

## A TEACHER'S GUIDE FOR

# GAME OF STRENGTH AND STORM

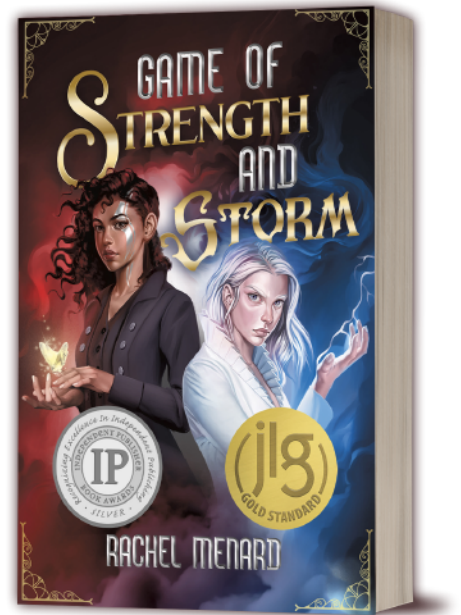
### >> ABOUT THE BOOK <<<

*Game of Strength and Storm* is the first book in a multi-award winning Greek Mythology duology by author, Rachel Menard. This genderbent Hercules retelling puts a modern twist on a classic tale of heroism and redemption!

Once a year, the Olympian Empresses grant the wishes of ten people selected by a lottery—for a price. Seventeen-year-old Gen, a former circus performer, wants the freedom of her father, who was sentenced to life in prison for murders she knows he didn't commit. Castor plans to carry the island Arcadia into the future in place of her brother, Pollux, but only after the Empresses force a change in her island's archaic laws that requires a male heir.

To get what they want, Gen and Castor must race to complete the better half of ten nearly impossible labors. They have to catch the fastest ship in the sea, slay the immortal Hydra, defeat a gangster called the Boar, and capture the flesh-eating Mares, among other deadly tasks.

Gen has her magic, her ability to speak to animals, her inhuman strength—and the help of Pollux, who's been secretly pining for her for years. But Castor has her own gifts: the power of the storms, along with endless coin. Only one can win. The other walks away with nothing—if she walks away at all.



9781635830767 | Ages 12-18

### >> ABOUT THE AUTHOR <<<



Rachel Menard is an author of strange and fantastical stories for teens that feature unapologetic young women. Her work has been featured in *Writer's Digest* and on *Cast of Wonders*, and her short story, *Blame it on the Bees*, was chosen as a "Best of 2019" by *Diabolical Plots*. Her novels include *Game of Strength and Storm* and *Clash of Fate and Fury*, both Junior Library Guild Gold Standard selections. *Game of Strength and Storm* also won the Silver IPPY Medal for Young Adult Fantasy. *Steel Hand, Cold Heart*, her self-published novel, was the grand prize winner in the *Writer's Digest* 7th Annual Self-Published eBook awards.

TO BOOK AN AUTHOR VISIT:  
[rachelmenard.com/speaking](http://rachelmenard.com/speaking)



## ➤➤ PRE - READING ‹‹

Do you know the labors of Hercules? If not, look it up online or in a Greek Mythology book. What are the labors? What is the theme of the story? Do you think Hercules was treated fairly or unfairly? How does the story of Hercules compare to other Greek Mythology you know? How does it differ?

## ➤➤ DISCUSSION QUESTIONS ‹‹

1. What elements in the novel reflect the traditional Hercules story? How is it different? In this retelling, the author changes some of the labors and leaves some of them as is. How do you think that affected the story?
2. In this retelling, Gen is someone of mixed race and abilities. People with her type of magic are feared by others. Discuss some examples where Gen is “othered” because of her abilities. Do you think that’s fair?
3. Gen keeps with her two animal companions from her circus days. Discuss how the author uses those animals both as plot tools and symbolic objects. Do you feel the animals have personalities of their own?
4. Describe Gen’s personality. What are her strengths and weaknesses? What can you tell about her from her relationship with her creatures? What effect does it have on her to be the object of scorn from others?
5. Now discuss Castor’s personality. What can you tell about her from her relationship with her brother? Her father? What are her strengths and weaknesses? Do you prefer one character over the other? Why?
6. Pollux plays two parts in this story: as Gen’s love interest and Castor’s brother. What is the role of family in this novel, both traditional and found family? How does Gen’s relationship with Pollux compare to Castor’s?
7. Pollux has had a long-standing crush on Gen, even though he has never met her. What does he like about her? Gen has some prejudice toward Pollux because of his family. How does Gen work to overcome that prejudice and develop feelings for him?
8. The Empire of Olympia is made of separate isles. While all are dominions of the Empresses, they each have their own governmental structure. On Arcadia, the structure is a patriarchal monarchy that Castor is trying to change. How does that compare to governments in our current world? How does it differ?
9. Discuss the plot structure of the novel. What is the inciting incident? What do you think is the climax of the novel? Does that differ between characters or is the structure the same for both?
10. Discuss the ending of the novel. What is Gen’s reaction when she realizes she hasn’t won? What is Castor’s when she learns she has? Why do you think Gen agrees to continue on with two more labors, knowing the Empresses can’t be trusted?

## ➤➤ PROJECTS ‹‹

Make your own labors. Have students create a list of ten, modern-day feats of greatness. Would they need to build a bridge to the moon? Replant the rainforests? Bring back the dodo bird? They can describe how they might solve their labors with modern resources and also decide what wish they would like for completing them.

Genderflip a classic tale. How would the story of Rapunzel be different if it were about a prince trapped in a tower instead of a princess? What if in Beauty and the Beast a handsome traveler was held captive by a beastly witch? Have students imagine a retelling where gender roles are swapped. They can write a few pages and discuss in groups how gender roles do (or don’t) change the outcome of the story.

