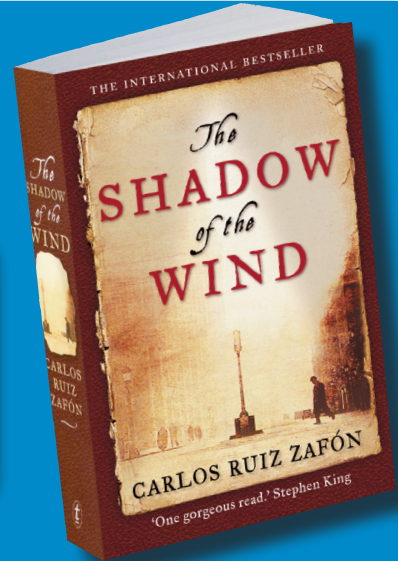
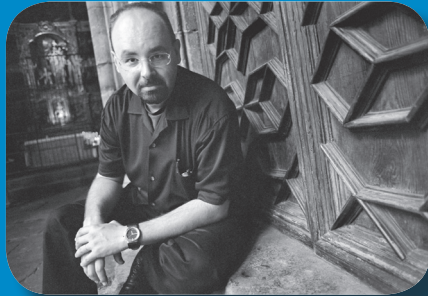


The Shadow of the Wind

Carlos Ruiz Zafón

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Fiction Paperback



Praise for *The Shadow of the Wind*

'This story is so expansive that to describe it as an epic doesn't quite do it justice.' *Adelaide Advertiser*

'It will entrance and move you and make you chuckle. You couldn't ask for more.' *Sunday Age*

'The book is embroidered with the magic of books, the alchemy between reader and writer, and a deep reverence for literary memory...Reading, for Zafón, is romance. Cinema, somewhat reluctantly, is admitted to the club. But television is the enemy of all that this generous and gripping novel celebrates.' *Weekend Australian*

'A love letter to literature, intended for readers as passionate about storytelling as its young hero.' *Who Weekly*

About Carlos Ruiz Zafón

Carlos Ruiz Zafón was born in Barcelona in 1964 and grew up under the shadow of Gaudi's Sagrada Familia cathedral, just a block away from the family home.

For ten years he lived in Los Angeles, working as a screenwriter. During this time he published four novels for young-adults.

The Shadow of the Wind, his fifth novel, has become an international literary phenomenon in over 25 countries, including the UK, North America, Germany, Spain, France, Netherlands, Italy and Denmark. Ruiz Zafón's work has been translated into 17 languages.

Carlos Ruiz Zafón is now a full-time novelist in Barcelona, and a regular contributor to the newspapers *El País*, *La Vanguardia* and *El Mundo*.

A reader's introduction to *The Shadow of the Wind*

...A labyrinth of passageways and crammed bookshelves rose from base to pinnacle like a beehive, woven with tunnels, steps, platforms, and bridges that presaged an immense library of seemingly impossible geometry. I looked at my father, stunned. He smiled at me and winked.

'Welcome to the Cemetery of Forgotten Books, Daniel.'

It is 1945 and Barcelona is enduring the long aftermath of civil war when Daniel Sempere's bookseller father decides he is old enough to visit the fabulous secret library, the 'Cemetery of Forgotten Books'. There, Daniel must 'adopt' a single book, promising to care for it and keep it alive always. His choice falls on *The Shadow of the Wind* by Julian Carax.

Entranced by his obscure treasure, Daniel is drawn into a quest to find the truth about the life and death of its mysterious author. Fiction blossoms within fiction, stories turn back on themselves. A malevolent stranger appears, faceless, under a streetlight. Daniel falls into a game of mirrors, reflecting strange discoveries about obsession, and love, and how they are entwined within the shadow world of books.

Questions for Discussion

1. Carlos Ruiz Zafón's book shares the same name as his character Julián Carax's novel. What is the significance and meaning of the title *The Shadow of the Wind*?
2. *The Shadow of the Wind* draws on comedy, film noir, thriller, coming-of-age narrative, fantasy and satire. But what is its predominant style, or does it transcend genre? How would you describe the novel?

3. How do suspense and humour work together in the novel? Does the existence of one reduce the impact of the other, or is the book enhanced by the use of both?
4. 'Some things can only be seen in the shadows.' What does Daniel's father mean?
5. Is the relationship between Daniel and his father convincing? What does it illustrate about responsibility, about tolerance towards others and the ways family relationships shape each other's lives?
6. Beginning in 1945, *The Shadow of the Wind* is set just after the Spanish Civil War. Does the war's proximity help set the scene, or does it inform the narrative in bigger ways? Why did Ruiz Zafón choose this era in Spain's history for his tale? How are the events of the country related to the upheaval in Daniel's life?
7. 'The man who used to live within these bones died, Daniel. Sometimes he comes back, in nightmares.' What do we learn of Fermín's past life? How would you describe him? Are all of Ruiz Zafón's characters haunted by past lives?
8. 'Every book you see here has been someone's best friend.' So says Daniel's father in the Cemetery of Forgotten Books. Books are revered objects in this novel, but why are they so important? Did Daniel choose Julián Carax's *The Shadow of the Wind*, or did it choose him?
9. In *The Shadow of the Wind* the women are often elusive and enigmatic. Clara the blind white goddess becomes a fallen angel; Daniel finds Nuria Monfort especially mysterious when they first meet, and he can't even picture his long-missed mother's face. Are women embraced or feared by the male characters in the novel? Is their hold over men more powerful than they realise?
10. *The Shadow of the Wind* is translated from the Spanish. Does this affect the authenticity of the work? What are the key elements a translator must keep in mind in order to stay true to the original text?
11. Fumero is the only son of a ridiculed father and a status-seeking mother. The troubled Julián is the bastard son of a love-starved musical mother and an amoral businessman. Are their personalities the products of nature or nurture? Are the sins of the fathers and mothers visited upon each of the characters?
12. Julián Carax's and Daniel's lives follow very similar trajectories. Yet one ends in tragedy, the other in happiness. What similarities are there between the paths they take? What are the differences that allow Daniel to avoid tragedy?
13. Nuria Monfort tells Daniel, 'Julian once wrote that coincidences are the scars of fate. There are no coincidences, Daniel. We are the puppets of our unconscious.' What does she mean?
14. As Daniel discovers numerous versions of Carax's life, in particular the story of his great love, Penelope, a history emerges of powerful, conceited men in whose shadow love withers: a dodgy financier, a textile giant, an arms dealer. Are these the fathers that really matter in the book? Is it Daniel's responsibility to undo their curse?
15. 'A secret's worth depends on the people from whom it must be kept.' Secrets are a constant presence in the novel. In what way do they affect the lives of the characters and inform the plot? What are the key secrets that Zafón keeps from the reader, and to what end?

A Brief Interview with Carlos Ruiz Zafón

Daniel promises to show Bea a Barcelona that she's never seen. From the paintings of Joan Miro to the imaginative architecture of Antoni Gaudí, what is it about Barcelona that lends itself to fantasy? Do you believe, as Daniel says to Bea, that 'the memory of this city will pursue you and you'll die of sadness'?

Barcelona provides an enchanting, mysterious and romantic setting for the story because many things about the place, its streets, its history and its people are unique. It is also my hometown, a place I know like the palm of my hand, and I wanted to use this fantastic backdrop as an organic character, very much like the great novelists of the nineteenth century did in creating the London of Dickens, the Paris of Victor Hugo and Balzac, etc. Hopefully, after reading the novel the memory of Barcelona and the joy of the story will pursue the readers as well.

Daniel says, 'Once, in my father's bookshop, I heard a regular customer say that few things leave a deeper mark on a reader than the first book that finds its way into his heart'. What book was that for you? Are there any forgotten books you would like to rescue from obscurity?

I would say that rather than just one book, for me what did the trick was the world of storytelling, of language, of ideas. All books, all stories, all words and ideas, all the possibilities of the mind—such an infinite universe of wonders is what did me in and I haven't looked back. And I would like to save all books, those that are banned, those that are burned, or forgotten with contempt by the mandarins who want to tell us what is good and what is bad. Every book has a soul, as Daniel's father says, and I believe every book is worth saving from either bigotry or oblivion.

This book is obviously an ode to books and to the art of reading. You have Bea state that 'the art of reading is slowly dying, that it's an intimate ritual, that a book is a mirror that only offers us what we already carry inside us, that when we read, we do it with all our heart and mind, and great readers are becoming more scarce by the day' (p. 484). Do you believe this to be true? Do you share Fermín's disdain for television?

I believe it is in our hands. Now more than ever, I believe it is up to us to decide if we want to think by ourselves, or if we want to accept and submit to what others would rather have us believe. As for TV, well, I share many of Fermín's views. I'd say TV is a very powerful medium, which can be used, and sometimes it is used, to accomplish great things. Unfortunately, those are exceptions to the rule. But blaming TV as an abstract entity is nonsensical. It's our hand on the remote. There's a world out there outside the tube. Life's short: Wake up and live.

The Aldaya Mansion, the allegedly cursed Angel of the Mist, seems to be a character in its own right. It has a life of its own, creaking, moaning, and breathing fire in its belly. Where did you draw your inspiration for your novel's gothic centerpiece? Are you attracted to haunted houses, the supernatural, and other horror story trappings? Do you believe in curses?

I don't believe in the supernatural, but I think it provides excellent material for literary purposes. Ghost stories are great tools to explore symbolic and atavistic elements in a narrative. Shakespeare, Dickens, and Henry James used ghosts and phantasmagoric trappings in order to add layers of meaning and effectiveness to their stories. At the end of the day, it is all fiction, poetry, and magic. Real curses, however, don't dwell in dark basements but in our hearts and conscience. We make our own moral choices, sometimes far spookier than any horror tale, and the terrors of this world are far too real and ordinary.

There are many casualties of love in your novel, not just the star-crossed love between Julián and Penélope, but also the love that makes Miquel Moliner and Nuria Monfort both lay down their lives for Julián. Why do you think we are fascinated with ill-fated tragedies of love?

Because that's the stuff that thing called life is made of. Love, deception, tragedy, joy, passion, murder, jealousy, lust, fear, generosity, friendship, betrayal... Human nature provides the lyrics, and we novelists just compose the music.