



### Discussion Questions

1. In what ways is *We Kiss Them With Rain* a classic coming-of-age story and in what ways is it different?
2. What does this story suggest life is like for a young poor black woman growing up in South Africa? List the things that surprised you and list the things that didn't.
3. The back cover suggests that *We Kiss Them With Rain* uses elements of Shakespearean comedy to tell this tale. What does that mean? In what ways does this story remind you of classic Shakespearean comedies like *A Midsummer's Night's Dream*? In what ways is it different?
4. Futhi Ntshingila's use of the supernatural is subtle in *We Kiss Them With Rain*. Where do the supernatural elements of the story occur? Is the supernatural a symbol of power? Why or why not and how?
5. Would you consider this novel a feminist text? Why or why not?
6. At her mother's funeral, Mvelo reads her mother's favorite biblical verse about love. (*If I speak with the languages of men and of angels, but have not love, I am nothing, etc.*) How does this particular verse, and its meaning, intertwine with the characters' fates during the course of the novel? What is the role of "love" in this book?
7. What are the sexual politics of this book? How is Nonceba's sexuality displayed differently than Zola's or Mvelo's? What is the history and culture behind those differences? From this book, what would you guess sex education (whether that occurs in families or institutions) in South Africa looks like? How might it be different in North America?
8. Consider the relationship between Sipho and Julia, his mother's employer. What are the power and gender dynamics at play in that relationship?
9. Both Johan and Zimkitha seemed to be with each other as an act of defiance. Was any part of their relationship based on love? Why or why not?
10. Is Johan acting out of contrition or selflessness when he agrees to adopt Mvelo's baby?
11. Why does Futhi Ntshingila choose to tell this story from different points of view? How do these changing points-of-view in the story strengthen or weaken our understanding of Mvelo's situation and her story?
12. Many women gather to honor Sipho, a man that they loved, after his death even though he had been the source of disease for many of them. What does this imply about the

complications and depth of love? What does it imply about the women's feelings toward AIDS itself?

13. Futhi Ntshinglia has written about her interest in how people with so little struggle to maintain normalcy in the face of disaster. In what instances and to what lengths do the people of *We Kiss Them with Rain* put forth the effort to maintain their normalcy? How has this focus on normalcy helped or hurt the situation?
14. Was there poetic justice in the death of the pastor and will his death allow Mvelo to find some peace?
15. What was your reaction when it was revealed that Mvelo stopped going to the virgin checks because girls had been raped by the men they were intended to trust?
16. Nonceba's grandmother, Mae, felt a pull between her American and African roots that Nonceba also seems to struggle with. Both of these women seemed unsure of where they belonged. What reasons could these women have for such a strong feeling of displacement, and how did this feeling influence where they found themselves throughout the story?
17. *We Kiss Them With Rain* begins with poetry. Some of the poetic images are obvious in the story, but others are more obscure. What ideas exist in the poem but may not be quite as obvious in the text? How does this poem, and the title that comes from it, comment upon the text as a whole and provide perhaps the book's main theme?