

BOOK CLUB NOTES

AGES 15+



SEVEN DEADLY THORNS

BLOOMSBURY

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SEVEN DEADLY THORNS

BY AMBER HAMILTON

Ages 15+ Book Club Notes

This guide can be used in school reading clubs or casual reading groups. It blends literary analysis with personal reflection to explore the dark romantasy of *Seven Deadly Thorns*, diving into its key themes through discussion and interactive activities.

Note: The book contains mature themes, dark romance and morally complex situations, so discretion is advised for younger or sensitive readers.

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1. BOOK COVER PROMPTS

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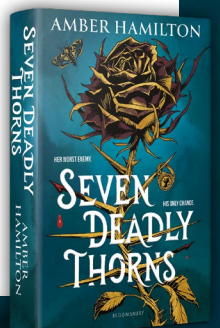
- Romantasy Genre Traits
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3. THEMATIC OPPOSITIONS

4. EXTRACT FOCUS: ROZE AND VIOLA

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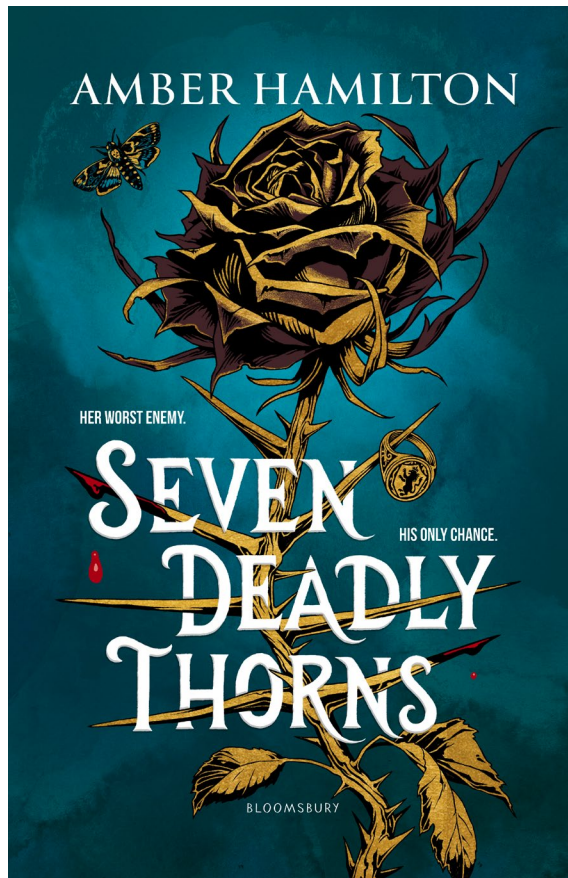
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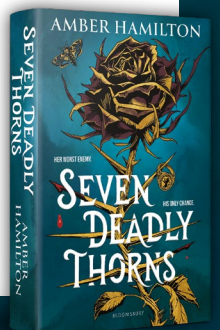
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1. BOOK COVER PROMPTS



- What does the title *Seven Deadly Thorns* suggest to you? What sort of story do you expect?
- Looking at the cover, what mood or atmosphere do you sense?
- Do you notice any symbols (colour, imagery, patterns) that might hint at the story's themes or conflicts?
- What do roses and thorns often symbolise in stories? Can you think of other fairytales or books where this image appears?
- Based on the title and cover, what kind of main character do you expect – flawed, heroic, enigmatic or ambiguous?





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2. GENRE DISCUSSION

The book is described as a ‘dark academia romantasy’ – discuss what this means:

1. When you hear ‘dark academia romantasy’, what do you expect in terms of setting, atmosphere and character dynamics?
2. How does *Seven Deadly Thorns* combine intellectual or academic elements with romance and dark fantasy?
3. How does the ‘dark’ aspect (mystery, moral ambiguity, danger, death) influence the story?
4. What are the characters’ ambitions, secrets or rivalries?
5. How does the dark academia aesthetic – intellectual, moody, secretive – impact tone and mood?

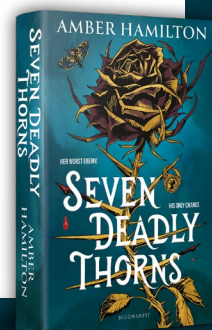
ACTIVITY: ROMANTASY GENRE TRAITS

In pairs or small groups, discuss the **romantasy trait cards** on the next page. Can you come up with any further traits of the genre based on other books you have read? Add them in the row below.

For each feature, **find one example from the book** that demonstrates it.

Imagine you are marketing the book to a new reader:

- Pick the **two strongest features** you identified.
- Create a **one-sentence ‘hook’** or tagline highlighting them.



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SLOW-BURN
ROMANCE OR
FORBIDDEN
ATTRACTION.

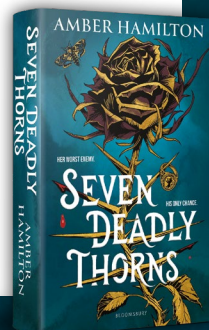
DANGEROUS
OR MORALLY
COMPLEX LOVE
INTEREST.

SETTINGS IN
ELITE ACADEMIC
ENVIRONMENTS.

MAGIC OR
MYSTICAL
ELEMENTS
AFFECTING
THE PLOT.

EMOTIONAL
STAKES
INTERTWINED
WITH ADVENTURE
OR DANGER.

GOthic
OR MOODY
ATMOSPHERE
THAT
HEIGHTENS
TENSION AND
ROMANCE.





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ACTIVITY: FAIRYTALE CONNECTIONS

Explore how *Seven Deadly Thorns* draws on traditional fairytale symbols and themes (like roses, thorns, mirrors or curses) and compare them to their use in classic stories such as *Snow White*, *Sleeping Beauty*, *Rapunzel* and *Beauty and the Beast*.

1. Symbol Hunt

- As you read *Seven Deadly Thorns*, keep a list of fairytale symbols you notice (e.g. roses, thorns, poisoned objects, enchanted forests, towers, mirrors).

2. Fairytale Match

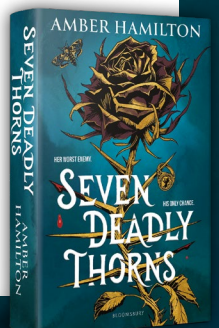
- Choose 2–3 symbols from the book and match them with examples from classic fairytales. Example: Roses → *Beauty and the Beast* (enchanted rose), Thorns → *Sleeping Beauty* (thorn hedge).

3. Discussion Questions

- Why do you think Amber Hamilton uses these fairytale images?
- How does the meaning change in *Seven Deadly Thorns* compared to the original fairytale?
- Do these symbols make the story feel darker, more modern, or more magical?

4. Creative Challenge

- Create your own short fairytale spin using one of the symbols (e.g. rose) but give it a new twist.



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3. THEMATIC OPPOSITIONS

The book explores the concept of **duality**. This means that it contains many thematic oppositions – a genre trait that is common in **fairytales**.

Explore these oppositions, connecting the book's themes to characters, events and symbols.

Suggested Thematic Oppositions for Exploration:

- Good vs Evil
- Safety vs Danger
- Innocence vs Corruption
- Love vs Hate
- Hope vs Despair
- Freedom vs Entrapment
- Truth vs Deception
- Light vs Darkness
- Life vs. Death
- Redemption vs Damnation



1. Select your example

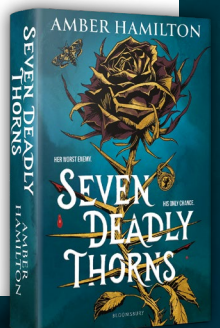
- Choose a **thematic opposition** from the list above or come up with your own.

2. Draw a Venn Diagram

- Label one circle with one side of the theme (e.g. Good) and the other with the opposite (e.g. Evil).

3. Fill in the Diagram

- **Left Circle:** Characters, events or symbols that strongly represent one side.



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- **Right Circle:** Characters, events, or symbols that strongly represent the opposite.
- **Middle (Overlap):** Elements that show a mix, complexity or duality. For example, a character who seems good but makes dangerous choices.

4. Extension

- Can you extend your Venn diagrams so that more than two circles overlap?

5. Reflection Questions

- Why do you think the author included these overlaps?
- How do the opposites help tell the story or develop characters?
- Can you find similar examples in a classic fairytale?

4. EXTRACT FOCUS: ROZE AND VIOLA

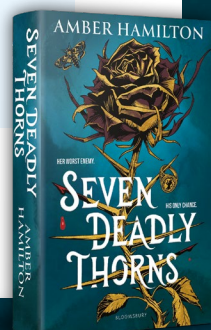
Read the extract below taken from Chapter Five.

‘I’m listening,’ I say.

He smiles like he’s won an argument, and I have to bite my tongue to keep from lashing out.

‘I’m an assassin,’ he says. ‘A very good one. The only one the Queen trusts to deal with meigas. She blames my father’s death on your kind, and she knows what you are. She’s ordered your death.’

He finally releases me, stepping away, and the loss of his grip on my wrist feels like plunging into an icy bath. He shrugs off his Vandenberghe blazer, and my eyes widen at the hidden straps he has wrapped everywhere around his body, carrying





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at least half a dozen blades. He rolls up his left sleeve, revealing pale skin on his toned forearm. Then he holds it up into the candlelight, and there, on his arm, is a tattoo.

It's a rose, like his name. But it isn't beautiful, as a rose should be. It's dark and malevolent, full of sharp lines and jagged angles. There's a curling stem that descends his forearm, and on that stem, jutting out sharply like the teeth of a monster, are seven thorns.

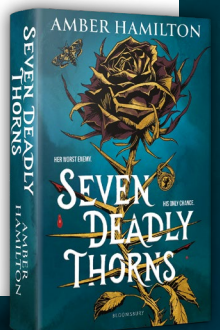
'My mother gave me this, this afternoon,' the Prince says. His voice is full of loathing, but I don't think it's me he hates this time. 'She gives me one each time I'm ordered to execute a meiga. A way of keeping me in line.' He points to the thorns. 'Seven thorns for seven days to kill you. One will disappear each day until it's done.'

'And if you don't?'

His eyes are edged with strain and contempt. 'If I don't kill you, on the seventh day at sundown, my life will end.'

Discussion Questions:

1. How does Viola feel about Roze in this extract? What details or actions show this?
2. What task has Roze been given? Who set it for him, and why?
3. What do we learn about Roze's motivations, feelings and desires in this passage?
4. How does Amber Hamilton suggest the attraction between Roze and Viola?
5. What is Roze's relation with his mother, the Queen, like? What evidence from the text supports this?



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6. The stakes are explained in this extract – what are they?
How does this affect you as a reader?

ACTIVITY: SUBVERSIVE SYMBOLS

Read the passage again carefully. Highlight or underline words and phrases that describe **Roze's tattoo**. Focus on adjectives, imagery and tone.

1. Reimagine Roze's Tattoo

- Draw your own version of Roze's tattoo, highlighting the meaning you think it carries.
- Consider how the design **subverts** the traditional beauty of a rose. What does this reveal about his character?

2. Create a Tattoo for a Character

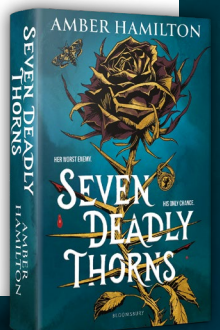
- Design a tattoo for a character in a dark academia or romantasy story.
- Annotate your drawing to explain the symbols, shapes and features you included, and why you chose them.
- Reflect on how your design **subverts** or twists a traditional symbol to reveal something deeper about the character or story.

ACTIVITY: RELATIONSHIP TIMELINE

Track the development of Roze and Viola's relationship, analysing how it changes over the course of the book and what it reveals about character and theme.

1. Create a Relationship Timeline

- Draw a horizontal line to represent the story's progression from beginning to end.





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- Mark key chapters, events or passages that show interactions between Roze and Viola.

2. Identify Key Moments

- At each point, note the type of interaction or feeling (e.g., trust, conflict, attraction, misunderstanding).
- Use symbols or colour-coding to represent positive, negative, or complicated moments.
- Between each key moment, write a short note explaining how their relationship changes. Consider questions like:
 - What causes tension or connection?
 - How do the characters' motivations, fears, or secrets affect their bond?

5. AFTER READING: REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- Which event or character did you find most compelling, and why?
- Did any of the themes or character struggles resonate with your own experiences or perspectives?
- Which moment or passage stayed with you the most, and why?
- What big questions does this story leave you thinking about (morality, human nature, resilience)?
- If you designed an alternative cover for the book, what symbols or imagery would you choose?
- Imagine a sequel: which character or theme would you want explored further?
- If *Seven Deadly Thorns* were adapted into a film or series, who would you cast in the lead roles?
- If you could speak to the author, Amber Hamilton, what would you ask her?

