



Book Club in a Bag

Discussion Questions

“Hum If You Don’t Know the Words” by Bianca Marais

1. Compare 1970s South Africa to today’s world. How have issues of racism and homophobia progressed since then? What can we do individually and in our communities to facilitate forward thinking and change?
2. How does this book challenge norms of the conventional nuclear family? What does *Hum If You Don’t Know the Words* tell us about human connection in the face of adversity?
3. How much of Beauty’s family life is affected by the laws of apartheid? Once apartheid ended in 1994, how much do you think the state-legislated disintegration of families continued to impact South African society and black cultures?
4. What purpose does Cat serve in Robin’s life, and what necessitated her appearance? How does Robin use Cat to navigate her home life with her parents, and then her life with Edith?
5. Compare Beauty and her daughter, Nomsa. As the plot unfolds and more of Nomsa’s character is illuminated, what similarities between the two come to light?
6. What is the significance of the book’s title, and why do you think it was chosen? How does it relate to the book’s central themes?
7. How does the narrative change between Robin and Beauty’s alternating perspectives? Who is a more reliable narrator?
8. How does the White Angel help Beauty in her search for Nomsa, and how much does she hinder it? Does her need to control the situation say anything about Maggie and her subconscious attitude toward black people?
9. What do you make of the ending, and why do you think the author chose to end the novel at this moment? If there were an epilogue, where do you think we’d find the characters?

The above questions were taken from Penguin Random House, Reader's Guide.
www.penguinrandomhouse.com/books/539994/hum-if-you-dont-know-the-words-by-bianca-marais/9780399575068/readers-guide/

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