



# The Furies

Natalie Haynes

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## READING GROUP GUIDE

### About the book:

After losing her fiancé in a shocking tragedy, Alex Morris moves from London to Edinburgh to make a break with the past. Formerly an actress, Alex accepts a job teaching drama therapy at a school commonly referred to as "The Unit," a last-chance learning community for teens expelled from other schools in the city. Her students have troubled pasts and difficult personalities, and Alex is an inexperienced teacher, terrified of what she's taken on and drowning in grief.

Her most challenging class is an intimidating group of teenagers who have been given up on by everyone before her. But Alex soon discovers that discussing Greek tragedies opens them up in unexpected ways, and she gradually develops a rapport with them. But are these tales of cruel fate and bloody revenge teaching more than Alex ever intended? And who becomes responsible when these students take the tragedies to heart, and begin interweaving their darker lessons into real life with terrible and irrevocable fury?

*The Furies* is a psychologically complex, dark and twisting novel about loss, obsession and the deep tragedies that can connect us to each other even as they blind us to our fate.

### Discussion Questions

1. What do you think are the central themes of the book, and how did they resonate with you?
2. The children at the Unit are impressionable, emotional and troubled. Were they what you expected? Did your opinion of them change as the novel progressed?
3. 'We don't want to upset Alex, because she's ours now.' What do you think it is about Alex that draws Mel so closely in?



4. In what ways does grief run as a theme throughout the novel? How do the coping strategies of Alex and Mel differ, and in what ways are they the same?
5. 'Even if you have no control over your life, you should live like you have a choice.'  
Discuss how the story examines the issue of free will versus determinism. Where do you stand on this debate?
6. Alex's class find themselves enthralled by tales of anger, fate and revenge. What do you think it is about the Greek tragedies she teaches that so engages them?
7. What is Alex searching for in the pages of this book? In your opinion, does she find what she's looking for?
8. Did the novel's ending surprise you? Did you find it satisfying?
9. What have you taken away from the story? Has it altered any of the views you currently hold?
10. Has the novel inspired you to read, or revisit, any of the Greek tragedies for yourself?

#### About the author:

NATALIE HAYNES is a graduate of Cambridge University and an award-winning comedian, journalist, and broadcaster. She judged the Man Booker Prize in 2013 and was a judge for the final Orange Prize in 2012. Natalie is a regular panelist on Radio 4's *Saturday Review* and the long-running art show, *Front Row*. She is a guest columnist for *The Independent* and *The Guardian*.

Want to learn more about Natalie Haynes?

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