

Discussion questions for *Sea of Secrets*
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Warning: Spoilers follow!

If you haven't finished reading Sea of Secrets and don't wish to know what happens, stop reading now.

1. *Sea of Secrets* is clearly inspired by Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. What are some of the parallels? What are the biggest differences? Does *Sea of Secrets* give you a different perspective on *Hamlet*? Do the parallels between the two works enhance *Sea of Secrets*? If so, how?
2. Very rarely is the heroine, Oriel, addressed by name. Instead, those around her use endearments, nicknames, or other ways of referring to her (e.g., "daughter," "Ondine," "my dear"). What do these different forms of address reveal about each character's relationship with Oriel? Who actually calls her by her name, and is this significant?
3. The sea is a recurring presence in the book, and Oriel feels she has a special relationship with it. Why is this? In what ways does this connection manifest itself? Is the ocean a symbol? If so, what does it symbolize, and does this meaning change over the course of the story?
4. Different characters offer a variety of perspectives on the late duke, Herron's father. What kind of picture emerges from their descriptions and implications?
5. A turning point in Herron and Oriel's relationship occurs when he strips her on the night of the ball. Why does he do this? What does it reveal about his feelings toward women in general and Oriel in particular?
6. Over the course of the novel Oriel gains two suitors. What traits in each man attract her? How are they different? What qualities in Charles may make him a better match for Oriel than Herron?
7. How does Oriel change over the course of the story? In what ways does she gain wisdom or maturity? Do you feel that she is a stronger person at the end of the novel than she is at the beginning? What do you envision that her future will be like?
8. Oriel is haunted by the fear that she may take after her father. Do you see any resemblances between them? What are her father's chief personality traits?
9. In the 1850s, when the story takes place, the position of Victorian women was still greatly limited. Based on the female characters in the story, what impression do you get of the expected role of the Victorian woman? In what ways do different characters adhere to that role or defy it?

10. *Sea of Secrets* follows in the tradition of classic gothic romance novels like *Jane Eyre* and *Rebecca*. What traditional gothic elements do you see in the story? Are any of the gothic conventions altered or overturned in this novel?