

READ GLOBAL

Land of Love and Drowning

Questions

(adapted from PenguinRandomHouse Reading Guide)

Warm-up: On a scale of 1-10, how would you rate this novel?
Which character would you like to have dinner with?

1. In the opening scene, Arthur Owen Bradshaw saves a frightened little girl. Considering his behavior towards Eeona, why did Yanique make that choice?
2. The book begins in 1917 on the cusp of St. Thomas's transfer from Danish rule to American. Why do you Yanique has chosen to open her novel with this event? What is the significance of the transfer of power?
3. What does "Americanness" mean to the characters? How does it change who they are? Does it also change how they relate to one another or how they relate to the Virgin Islands in general?
4. Anette and Eeona Bradshaw present two different ways of being a woman. Where Anette gives in to her desires, Eeona represses hers. Is there a reason they are so different in this way? How do you see these differences affecting the course of their lives?
5. While in the Army, Jacob Esau McKenzie has a jarring encounter with institutionalized racism, something that is somewhat unfamiliar to him. How is the awareness of race connected with the idea of becoming American?
6. Are there other lines of demarcation on St. Thomas besides race? Which of these perceived divisions are imposed by outsiders and which come from the Virgin Islanders themselves?
7. How is magic employed throughout Land of Love and Drowning? Who has access to magic and who doesn't? How do the characters use it? Is there a changing relationship with magic over time? What does it mean to be a witch? Does the term mean something different in the culture of these islands than it does in the United States or Europe? Who is considered a witch in the book?
8. Beaches figure prominently throughout Land of Love and Drowning. Think of the scenes that are set on the beach. What does the beach represent in these moments? What is lost when beaches are no longer accessible to everyone?
9. How is magic employed throughout Land of Love and Drowning? Who has access to magic and who doesn't? How do the characters use it? Does being a witch mean something different in the culture of these islands than it does in the United States or Europe?
10. When Anette narrates the story of her parents meeting, she says, "This ain true history. I just saying that given what we know about the place and about the time, my version seem to have a truth in somewhere." Later, Eeona tells Youme "the real, but not true, stories of the Bradshaws." Why are stories important?

Wind-down: Did this discussion change your 1-10 rating for this book?

Notes

Rum and Coca-Cola

(Listen to a Lord Invader version at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nMWUF3LYd88>. The Andrews Sisters' version is there, too.)

[Verse 1]

And when the Yankees first went to Trinidad
Some of the young girls were more than glad
They said that the Yankees treat them nice
And they give them a better price
They buy:

[Chorus x2]

Rum and Coca-Cola
Went down Point Cumana
Both mothers and daughters
Working for their Yankee dollars

Interview

WBUR (Boston) 2017: <https://www.wbur.org/npr/335020807/love-and-drowning-in-the-u-s-virgin-islands>

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September 2020