

Reading guide

Adventures in Oculus: The Spider Witch's Curse

Book One • Theresa Maria Villarreal

For families, homeschool groups, and book clubs

Keep your book nearby and choose a few questions to explore together. Explain your ideas with details from the story. You can answer aloud, write, or draw. Read each chapter before discussing its questions; save pages 2 and 3 of this guide until you finish the book.

Before you begin

Look at the cover and title. What do you think the curse might change about life in Oculus? Write down one prediction to revisit later.

Pause and talk as you read

1. Chapter 1: Rebecca accidentally knocks three bricks from Dominic's castle. How does he respond? What do you learn about him before the adventure even begins?
2. Chapter 1: What seems unusual about Rebecca's dragon drawing and her mother's reaction to it? Pick one detail that makes you curious, without reading ahead.
3. Chapter 3: Dominic hears Leonard beyond the wardrobe. What pulls him toward the portal, and what makes him hesitate? Would you describe his decision as brave, risky, or both?
4. Chapter 8: Dominic notices that Buckle Boots seems sad beneath his cheerfulness. What has Dominic observed? What might Barnabus mean when he talks about the burden of protecting others?
5. Chapter 8: The Book of Knowledge changes so Dominic can read it. What does he learn about the Spider Witch's defenses? Why might bringing hope into her castle matter as much as carrying a weapon?

Your prediction

Which clue do you think will matter later? Record the clue and your guess on a separate sheet. Audiobook listeners can note the chapter and approximate time.

After you finish the story

Spoilers ahead. Discuss these questions only after everyone has finished. There can be more than one thoughtful answer; return to the scene when you disagree.

6. Chapter 17: Leonard finds the colored tiles when Dominic cannot spot the pattern. How do Leonard's senses, Barnabus's advice, and Dominic's actions work together? Who deserves credit for getting them through?

7. Chapter 17: The helmets protect thoughts and memories from the wriggle wraiths. Why is that danger frightening in a different way from a physical attack? Which memory would you most want to protect?

8. Chapter 18: Why does Dominic challenge the Spider Witch to a contest? What does he understand about her pride, and what does he risk if his plan fails?

9. Chapter 18: Choose one riddle from the contest. Explain its answer in your own words. How does it challenge the Spider Witch's belief that she should control everyone's thoughts?

10. Chapter 18: What happens when Dominic brings out and opens the Book of Knowledge? Connect its effects on the Spider Witch, the statues, and Princess Rebecca with what the book represents to Dominic.

11. Chapters 19 and 20: Oculus begins to recover, but its people still have to learn how to choose for themselves. Why is that harder than simply removing the Spider Witch's control?

Faith and everyday choices

These optional reflections invite personal connections. They do not require every character or magical object to stand for something from the Bible.

12. Return to Chapter 1. How might Dominic's response to Rebecca connect with patience or forgiveness in your own family?

13. In Chapter 18, Dominic defends hope and caring for others. Where do you see those beliefs become actions in the story? What connection, if any, do you make with your Christian faith?

For the group leader: Choose three or four questions. Give readers time to find a scene before answering, and invite them to ask their own questions too.

Make something from the story

Finish the book first, then choose an activity. Use another sheet for your artwork or writing.

Design a memory helmet • Chapter 17

Sketch a helmet inspired by the ones Dominic and Leonard wear. Include two details from the chapter and label one feature you invented. Around the sketch, write three memories or ideas you would want it to protect.

Create a riddle • Chapter 18

Choose knowledge, hope, or freedom as your answer. Write an original riddle that fits that answer, then test it on someone in your group. Explain how your riddle connects with Dominic's contest.

Show Oculus before and after • Chapter 19

Divide a sheet in half. Draw or describe Oculus under the curse on one side and its recovery on the other. Use details about the setting and the people. Label your story details and any additions you imagined.

Your reading notes

A scene I want to talk about and why

A question I would like to ask Theresa

Continue with Firedrake

The next book is Adventures in Oculus: Firedrake. What unanswered question about Oculus or Dominic's family would you like to explore next?

[Explore the series at theresamariavillarreal.com](http://theresamariavillarreal.com)