

Study Guide for Ruby's Fire

By *USA Today* bestselling author Catherine Stine

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Discussion Questions, Related Assignments, Creative Projects & Links



If everything about you changes, what remains?

Seventeen year-old Ruby, long-pledged to the older Stiles from the Fireseed desert cult, escapes with only a change of clothes, a pouch of Oblivion Powder and her mute little brother, Thorn. Arriving at The Greening, a boarding school for orphaned teens, she can finally stop running. Or can she? The Greening is not what it seems. Students are rampaging out of control and as she cares for the secret Fireseed crop, she experiences frightening physical changes. She's ashamed of her attraction to burly, hard-talking Blane, the resident bodyguard, and wonders why she can't be happy with the gentler Armonk. She considers her great beauty a liability, a thing she's misused in order to survive. And how is she to stop her dependence on Oblivion to find a real beauty within, using her talent as a maker of salves, when she has nightmares of Stiles without it?

When George Axiom, wealthy mogul of Vegas-by-the-Sea offers a cash prize for the winner of a student contest, Ruby is hopeful she might collect the prize to rescue her family and friends from what she now knows is a dangerous cult. But when Thorn sickens after creating the most astonishing contest project of all, the world Ruby knows is changed forever. This YA futuristic thriller set in 2099 is the sequel to *Fireseed One*. It is a Next Generation Indie award finalist in YA.

Discussion Questions:

Who is Ruby at the beginning of the novel, and who is she by the end? What weaknesses and strengths does she have and how do those change?

How would you make your escape from the compound if you were Ruby? What skills (and even weaknesses) does she use to her advantage?

What does each student at the Greening bring to the table? How did their own difficult pasts shape their own personalities?

What might you invent from the Fireseed plants, in considering their very special properties?

What other types of hybrid blends might be useful in the future? You can open up this concept to tools, people, animals, and even foods. Have fun with this one!

What are the major themes in *Ruby's Fire*, and what does the author seem to be saying about each theme as the novel progresses?

What is Stine saying through the character of Nevada Pilgrim? Through Blane? Thorn?

What is your prediction for Ruby and Thorn? Do you see her ever being able to make her "blue fantasy house" a reality? What would you like to see happen in a possible sequel?

Themed Assignments:

1. The Fireseed crop is able to grow in the extreme heat of Skull's Wrath desert (now the southwest USA), where, in 2099, temperatures often reach 150 degrees Fahrenheit. The reason for its survival is that it is a transgenic crop, bred from two very diverse genes. **Research existing species of plants able to grow and thrive in the desert. What qualities must they have? Below is a link to the desertusa.com site. Find others and write a report on at least two species.**

http://www.desertusa.com/du_plantsurv.html

2. What is climate change? What is global warming? Most scientists agree that the planet is warming due in part to human activity and that we need to take action to help change this course. Do you agree? Disagree? **Write a response paper that uses specific examples to back up your position. Below is a link from National Geographic to start your research.**

<http://environment.nationalgeographic.com/environment/global-warming/>

3. In *Ruby's Fire*, the Fireseed plant is a hybrid of two very diverse species; in other words, it is a transgenic crop (Also called a GM, or genetically modified crop). What exactly is a transgenic plant? Do these already exist? **Write a research paper that defines transgenic plants and goes on to describe an example, as well as discussing the pros and cons of this emerging science.** Here are links from Colorado State and Science Direct to start your study (Find more):

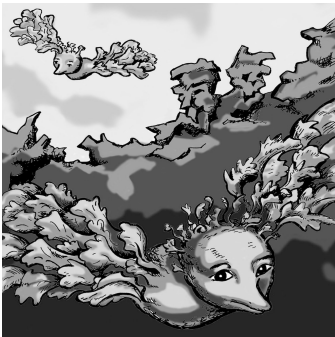
<http://cls.casa.colostate.edu/transgeniccrops/what.html>

<http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0974694313003289>

Creative Projects:

1. Imagine you live in a desert environment like Skull's Wrath with temperatures rising to 150 degrees Fahrenheit. **How might you survive in this type of desert? Describe in detail what kind of shelter you would build and what kind of food you would grow.**

2. Important themes in *Ruby's Fire* include: climate refugees, global warming, eco-terrorism, extremist cults, drug abuse and recovery, the balance between real inner beauty versus surface beauty, hybrids, the use of creativity in the face of strife and struggle. **Choose one or two of the themes that speak to you and write a story using these themes.**



Depicted is one of the fantastic creatures readers meet in *Ruby's Fire*. But... what is it exactly? This is one of the novel's striking mysteries.

Illustration for Ruby's Fire chapter header
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To arrange an author visit, Skype chat or interview, send an email to kitsy84557@gmail.com with "School Book Talk" in the header. She welcomes letters from students.

Visit Catherine on the web at catherinestine.com



Catherine Stine is a *USA Today* bestselling author, whose novels span the range from futuristic to supernatural to contemporary. Her award-winning Fireseed series includes *Fireseed One* and *Ruby's Fire*. *Dorianna*, her dark YA twist on the Oscar Wilde classic, won Best Horror Book in the Kindle Hub Awards. An earlier YA novel, *Refugees*, earned a New York Public Library Best Book and a featured interview in Booklist.

Stine hails from Philadelphia, and lives in New York City. Visit catherinestine.com for more information.

Praise for *Ruby's Fire*:

5 stars from The (Mis) Adventures of a Twenty-Something Year-Old Girl: "You know when you get a book, and it's much better than you thought it was going to be? *Ruby's Fire* was definitely one of those books! I absolutely loved it... What an amazing plot! Also, there is a fantastic twist that I didn't see coming."

Books for YA: "Astounding creativity and unique world-building."

Words Create Scenes: "I can't even begin to tell you how smoothly the writing flows. It's perfect. No joke. I went into this book not knowing what to expect and what I got was an amazing storyline."

Seeing Night Reviews: "Romance, betrayal, secrets, great world-building!"

YA Between the Lines: "With the rest of her world coming down around her, Ruby must choose. Blane or Armonk? Blissful Oblivion or painful memories? Ruby can choose to wield her inner fire, but she has to be careful not to get burned."

Book Luvver: "*Ruby's Fire* combines beautiful, arresting language with fully fleshed-out characters, a richly detailed post-apocalyptic setting, and fast-paced, surprising story turns."

Flutteral Flight: "Full of creativity, imagination & original concepts."