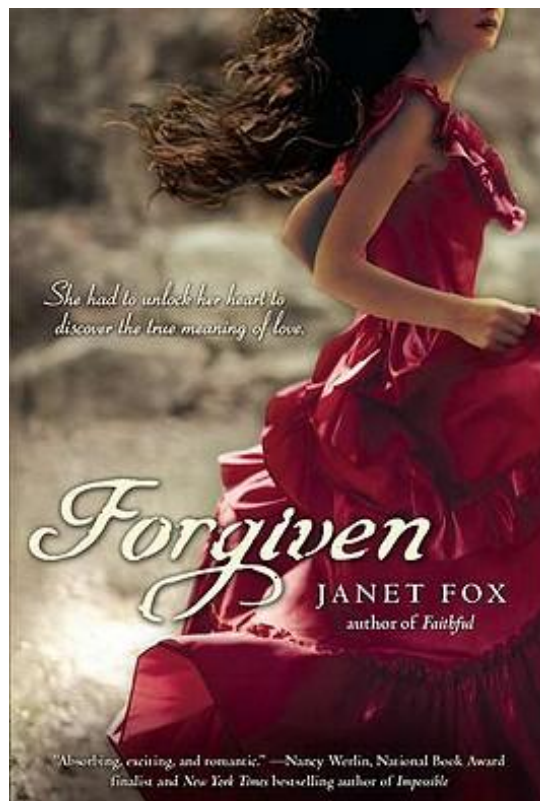


A Discussion Guide and Poetry Prompts for

Forgiven

Written by Janet Fox



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Guide Created by Debbie Gonzales

A Table of Contents

The format of this guide follows a 6 section course of study. Each section is comprised of discussion questions for designated chapter groupings followed by a series of Personal Journal Prompts inspired by the novel’s chapter headings.

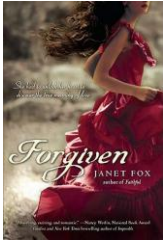
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Reading Assignment Bookmarks

Listed on these bookmarks are the designated chapter groupings and a space allotted for a **Target Completion Dates**. A suggested format for a group or individual novel study is to assign weekly **Target Completion Dates** for students to finish reading prior to the weekly book discussion session.

Procedure:

- Print book marks on cardstock – one per student in novel study group.
- Trim the edges of bookmark.
- Give to student with the directions to:
 - Write their name on it.
 - Copy Target Completion Dates in designated space below assigned chapters to be read.
 - Keep the bookmark in the book for reference through the course of novel study.



Name: _____

Chapters 1 through 6

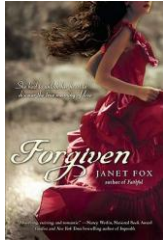
Chapters 7 through 12

Chapters 13 through 19

Chapters 20 through 25

Chapters 26 through 30

Chapters 31 through 37



Name: _____

Chapters 1 through 6


Chapters 7 through 12

Chapters 13 through 19

Chapters 20 through 25

Chapters 26 through 30

Chapters 31 through 37



Name: _____

Chapters 1 through 6

Chapters 7 through 12

Chapters 13 through 19

Chapters 20 through 25

Chapters 26 through 30

Chapters 31 through 37

Discussion Questions for Chapters 1 through 6

Whether I shall turn out to be the hero of my own life, or whether that station will be held by anyone else, these pages must show (1).

1. The quote above appears as a heading in the novel's first chapter – a prominent placement in the structure of the story. Closely consider Dickens' words. What do you think is the significance of this quote as it pertains to the novel, *Forgiven*?
2. What does the word forgiven mean to you?
3. What is meant by the word 'station'?
4. Based upon quote above, the prologue, and the novel's title, what do you think this book is going to be about? What themes will be explored?

I wished I'd nailed him harder and less glancing and laid him flat. I'd be clear to the safety of the Fort Mammoth Hot Springs by now if I could've kept moving (4).

1. After reading just four pages of this story, what is your impression of Kula? What kind of girl is she? List some adjectives that might describe Kula Baker.
2. How does Kula describe herself?
3. To get a historically visual sense of the *safety of Mammoth Hot Springs* click [HERE](#). How do the topography and architecture create a feeling of safety?

Min showed up in Mammoth Hot Springs a few weeks earlier and I noticed her right off. She was like me, foreign-looking...We'd only exchanged a few words, but straight off I thought of her as kin. Both of us wore our skins like they didn't quite fit (14-5).

1. What is meant by the profound statement "...wore our skins like they didn't quite fit"?
2. Even though she had not spent a great deal of time getting to know Min, Kula thought of her as "kin." How could this be? Though they are not sisters, Kula felt a familial affection for Min. Why?

Men prowled into the station, cat-like.

Cougars came into the camp on a rare occasion and I knew well how to stare down a cougar. Stand tall, do not run, show no fear, that's best. Cats do not like to be challenged, but they love a chase. I straightened my shoulders and made sure my thick hair was still pinned well up. Tucked in tight (16).

1. If men prowl into the station like cats, what are they looking for?
2. What sort of mindset or behavior tendencies does the verb prowl evoke?

3. Why did Kula find it important to assure that her thick hair was pinned up well? Why was this important to her?
4. What does the line *Cats do not like to be challenged, but they love a chase* suggest? Can you explain the metaphorical connotations?
5. How does the line above compare with the following quote: *Snake-eyes looked me up and down. "Thought you were a girl. You more like a woman."/ He stepped closer. I stepped back (6).*
 - a. In this scene, who is prowling?
 - b. Is Kula challenging Snake Eyes?
 - c. How does her physical response to Snake Eyes suggest a chase?

And then, there she was. In the middle of the chaos. Min.

She glided down the street, head bowed, hands clutched at her middle...She'd walked up to someone I knew...She walked up to Snake Eyes, and it was clear from the way he laid his hand on her: she belonged to him (19).

1. What does Min's body language suggest, with her head bowed and her hands clutched at her middle?
2. What does the act of laying a hand on Min suggest? In regard to Snake Eyes' intent, is Min a person or a possession? Explain.
3. Min 'belongs' to Snake Eyes. Is Min in danger?

Snake Eyes. He has the law (19).

1. Earlier Kula had seen a shiny gold star on Snake Eyes' lapel. What does this star signify? How does Snake Eyes' position of legal authority affect Kula?
2. Consider the word 'has' in this quote. Snake Eyes has the law, rather than Snake eyes is the law. How do the words 'has' and 'is' suggest different meanings?

The conscience makes cowards of us all.

– Hamlet. William Shakespeare, 1602 (25)

And I denied him, stepped deeper into the crowd, melting like late snow, melting my shame and agony (31).

1. Kula cowered and hid at the sight of Wilkie as he ordered her innocent father's capture. She denied him, sacrificing him to the captors. Why would she do such a thing? Do you think denying her father was a cowardly act?
2. If Kula did the right thing, why did she feel shameful?

- Discuss Kula's emotional reaction to her father's arrest in the light of Shakespeare's quote above. How does the conscience make cowards of us all?

In a dangerous quest to save her father's life by finding the mysterious box, Kula travels from her beloved Bozeman home to San Francisco, California inhabited by both saints and demons. The red line traces Kula's journey.

- In what way does the map help you understand Kula's trepidation?
- In what ways does the map help you understand Kula's determination?



References:

"Map of the United States Population 1900." World History for the Relaxed Historian. N.p., n.d. Web. 2 Nov. 2011. http://www.emersonkent.com/map_archive/us

"Yellowstone National Park – Fort Yellowstone Historic District (U. S. National Park Service)." U.S. National Park Service – Experience Your America. N.P., n.d. Web. 1 Nov. 2011. <http://www.nps.gov/yell/historyculture>

Discussion Questions for Chapters 7 through 12

The Barbary Coast is the haunt of the low and vile of every kind...Licentiousness, debauchery, pollution, loathsome disease, insanity from dissipation, misery, poverty...and death, are there.

– Lights and Shade of San Francisco. Benjamin Estelle Lloyd, 1876 (48)

I whirled, aghast, and he lurched backward, which didn't stop him from leering and moving back in. "Just wanted to know how much you're charging. Pretty thing, you are" (48).

1. Kula has been robbed and abandoned, left alone to find her way along the treacherous Barbary Coast. Danger lurks at every turn.
 - a. Can you predict what will happen next?
 - b. Based on what you know of Kula's character, how do you think she will handle the trials set before her?
2. Thumb through the book to discover one of Kula's personal affirmation statements to validate your prediction.

Pay a call. On me. The first time a gentleman would pay me a call...Kula Baker needs to rise above her station. This couldn't be the gentleman for that (57).

1. What does it mean for someone to rise above their 'station'? What is a station?
2. The novel's opening chapter makes a statement about one's station. How important is one's station?
3. Why does Kula feel that a gentleman needs to help her elevate her station?
4. Does ethnicity play a role in one's station?
5. Do you think Kula's thinking regarding David Wong is shallow? Is it consistent with her character development thus far?
6. Is it right to use someone for one's own personal gain, such as elevating one's social station?

"Yes the soul. Your soul, I will assume for the moment is intact. The young thief's soul, not likely. He is sadly duped by the idea that material gain is all that matters. That possessions are of the utmost importance. He could be wrong. Possessions, my dear girl, are meaningless" (66).

1. Isn't it somewhat ironic that the wealthy Phillipa Everts, surrounded by the finest of earthly goods, is admonishing Kula about the evils of materialism?
2. What is a soul?
3. How can one's soul be intact?
4. Do you agree with Miss Everts' statements regarding the preservation of one's soul? Or do you feel that possessions are important?

5. What about the earlier notion of station and possessions? Is there some sort of correlation there?

...Miss Everts went on, "Miss Baker is my new protégé. She's an artist's model. I think her exotic beauty will charm San Francisco, don't you agree? (78)"

1. Miss Everts introduced Kula to wealthy Mr. William Henderson as her protégé, as if she were owned by Miss Everts. Does Miss Everts consider Kula to be a possession of sorts?
2. Do you think Miss Everts' soul is intact?
3. In some way, does Kula belong to Miss Everts?
4. If so, in the same way that Min belongs to Wilkie?

Though, if I could help myself along the way, say by attracting such a one as Will Henderson, that might do more to help Pa than any mysterious box could (82).

1. Do you think Kula's principles have changed since she's arrived in San Francisco? How so?
2. What about the affirmation Kula states on page 23, "Kula Baker won't be taken for a fool." Is using rich and handsome Will Henderson to further her station in life a foolish act? How so or why not?
3. What about Kula's affirmation found on page 55, "Kula Baker keeps her wits about her. Kula Baker does not go soft over a boy." Is this statement true? Is Kula contemplating 'going soft' over Will Henderson? Is this a wise thing to do?

Discussion Questions for Chapters 13 through 19

I could not allow myself to feel guilty for being in San Francisco. Pa sent me to San Francisco to find his freedom.

The automobile waited for us by the curb. It was shiny black with little brass lantern headlamps and a leather top as on a buggy, only the top was rolled away considering the fine, cool day (86).



1. Why do you think that, after five days in San Francisco, Kula had to remind herself of her trip's intention?
2. Why can't she allow herself to feel guilty?
3. How does living in San Francisco compare to life in Bozeman, Montana? Are there any similarities in the two lifestyles? Differences?

It was a small black shoe. Being black, it all but vanished in the shadows... The shoe was embroidered with thick black thread along the sides and toes (87).

I placed the shoe on the seat.

As I put it down I marked a smudge of black – shoe-black, I guessed – on my beige glove fingertips...the thread beneath was gold. Gold thread on such a shoe (88).

1. Miss Everts hastily stated that the shoe belonged to Mei Lien. Do you believe her?
2. Why would the gold threads be covered by black shoe polish?
3. Consider the line *all but vanished in the shadows*. They were enjoying an open-air horseless carriage ride on a beautiful sunny day. Could the description of the shadows serve as a metaphor or perhaps foreshadowing of some kind? How so?
4. On page 90, Kula looks for the shoe on the bench to discover that it is gone. Where did it go? Who took it? And, most importantly, why?

He [Josiah Wilkie] shook his head. "You have no idea what you've stepped into here, girl. This is bigger than you, there are things you don't understand. Why this is even bigger than me. Your pa's in the way, he's a problem. I solve problems" (97).

1. What danger has Kula stepped into?
2. Why do you think Wilkie wants to thwart Kula's efforts to find the box?
3. Do you believe that Wilkie has the box in his possession? Why or why not?
4. How can Kula's father be a threat to something taking place in San Francisco, California?
5. Is Kula becoming a problem to Wilkie?
6. How does Wilkie solve problems such as Kula and her father?

Wilkie stood, his hand raised to strike her, and Min lay prostrate at his feet, clutching his foot, a sacrifice in the filth of the alley (97).

She didn't move. I crept backward toward the busy avenue. He reached down and yanked Min to her feet. As he lifted her, our eyes met, and I saw in hers a plea, but not for her. She was trying to tell me to get away, that I couldn't save her, she was already lost (98).

1. How can Min's submissive act be considered that of ultimate bravery?
2. This is the second time that Kula has back away from confrontation. First, when she denied her father and, secondly, when Min sacrificed herself for Kula's safety. How are the two situations similar? How are they different?
3. What is your interpretation of this scene? Do you think that Min will be lost forever?
4. Do you think Kula will be able to forgive herself if something terrible happens to Min?
5. Consider the word 'sacrifice'. What does sacrifice mean to you?

"Do you know him [Wilkie]?" David lowered his arm, loosening his fingers.

"I don't think you can imagine. He – or those he works with – they ..." he couldn't finish, and looked away from me, hiding his face, before turning back to me (100).

1. Consider David's physical reactions paired with his spoken words. He lowers his arm and loosens his fingers when he wonders if Kula knows Wilkie. What does this say about David's awareness of Wilkie? Of David's concern that Kula may know him?
2. If Kula is connected with Wilkie in some way, is he willing to let her go?
3. Why do you think he could not finish his statement regarding who Wilkie works with?
4. How bad can it be?

I did so much like that David Wong. He was not the right man for me; he wasn't what I was looking for. Still and all, I liked him (103).

1. Why isn't David Wong the right man for Kula?
2. What is she looking for in a man?
3. According to Kula, who is the right man for her?
4. What do you think about Kula's judgment in men?
5. Who would you choose if you were Kula? Why?

[Miss Everts] dropped her head. "It isn't easy, loving someone when it's forbidden." Her fingers moved under mine like a fledgling bird. Her voice was hushed and far away. "You must understand. You would have suffered this kind of discrimination all your life" (105).

1. Do you think Kula understands Miss Everts emotional state?
2. Has Kula loved someone forbidden? Or would loving Kula be a forbidden thing?
3. Is this kind of forbiddance ever forgivable? Acceptable? Honorable? How so?
4. Consider the chapter heading quotation on page 104. How does the quote speak to this notion of forbidden love?

I tossed my loosed strands into the fire in the drawing room and watched them fizzle and crack, and I set my teeth, like a servant should not (109).

1. What do you think compelled Kula to brush her hair using Miss Everts beautiful silver brush?
2. What does Kula's loose hair, free of the confines of pins and ties, suggest about her change in character? Is it symbolic of something happening within Kula? If so, what change is occurring?
3. What does the phrase "like a servant should not" suggest?
4. What does the 'fizzle and crack' suggest?
5. What do you think Kula about to do?

The refuse, consisting of 'boat-girls' and those who come from seaboard towns ... is sold to the proprietor of the select brothels..." (110).

I knew what I was seeing... And this was slavery in its worst form, humiliating and degrading, painful and frightening" (113).

1. The word 'refuse' is defined as something rejected or worthless, garbage, rubbish, trash. Could the refuse being referred to in the quote be young girls? How could this be?
2. What did Kula see? Describe it in our own words.
3. Do you feel that what Kula discovered slavery in its worst form? How so?

"It's the family crest. Something about when the Hendersons arrived in San Francisco. They had luck finding gold, and then formed a relationship with a Chinese outfit and picked up the dragon thing. Something like that..." (120).

1. Do you believe Will's story about the dragon symbol?
2. Why do you think Will happened to be deep in the heart of Chinatown? What was his business there?
3. Do you trust Will? Why or why not?

Mie Lien stood up. "She saves me. She saves you, too" (125).

1. Open the book to pages 125 and 126. Consider the interchange between Mie Lien and Kula. What sort of insight regarding Miss Everts' nature is Kula gaining?
2. What did Miss Everts save Mie Lien from?
3. What horror do you think Miss Everts was saving Kula from?
4. Could Kula be considered to be 'refuse' of some kind? Why?

It is the art that most interests me," said Miss Everts. "Mr. Wong's family has a long history of importing art. There are people the world over who love oriental art. I help Mr. Wong find a home for his collections" (128).

1. Kula works hard to make sense of the complicated world of golden dragons, Chinatown travesty, names listed on a painting's scroll, and the ever intriguing Miss Everts. To solve the mystery of the illusive box and, thereby, save her father's life, she must listen closely to words stated overtly and then contemplate the words left unsaid.
 - a. In the quote above, could Miss Everts be referring to something more than importing paintings and artifacts?
 - b. Miss Everts states that she and Mr. Wong's family have a "long history of importing art" and finding homes for "his collections". If the art they are referring to is not artwork in the traditional sense, what business are they involved in?
2. Earlier in the novel, Miss Everts introduced Kula to William Henderson as being an artist's model, suitable because of her exotic look. Could there be a connection of some sort with Kula being presented as an object of art and the quote above?

Reference: "Franklin Mint 1983 Duryea Horseless Carriage 1:8th model." *PhillyMint Diecast Cars & Collectibles featuring The Franklin Mint*. N.p., n.d. Web. 2 Nov. 2011. <http://www.phillymint.com/FMShopCartAE>

Character Analysis

Throughout the novel, Kula makes affirming statements defining her personal convictions. These intriguing comments mark changes in Kula's character as well as provide insight to her developing character arch. The affirmations suggest that Kula has strong sense of conviction and character, that she knows herself well.

But does she?

Several of the affirmations have been listed below. Read them. Seek them out in the pages of the novel. Find others that are not listed below. Discuss the statements in two ways.

1. Look at the statement In the light of the story's progression. Why did Kula make a certain statement in a particular point of the story arch? What is happening to her that would cause her to make such a statement? What is she saying about her developing character? What does she want you, the reader, to know?
2. Consider the statements as character development road markers. Do you see any changes? Contradictions? Foreshadowing?

Kula Baker doesn't scream (4).

Kula Baker can keep a stony face (5).

And Kula Baker doesn't speak of fear (7).

Kula Baker doesn't cry (11).

Kula Baker knows predators (20).

Kula Baker won't be taken for a fool (23).

Kula Baker does not forgive. Especially not herself (32).

Kula Baker pays heed to warnings (39).

Kula Baker does not shrink. Even in the face of chaos (41).

Kula Baker keeps her wits about her. Kula Baker does not go soft over a boy (55).

Kula Baker musters up (59).

Kula Baker knows when she is not welcome (65).

Kula Baker does not fall frivolously in love with unsuitable men (72).

Kula Baker does not know how to breathe. Breathe, Kula Baker (78).

Kula Baker knows to get what she wants, she must not lose her wits (82).

Kula Baker does not like being taken for a fool (93).

Discussion Questions for Chapters 20 through 25

But [Miss Everts] brushed me away. "It was not you." She straightened her back. "I've allowed myself to drift into sentimentality. Compassion is an acceptable emotion. Sentimentality leads to regret, and regret is dangerous" (134).

1. Miss Everts straightens her back before explaining herself to Kula. What does this physical reaction say about her personal resolve? Does she need to prepare herself in some way before expressing her feelings to Kula?
2. Interestingly, this squaring of back and straightening of the shoulders is a physical response Kula engages in often. Are there common character traits shared between Kula and Miss Everts?
3. Why is compassion an acceptable emotion while sentimentality is one to be avoided?
4. What is sentimentality?
5. How can regret be dangerous?
6. How are Miss Everts' emotional expressions of sentimentality, compassion, and regret linked to William Henderson? To Ty Wong? To Kula? To the young captives in Chinatown? To Kula's father? To Mrs. Gale?

"I'm working on something different. A large work, a series of murals. It's a commission for the state capitol. I want to represent California in a new way. The new California. All of her people walking to a new country." [Mr. Gable] paused. "Would you care to see what I've begun" (138)?

"You've left out the cruelty" (139).

1. Consider Mr. Gable's and Kula's dialogue interchange in the light of the quote featured at the beginning of Chapter 21. What sort of connection between the two can you discover?
2. Mr. Gable's idealistic view of San Francisco clashes with Kula's realistic one. Which is the most important point of view to consider?
3. What does Kula's comment say about her developing character?
4. Why is it important to look to include cruelty as a facet of the overall artistic complexion of California? As society as a whole?
5. Do you agree with Kula's statement? Why?
6. How about in today's society? Can art aide in awareness? Does art aide in awareness? How so?

"Now I've found someone so different, so ... unspoiled." He leaned toward me, his lips brushing my ear. "It would send all their tongues wagging, would it not? Me with someone like you" (146)?

1. How would the union Will is proposing be unforbidden?
2. Who is the "someone" Will is suggesting Kula represents?
3. Why is Will attracted to Kula? Is this comment a compliment or an insult?

Sebastian Gable bowed. He regarded Will and the punch glass in his hand. "Miss Baker could do with water" (150).

1. What is happening in this scene? How does it relate to the chapter heading quote found on page 150?
2. In this instance, is Mr. Gable identified by his proper name. Why? How does this naming correlate with the chapter heading quotation?
3. How is Kula being perceived by Will at this moment? By Mr. Gable?
4. Later in the scene Mr. Gable states that he has taken Kula's comment regarding the omission of cruelty in his mural. And Will invites Kula to experience the real San Francisco with him. Consider the juxtaposition of the concept of the "real San Francisco." What is real?

Josiah Wilkie stood at one end of the table, William Henderson at the other. In between them was Phillipa Everts. I didn't know what words passed among them, but I surely knew what passed between their hands. I watched Phillipa Everts hand a thick stack of bills to Josiah Wilkie (154).

1. What has happened in this scene? Explain your perception in the light of:
 - a. Betrayal
 - b. Compassion
 - c. Regret
 - d. Integrity
 - e. Station
 - f. The soul
2. Consider the staging of this scene. Why is Miss Everts stationed between the two men?
3. Who is Phillipa Everts? What is she involved in?
4. Do you trust her?

Will Henderson. Rich, handsome, clearly smitten with me. My dream come true.

David Wong. Who stirred something in me that I didn't know existed. David who held my heart in his gentle palm and my soul in his dark, kind eyes. David who could give me nothing (159).

1. Consider Will and David. Can you think of five ways that the two are similar?
2. What of their differences? Are there at least five ways that the two contrast one another?
3. In what ways is Will Kula's dream come true?
4. Is it true that David offers Kula nothing?
5. Which young man will advance Kula's station?
6. Which will best suit her soul?
7. Who would you choose? Why?

After her betrayal of me, I knew that Miss Everts was not to be trusted any more, no matter what Mei Lien said. Whatever needed to be done I would do it on my own (170).

“You let me handle her. I’ll deal with Miss Everts. We have to protect Yue, right?”

Mei Lien’s brow furrowed (171).

1. How had Miss Everts betrayed Kula?
2. What had Mei Lien said about Miss Everts earlier in the novel? Do you believe Mei Lien? Or do you think Miss Everts is not to be trusted?
3. Do you think it is wise for Kula to confront Wilkie on her own?
4. What does Mei Lien’s furrowed brow communicate?

Discussion Questions for Chapters 26 through 30

“Liked you! Of course I liked you.” [Will’s] eyes were cold, steely. “I still like you. Very much. But I could never marry someone like you.” He sounded harsh. “It was fun. And you’re very pretty, lots of fun. But look who I am. Look at who you are. I could never be serious about you. You’re a maid! My father would never approve of you – you’re not suitable. You, and your father. You’re both . . .”

“And that box of yours? That box belongs to my family. And I’ve got it now...” (184).

1. Why could Will never marry someone like Kula?
2. It seems that Will has known about Kula’s background all along. Could his secretive behavior be considered as betrayal?
3. What does this conversation have to do with societal station?
4. Will is aware, and has known all along, that the illusive box is critical to saving Kula’s father’s life, yet he is unwilling to relinquish it. What does this reveal of Will’s nature? Of his soul?
5. On the last line of dialogue notice the emphasis Will makes on the word ‘my’, as if there is a question of which family is the rightful owner. Could Kula’s questioning about family ties be warranted after all?

“Well,” said Wilkie. David stepped in front of Min, putting himself between her and Wilkie. “Ain’t that a pretty sight? And don’t that beat all? And now I know who’s been betraying me.” Wilkie’s face grew dark , and I saw in it the hurt, the anger, and all directed at Min (192).

1. What sort of betrayal does Kula assume Wilkie is referring to?
2. What sort of betrayal does David know Wilkie is referring to?

“No, Kula. You weren’t helping anyone but yourself...You’ve been playing two sides of the fence for too long” (194).

1. Is it true that Kula had been more interested in the box’s treasure than her own father’s well-being?
2. Had Kula considered herself a guest in Miss Everts’ home rather than a servant?
3. Had Kula imagined herself as a society girl? A person possessing a high station in society?
4. Was she more interested in Will for monetary gain?
5. Is David right? Has Kula been self-serving all along?
6. If so, how can she rectify her actions?
7. When and if, she acknowledges the errors of her ways, what must she ask of others to ultimately right her wrongs?

“Kula, Miss Everts is trying to save the girls. But to do that she has to either kidnap them or buy them... Wilkie has powerful connections. We have to do what we can do” (197).

1. What do you think this statement has to do with the chapter opening describing Miss Everts' worn gown and lack of accessories?
2. What does this statement have to do with Miss Everts' complimenting Kula's purchases of clothing for Yue?
3. How are the two – Miss Everts and Kula – alike? In what ways have they sacrificed for the benefit of others?
4. Is this discovery of Miss Everts' humanitarian actions a surprise to you?
5. What about Jameson's role? Did you anticipate his involvement in this way?
6. How has Kula been 'getting it wrong'?
7. What can Kula do to get it right?

I felt like a piece of artwork myself, expected to smile and utter nonsense while strange men worked their gaze up and down my figure, and their wives bared teeth in forced smiles above their diamond-crusted necks (204).

1. Isn't this moment exactly what Kula desired? To elevate her social station? To be the center of attraction?
2. Why does she seem unsatisfied in this scene?
3. What has changed in Kula?
4. What role has Will played in this transformation? David? Wilkie? Yue? Min?
5. Why has this elevated place in society lost its appeal for her?

Discussion Questions for Chapters 31 through 37

I would not be left behind not knowing if David had been crushed in the midst of his rescue. I knew he thought that I was silly and selfish, but I didn't care; I could only think of him (209).

1. Kula seems willing to risk her own life for David, the suitor who could offer her nothing. Is she doing the right thing? Are her priorities in line?
2. What of her station?
3. What of her soul?
4. What of sacrifice?
5. What of forgiveness?

There, alone, a shoe, tiny, black, like the shoe in Miss Everts automobile. And there, a flower of folded crimson tissue paper, someone's only treasure, still perfect, an unblemished paper poppy lying in the dust (212).

1. Do you find it ironic that, among the horrific scene of battered bodies, devastation and despair, Kula finds something of beauty? A vivid red tissue flower?
2. Consider the metaphorical use of the color red? Could there be a connection of the unblemished paper poppy and Kula, dressed in her stunning crimson gown?
3. How, after all that Kula has been through, has she managed to remain a treasure? Perfect? Unblemished?
4. What of the tiny shoe? What does that shoe signify, metaphorically?
5. Think carefully as you reread the quote above. Can you see how this one line tells the novel's entire story, to this point? Explain the representation of the tiny shoe? Miss Everts? The car? Brokenness and devastation? Survival?

I felt drained, as if all life had slipped out from me... Pa's death loomed ever closer; Will had betrayed me; David was gone, perhaps buried in the ruin that surrounded me (217).

1. How does the surrounding scene mirror Kula's broken emotional state?
2. Has life slipped out from those around her?
3. Does death loom ever closer?
4. What has been buried in the earthquake?
5. What surrounds her?
6. Yet, what is still living? Think of the crimson paper flower.
7. Is there still hope?
8. Hope for what?

I pulled away so I could look into [David's] eyes. "I was lost."

He put his hands on my cheeks. "And now you're not."

We were together. I was whole. Whole and forgiven (218).

1. Kula was lost, both in the physical sense and the emotional sense. How so?
2. Consider David's action of holding Kula's face. How does this action contribute to Kula's sense of security? Of safety? Of being loved?
3. How does David complete Kula? Make her whole? Fill her soul?
4. To Kula, how important is being forgiven?
5. What does it mean to unconditionally forgive someone? How emotionally freeing is it?

"It's not over," I said. "Not for me. I still have to help my father" (226).

1. With devastation all around, brokenness and despair at every turn, what is Kula referring as not being over?
2. How can she help her father?
3. Who must she confront in order to save him?
4. Is there anything within herself that she must confront in order to save him?

"I have to return Kula's box to her." Will straightened and faced his father, the door to the vault still shut (233).

1. What transformation has taken place within Will? How has he changed?
2. Consider the symbolic significance of this scene's staging – Will challenging his father, the person whom he was certain would not approve of Kula and now is coming to Kula's defense. What do you make of this?
3. Will physically straightens his body in this scene, much like Kula and Miss Everts have done in previous scenes – a sign of being resolute and determined. Could this physical action tie Will and Kula together in some way? How so?

"There's no money in that box, Kula. There's an entire fortune," Henderson said.

"There's nothing in there that can save your father, Kula. And surely he knew that. When he told you to find it, he meant for it to save you" (239).

1. Consider these lines with reference to societal station and the salvation of the soul. Is there any correlation?
2. What kind of fortune is Henderson referring to?

3. So, in the end, Kula is getting what she wants – station, wealth, notoriety – but at what cost? Is the price of such gain worth the spoils?
4. It appears that Kula’s father was performing the ultimate sacrifice – giving up his own life for Kula’s benefit, does it not? Explain your answer.

His heart. Oh, my heart (244).

It didn’t matter that Wilkie was dead. I’d never forgive him for taking David from me. I’d never forgive myself for not telling David how I truly felt.

I’ll never forgive this miserable city for laying my heart wide open to love and then taking all love from my life (245).

1. Explain the first line. What is Kula referring to in this statement?
2. The Oxford English Dictionary defines forgiveness as ‘to grant free pardon and to give up all claim on account of an offense or debt.’ Kula says that she will never forgive, pardon, and emotionally release herself and the entire city of San Francisco for her heartache. Is this statement realistic?
3. Who does Kula really need to forgive? The city? Wilkie? Or herself?

I had to accept what I was and what I had to give (252).

The soul of a girl who had lost all hope, lost love, and needed to be made new, as well (256).

1. Kula is making peace through forgiveness with all that has come before her, transpired, and with the unknown future that is yet to come. How has she made come to terms with the memory of
 - a. Josiah Wilkie?
 - b. David Wong?
 - c. Her ancestors?
 - d. San Francisco?
2. What of her soul?
3. What of her station?
4. What of sacrifice?
 - a. Her father’s?
 - b. David’s?
 - c. Min’s?
 - d. Her sacrifice for whom?
5. What does she have to give?
6. What of her future?

“Where I’m From” Poetry

Poetry can help to reveal the innate nature of a character. In this lesson, we will consider aspects Kula’s journey and character and then craft a “Where I’m From” poem centered around the protagonist.

Below is an example on an “I Am” poem, by George Ella Lyon’s, written about the world that she was born into: the landscape, people, food, expressions, and stories that are her heritage as a member of a particular community. Read it closely. Consider the specific use of language. Note the dramatic use of detail and line breaks.

Following Lyon’s poem is a worksheet, a questionnaire of sorts, for you to use to gather specifics about Kula and her quest. After completing the worksheet, you are to create a “Where I’m From” poem written from Kula’s perspective.

Where I’m From

I am from clothespins,
 from Clorox and carbon-tetrachloride,
 I am from the dirt under the back porch.
 (Black, glistening,
 it tasted like beets.)
 I am from the forsythia bush,
 the Dutch elm whose long-gone limbs I remember
 as if they were my own.

I’m from fudge and eyeglasses,
 from Imogene and Alafair.
 I’m from the know-it-alls
 and the pass-it-ons,
 from Perk up! And Pipe down!
 I’m from He restoreth my soul
 with a cottonball lamb
 and ten verses I can say all by myself.

I’m from Artemus and Billie’s Branch,
 fried corn and strong coffee.
 From the finger my grandfather lost
 to the auger,
 the eye my father shut to keep his sight.

Under my bed was a dress box
 spilling old pictures,
 a sift of lost faces
 to drift beneath my dreams.
 I am from those moments –
 snapped before I budded –
 leaf-fall from the family tree.

–George Ella Lyon

To prepare for writing a “Where I’m From” poem from Kula’s perspective, first consider Kula’s journey. Listed below are various characters, places, and varied emotional states. Think about her connection to them. List a few words that come to mind when thinking about these characters and places. Review the chapter heading quotations. In what ways do they contribute to the overall theme of the book – Kula’s quest to find her father and herself. You may also consider the long list of personal affirmations stated by Kula throughout the entire book. Many of those statements were actually oxymoron-like, in that she was saying one thing with words, yet behaving in contradictory manner. *Forgiven* is rich with subject matter from which to choose from. Make a list of topics and then write your own “Where I’m From” poem based on your interpretations. Be specific when drafting your poem. Specifics make a piece come alive!

You are not limited by the topics on the list below. Nor are you required to include all of the topics in your poem. You might like to choose a few and deeply develop those. Consider the topics in relation to the various themes explored in the novel – violence, human rights, respect, love, hate, prejudice, fear, compassion. Include themes presented in the various chapter heading quotes, if you’d like. Maybe add a bit of your own convictions in the poem, as well. Consider the person you have become as result of reading Kula’s story. Has she changed you in any way? Opened to your eyes to aspects of humanity you didn’t know existed? Express yourself. Write it and share your work with the author of *Forgiven*, Janet Fox, via her website at www.janetsfox.com.

Where I’m From: Kula’s perspective

Bozeman, Montana _____

San Francisco, California _____

Pa _____

David Wong _____

Will Henderson _____

Josiah Wilkie _____

Min _____

Miss Everts _____

Ty Wong _____

Chinatown _____

Mei Lien _____

Sacrifice _____

Betrayal _____

Forgiveness _____

Reference: Atwell, Nancie. *Naming the world: a year of poems and lessons*. Portsmouth, NH: Firsthand, 2006. Print.

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ReaderKidZ

www.readerkidz.com