

WHAT TO KNOW ABOUT L. D. LEWIS



L. D. Lewis is an editor, writer, and literary nonprofit administrator based in Georgia. She is a Locus and Hugo Award-winning project manager, and Shirley Jackson award-nominated writer of speculative fiction.

She is a co-founder of *FIYAH Literary Magazine*, creator of the Ignyte Awards, and former researcher for the LeVar Burton Reads podcast. Her published works include novellas *The Dead Withheld* (2025) duology and *A Ruin of Shadows* (2018). Her short fiction has appeared in publications such as *Neon Hemlock* anthologies and *Out There Screaming*, a black horror anthology edited by Jordan Peele.

Year of the Mer is her debut novel.



QUESTIONS: YEAR OF THE MER (2026)

- How does Yemi and other characters' trauma manifest in the story, and at what points? In what ways do they begin to take a toll on the characters' emotions?
- How does Lewis use architecture and artwork such as statues and portraits for the novel's worldbuilding? What aspects of the world and characters' backgrounds do we glean from descriptions of these elements?
- Lewis describes the capital city of Chairre as being "in the middle of a transformation." What implications does this fact hold for the characters and the story's trajectory? How does the inclusion of modern technology in a fantasy world emphasize these themes?
- As the first part of a duology, what are the biggest questions you are left with at the end of this book?
- In what ways do the characters' traumas intersect with the broader transformation of Chairre and its social structures?

MAKING CONNECTIONS

- As a "dark adult reimagining of *The Little Mermaid*," what elements does Lewis take from the original Hans Christian Andersen tale (or other adaptations), and how are these iconic fairy tale elements subverted or recontextualized? How do these changes shape the tone of the novel and influence the reader's understanding of its central themes and characters?
- How does the character of Ursula specifically compare to Andersen's "Sea Witch"? How does Lewis turn her into a more complex character?
- Compare *Year of the Mer* to other contemporary retellings of classic stories. In what ways do these texts approach the genre?
- How does Yemi's story fit into the literary tradition of princess narratives more broadly? In what ways does she fit or break the mold of other heroines in the genre?
- What do we learn about the central conflict from the citizens' perspective and their attitudes toward the story's events?

LITERATURE AS PRAXIS

- The death of Yemi's parents causes much trauma, which occasionally manifests in unhealthy ways. What resources are available for people processing grief?
- Trauma also manifests from the violence the characters find themselves committing. How can we help support those who live through similarly traumatic experiences?
- The novel explores how advancements in society have increased tensions and made certain characters obsolete. Thinking in real-world terms, how can we help people who become disenfranchised by societal or technological shifts?
- Due to their responsibilities and having to fulfill specific roles, Nova and Yemi are unable to actualize their relationship in an official capacity. How can we prevent this scenario from playing out in our own world and help queer individuals live on their terms?

COMMUNITY RESOURCES

- [GriefShare](#)
- [NAMI](#)
- [Center for Employment Opportunities](#)
- [Rainbow Railroad](#)
- [PFLAG](#)

ADDITIONAL READINGS

- Maria Adelman, *How to be Eaten* (2022)
- Angela Carter, *Burning Your Boats* (1995)
- Angela Carter, *The Bloody Chamber* (1979)
- Ursula K. Le Guin, *Lavinia* (2008)
- Isao Takahata, *The Tale of the Princess Kaguya* (2014)