



The Dark Academia Reading Challenge



Twenty prompts to haunt
your shelves, test your wits,
and feed your obsession.



In the hush of candlelight and the weight of old tomes, a challenge waits. Dark Academia isn't just an aesthetic—it's an initiation into mystery, obsession, and the hunger for knowledge. These twenty prompts will lead you through forgotten libraries, shadowed halls, and stories that blur the line between brilliance and ruin. Ready your pen, ready your shelves—the semester of shadows begins now

- A book set in an old university or boarding school
- A story where knowledge becomes dangerous
- A novel with a library or archive at its heart
- A crumbling mansion, monastery, or castle setting
- A mystery solved by scholars or students
- A retelling of a classic myth or legend
- A book heavy with philosophical themes
- A text that blends art and obsession
- A story featuring a secret society or club
- A narrative where letters, diaries, or manuscripts drive the plot

- A book with tragic romance woven through academia
- A classic Gothic novel (19th century or earlier)
- A novel where grief or mourning shapes the characters
- A book with winter, storms, or candlelit nights as atmosphere
- A story where betrayal among friends or colleagues is central
- A thriller where academia hides a crime
- A work translated from Latin, Greek, or another classical language
- A novel by a modern “dark academia” author (Ruth Ware, M.L. Rio, Donna Tartt, etc.)
- A book with witches, occult studies, or arcane rituals
- A text that makes you feel like scribbling notes in the margins

Every shelf tells a story, every spine hides a secret.
To take part in this challenge is not merely to read,
but to descend—into knowledge, into obsession, into the
shadows
that linger between candlelight and ink.
Some tomes will comfort, others will unsettle.
Some will reveal truths, others will whisper lies.
But all will leave their mark.
As you wander through these prompts, remember—
the pursuit of wisdom is never harmless,
and curiosity has always been the sharpest of blades.
Carry your lantern carefully,
sharpen your quill often,
and may your shelves stay haunted long after the challenge
ends.

Knowledge is never harmless. Every book leaves its mark, every choice a
shadow. May your shelves stay haunted, and your studies endless.

Share your progress with the coven: tag @growlsandgrimm on Instagram,
Pinterest, Bluesky or Threads.