

READ GLOBAL BOOK DISCUSSION

Drive Your Plow Over the Bones of the Dead

by Olga Tokarczuk

Questions

Warm-up: On a scale of 1-10, how would you rate this novel?

1. Janina Duszejko usually refers to others by private nicknames she creates. What meaning do names have in the novel?
2. This book is translated. Any thoughts about the language or translation?
3. Ms. Duszejko defends animals passionately. Why is she so intense? Do you think she identifies with them?
4. Ms. Duszejko was an engineer and later a schoolteacher. Now she is interested in astrology and William Blake. How did she get from an analytical past to where she is now?
5. Are you familiar with William Blake? Why do you think his work appealed to Ms. Duszejko?
6. What role does religion play in the novel?
7. She spends a lot of time alone and is considered an old crank. How is it that she seems to be able to socialize well with some people and seems quite the social butterfly at the mushroom-pickers event?
8. At one point she asks, "But why should we have to be useful, and for what reason? Who divided the world into useless and useful, and by what right? Does a thistle have no right to life, or a Mouse that eats the grain in a warehouse?" Just who is seen or valued in the community?
9. Did the characters seem believable to you? Did they remind you of anyone?
10. Have you read other books by Polish authors? Does this have anything in common with them?
11. This book doesn't seem to fit neatly into a genre. How would you describe it? What would your "elevator pitch" be?
12. Would you read another book by Tokarczuk? Why or why not?

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

Proverbs of Hell

William Blake

In seed time learn, in harvest teach, in winter enjoy.
Drive your cart and your plough over the bones of the dead.
The road of excess leads to the palace of wisdom.
Prudence is a rich, ugly old maid courted by Incapacity.
He who desires but acts not, breeds pestilence.
The cut worm forgives the plough.
Dip him in the river who loves water.
A fool sees not the same tree that a wise man sees.
He whose face gives no light, shall never become a star.
Eternity is in love with the productions of time.
The busy bee has no time for sorrow.
The hours of folly are measur'd by the clock; but of wisdom,
no clock can measure.
All wholesome food is caught without a net or a trap.
Bring out number, weight, and measure in a year of dearth.
No bird soars too high, if he soars with his own wings.
A dead body revenges not injuries.
The most sublime act is to set another before you.
If the fool would persist in his folly he would become wise.
Folly is the cloak of knavery.
Shame is Pride's cloak.



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