

# AMARI

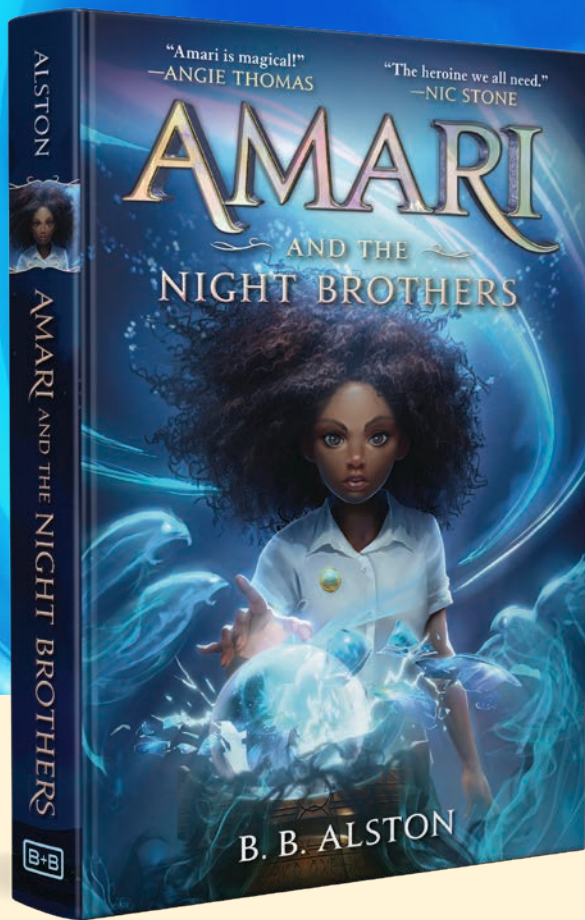
## AND THE NIGHT BROTHERS

BY B. B. ALSTON



EDUCATORS' GUIDE





# “AMARI IS THE HEROINE WE ALL NEED.”

—NIC STONE

## ABOUT THE BOOK

Nothing has been right for Amari Peters since her older brother disappeared, but losing her scholarship to an elite private school because she shoved a bully takes the cake. Of course, there's no time to feel bad when a mysterious package with a recorded message from her brother and a nomination to summer training at the Bureau of Supernatural Affairs turn her world upside down. Amari plans to keep looking for her brother as she hustles for a spot in the Bureau, but things get complicated when she realizes Quinton's disappearance is tied up with a nefarious magician and his plans to take over the supernatural world. It doesn't help matters that an “illegal” supernatural ability has placed Amari herself under suspicion. The stakes couldn't be higher and if Amari can't survive the trials and get a step ahead, her brother may be lost forever.



## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. As she's in the process of losing her scholarship, Amari notes that people with money “can do whatever they want with no consequences while the rest of us have to watch our every step” [p. 3]. How is this true even in the supernatural world? What about in our world? Can you think of examples of how wealth relates to fewer consequences or less risk?
2. During her talk with Jayden at the bus stop, Amari realizes that she and her mother aren't the only ones who depended on her older brother Quinton. What does Quinton represent to his community? How does his disappearance (and the growing assumption about why) impact more than just his family?
3. Amari's potential is literally off the charts, and the moonstone badge opens up a lot of opportunities within the Bureau. But is potential something static? How can potential change or develop over time? How is a person's potential shaped in part by external forces outside their control?
4. Agent Magnus tells Amari that “Supernaturals decided along time ago that they'd be much safer hidden away from humans” [p. 61]. Why do you think this is the case? How might humans be a threat to supernatural creatures? Do you know of real-life examples of people harming something or someone they didn't understand?

5. When Amari is revealed to be a magician, Chief Crowe explains that the Night Brothers, the first magicians, obtained magical power and wreaked havoc on the human and supernatural worlds alike. Director Van Helsing adds that “Humanity was never meant for such power. It corrupts the soul” [p. 96]. What you think about this statement? What about access to power, including magical power, compels people to make corrupt choices?
6. Look up the phrase “stereotype threat.” When you’re clear on what it means, make a list of instances in the novel when Amari or other characters struggle with stereotype threat. How does it impact their choices?
7. When talking about legacy kids’ advantages in the tryouts, what does Elsie mean when she says “It’s like their parents are buying them a spot in the Bureau” [p. 315]? How does it relate to Amari’s assertion earlier in the book that money means no consequences? What might be some drawbacks to disadvantaging/excluding people new to the supernatural world from the Bureau?
8. Discuss the comparisons that Amari makes between prejudice against magicians in the supernatural world and the racism and classism she’s experienced in the known world. Are they as similar as Amari says and feels? How are they different and why are the differences important?
9. Just as Dylan and Amari transport away to find the Key Holder, Elsie makes her first shift as a weredragon and breathes fire to stop the agents coming after them. What do you think is Elsie’s “great act of courage” that finally triggers her shift? Is this the only time Elsie shows courage in the novel?
10. Discuss Amari’s decision to nominate Jayden and introduce him to the supernatural world. Why Jayden? She also gives him the condition of returning and putting real effort into the tutoring program before next summer. How does this request relate to the question of Jayden’s potential and the systems and circumstances that have impacted it?

## EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

**True Sight.** When Amari puts the True Sight drops in her eyes, she can see the world and people around her for what they truly are. Imagine that you can have True Sight too. Who in your life or in your community would be a supernatural being? Choose three people and describe them or draw them as their supernatural selves. What kind of creatures are they? What abilities do they have? How do their supernatural selves relate to their known world selves (for example, a park ranger who is a werewolf or a hairstylist who is really Medusa)?

**Talent Enhanced!** At the Bureau of Supernatural Affairs, trainees have their most prominent talent enhanced to a supernatural ability. Think of your biggest talent or special skill—something you’re good at and enjoy doing. If you touched Merlin’s Crystal Ball, what supernatural ability would your talent become? How would you use it? What Bureau department and role is your supernatural ability best suited for?

**Picture the Bureau.** Choose one of the Bureau’s many departments and draw what it looks like. Use clues and descriptions from the text along with your own imagination to depict the department’s elevator lobby, offices, and equipment. Consider how a department’s purpose and function shapes what it looks like and contains as well as the uniforms that the members of the department wear.

**Supernatural Jobs.** Imagine that you’re the director of a brand-new department at the Bureau. What will you name it and what will be its purpose? Now write a job listing for the *One Thousand and One Careers* book. Include a job title (junior agent, researcher, etc.) and a description of the chief responsibilities, and based on these, decide on the minimum badge level required for the job. Who are some of the fictional characters and/or supernatural creatures who would be noteworthy members of your department?



Dear Reader,

I wish I could say that I was courageous. That once I'd created the world of this book, I didn't panic when Amari popped into my head, with her brown skin and curly afro. Growing up, I'd never seen a main character who looked like me in a fantasy. *Surely, I can't tell this story through her eyes*, I thought. No one will want to read it. And, certainly, no one will want to publish it.

So I resisted. Instead, I created the typical middle grade protagonist, a wisecracking white kid. Because that was realistic. A black kid—a black girl, especially—just wasn't. I'm sad to say that sometime in my thirty-plus years of living, I'd come to believe that there are some adventures people like me don't get to have. But that manuscript kept stalling after a few chapters, and each time it did, Amari's annoyed voice would remind me that this was *her* story. Exasperated, I finally gave in. And let me tell you, once I did, Amari's story just flowed. For the first time in my life, I was also telling *my* story, and the story of the people I grew up with.

I hope you enjoy Amari's story. It's also my sincere hope that this book sparks your sense of wonder, because that's what I love most about fantasy. And for those of you who look different or feel different, whatever the reason, please know that your uniqueness needn't be a source of fear and insecurity. There is great strength and joy to be found in simply accepting and loving yourself for who you are. Because once you do so, you'll be *unstoppable*.

—B. B. Alston



Joshua Aaron Photography

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**B. B. Alston** lives in Lexington, South Carolina. *Amari and the Night Brothers* is his debut middle grade novel. When not writing, he can be found eating too many sweets and exploring country roads to see where they lead.