

Mina and the Undead

Book Club Discussion Points



1. Being abandoned by their mother clearly has a huge impact on the two sisters. Do you like the gradual way her reasons for leaving them are revealed?
2. Mina and Libby are named after two women synonymous with vampire-lore: the fictional Mina Harker, who survives Dracula's bite and the real-life blood-bathing serial killer, Elizabeth Bathory. Do you believe in nominative determinism (i.e. the idea that people behave in ways that fit their names)? Do you think the girls have anything in common with their namesakes?
3. McCaw has obviously chosen New Orleans as her setting because of its links to vampire stories, but it's an unusual location for British YA fiction. To what extent does Mina's outsider-status affect our view of the city?
4. *Mina and the Undead* contains a lot of pop-culture horror references. How do these add to the tale's appeal? Does it matter if they're unfamiliar to some readers?
5. Marsden tells Mina, "There are people in this town who drink blood. Some say they're vampires; others say they're 'life-stylers' - those who enjoy the vampire way of life." What is the difference between vampires and life-stylers? Is it a simple matter of whether they're supernatural or not, or are the lines more blurred?
6. At what point in the novel did you start to suspect that Jared might not be quite what he seems? What clues led you there?
7. Can you see any parallels between the two pairs of siblings, John and Wayne Carter and Mina and Libby?
8. When she finds out that Lucas likes to let people drink his blood, Mina says, "I understood pushing yourself right up to the edge of what scared you." Do you understand this feeling? Have you ever confronted your own fears?
9. In order to distract herself from the real-life horror around her, Mina re-reads her favourite book, *Interview with the Vampire*. She is clearly very familiar with the tale; at one point she says, "I knew what was coming and read faster." Do you like to re-read stories you already know, or do you prefer to explore new ground?





10. Thandie tells Mina that crosses and holy water are not harmful to vampires. (“That’s wishful thinking on the church’s part.”) As for garlic, she says, “it smells terrible. That’s all.” Why do you think McCaw has chosen to reject these aspects of vampire lore?
11. Although this book is set in the 1990s, McCaw clearly has a more contemporary attitude to consent, which she addresses through Thandie’s struggle to avoid becoming a predator (“I have to take blood from a living donor. Going to the blood bar allows me to take what I need consensually and with minimal harm”). Why do you think this ethical subversion of the mythology is important?
12. McCaw is a self-avowed fan of 1990s *Point Horror* books. These novels famously played with horror tropes - and *Mina and the Undead* does too. In what ways?
13. In a recent interview, McCaw said that the best horror books are those where you feel a little bit of yourself in them. Do you recognise yourself in any of the characters or situations in *Mina and the Undead*?
14. There are cliffhangers at the end of many of the chapters in this book, and some of them are quite audacious. How effective are they in making you want to keep reading?
15. There are hardly any adults in this book: Auntie Sandra and Della’s dad are both mentioned, but we never meet them. The only adults that do feature - including the police - represent a threat to the girls’ freedom. Why do you think this is the case?
16. Amy McCaw says that several scenes in *Mina and the Undead* were inspired by a Voodoo doll she bought on Bourbon Street during a trip to New Orleans. Which scenes do you think these might be?



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