Rutkoski

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**Coming Fall 2009**

**The Celestial Globe**  
**The Kronos Chronicles: Book 2**  
by Marie Rutkoski

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