



Book Club in a Bag

Discussion Questions

Washington Black by Esi Edugyan

1. Big Kit tells Washington that “If you dead, you wake up again in your homeland. You wake up free.” How does this line resonate at the end of the book, in the final moments as Wash asks about Dahomey and looks out into the horizon?
2. Why do you think Big Kit didn’t tell Wash that she was his mother? Do you think he would have responded to Titch’s offer differently had he known? How might his life have been different?
3. Another secret kept in the novel is when Philip delays giving Titch the news of his father’s death, which turns out not to be true. How does this lie compare to Big Kit’s? How is Titch’s response different from Wash’s?
4. Tanna tells Wash, “You are like an interruption in a novel, Wash. The agent that sets things off course. Like a hailstorm. Or a wedding.” How does this metaphor manifest in literal and symbolic ways throughout Wash’s journeys?
5. Wash’s final meeting with Titch calls into question Titch’s motives for educating him. Wash accuses Titch of not really treating him as more than a slave. What is Wash’s benchmark for love and trust? Do Big Kit and Tanna fill the holes in his life that sent him on an “erratic pursuit of an unanswerable truth [and] calm my sense of rootlessness—solve the chaos of my origins”?
6. Describe Wash and Tanna’s relationship. What qualities and life experiences do they share that draw them together? What differences create a gulf between them?
7. Today, there are many groups suffering under the oppression of cruel governments and leaders. How might a narrative of their experiences compare to Wash’s? How are today’s oppressed being given or denied a voice?

The above questions were taken from

<https://www.penguinrandomhouse.com/books/573017/washington-black-by-esi-edugyan/9780525563242/readers-guide/> to enhance your discussion of the book.

Author Biography

Esi Edugyan was born in Calgary. She is a Ghanaian Canadian novelist whose work is becoming influential in Canadian literature. She began writing poetry in high school and pursued an education in creative writing. She attended the University of Victoria where she received a BA. She graduated with a master's in creative writing from Johns Hopkins University.

<https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/esi-edugyan>

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