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The Monster of the Forest by J.L. Thaxton | Reading Guide

General Questions:

1. *The Monster of the Forest* opens with an exciting flash forward scene. Did you realize it was jumping ahead in the story? How did this scene set your expectations for the story to come?
2. What were your initial guesses about the identity of the monster? Did you suspect that it was a regular animal or a mythical creature? Who did you think might be transforming into the monster?
3. What did you think about Theo's introduction? How do you feel about the history between Cam and Theo/Maxwell and Peter? Can you understand both sides of the family argument or do you find one side particularly compelling?
4. Were you surprised that Fern had new powers in the scene where she goes up against Jackson, the dragon? Do you think Fern will have any other new powers in the future? If so, what do you think they might be?
5. Fern collapses (chapter 10)! Talk about why this happened. How is this similar to her illness at the beginning of *Fern of the Forest*? In what ways is she better equipped now to handle things?
6. Fern and her mom visit NYC for a long weekend. How has Fern's friendship with Ava May changed? What does Ava May think about the changes? Do you think that Fern is still a good friend to Ava May?
7. Let's talk about all of the main characters and their mythical creature powers! Describe what you learned in *The Monster of the Forest* about each of them, especially about how their powers are changing:
    a. Fern (madremonte)
    b. Cam (griffin)
    c. Shay (seer)
    d. Theo (warlock/amplifier)
8. Ultimately the town comes together to defeat Maxwell Roe. Describe what actions Fern (and her friends) takes that lead to this climactic scene.
9. A lot of the conflict in *The Monster of the Forest* started years prior to when the story begins and doesn't have anything to do with Fern: Brothers Maxwell and Peter disagreed about the trajectory of Varina and then their sons, Theo and Cam, took their fathers' fight on themselves. Now that Maxwell Roe has been thwarted—and abandoned the town and his son—what do you think will happen with the relationships between Theo, Cam, Peter, and Theo's absent parents as the story moves on into the next book?
10. The story ends with quite a cliffhanger! What do you think will happen with Fern's madremonte mother in the next book? Why do you think her mother turns up when she does?

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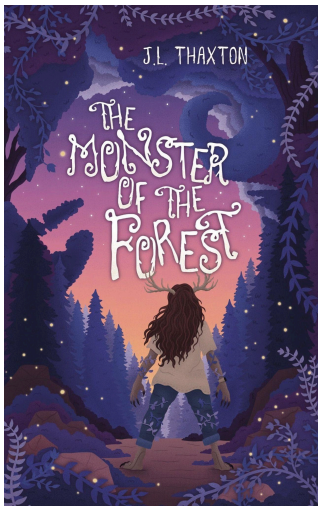
Thematic Questions:

1. The changing nature of friendship is a major theme of this story. Talk about the way Fern's relationships with her friends grow in *The Monster of the Forest*, specifically:
    a. Long-distance friendship with Ava May
    b. Close friendships with Cam and Shay
    c. New friendship (and maybe a crush) with Theo
    d. A growing group of acquaintances like Lily, Drew, Megan, and others
2. Fern (and Cam and Shay) are growing and maturing! Discuss the ways that they take the lessons learned in *Fern of the Forest* to make better choices in *The Monster of the Forest*.
3. Both books in this series emphasize the importance of community. Compare what happens in *The Monster of the Forest* when different characters try to do things on their own versus when they ask for help, work together, and rely on each other. In what ways can this mythical creature world encourage you to be a better friend, to be part of a community, to depend on others?



The Monster of the Forest is book two of Fern of the Forest, a contemporary fantasy series written by J.L. Thaxton. Book one, *Fern of the Forest*, is available now wherever books are sold.

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