

## Reading Guide

### ***Love Interrupted by Reneilwe Malatji***

#### **LOVE**

- The female characters in Malatji’s stories—whether they remain single, get married, or have boyfriends—struggle to find committed romantic partners. What are the obstacles standing in their way? What are the cultural realities that make it difficult?
- For the characters who find romantic love, what are their expectations for the relationship? How well do those expectations match reality? What expectations do the male characters have for their romantic female characters? What conflicts do those expectations engender?
- One of the realities that most of these characters face are romantic partners or spouses who cheat. This is sometimes explained away as “African culture.” What are your reactions to the women’s experiences with their unfaithful partners and in particular to the idea that this is part of “African culture”? Based on the variety of reactions and actions from characters in these stories, what do you suppose are Malatji’s thoughts on the idea that this is a traditional part of their culture that women should just accept?
- How does the romantic love experienced by these characters differ from your own experiences or desires/expectations? What are you willing to accept in a relationship and what is a deal breaker for you?

#### **FILIAL DUTY**

- The title story in this collection, “Love Interrupted,” lays out the duties and responsibilities of the *makoti*, or “daughter-in-law.” What are those duties and responsibilities? This story offers a destructive example of how that can play out.
- What are some of the problems the main character experiences and why? How might these duties and responsibilities precipitate a mutually beneficial relationship between daughter-in-law and mother-in-law if both parties are kind and well-intended?
- What are the responsibilities that adult children have towards their parents in this African culture? How does that differ and how is it similar to those responsibilities that adult children have towards their parents in western culture?

#### **PARENTHOOD**

- In many of these stories, women end up raising their children alone, even if they are married. Why do you think that is so? What are cultural, historical, and personal reasons that this happens?
- What are the expectations for parenting in South Africa? What is your definition of a “good mom”? How do the characters in this book fulfill or fail your definition of “good mother”?

## **SOUTH AFRICA**

- What do you know about South Africa, either its current reality or its history?
- How do these stories inform or shape your understanding of South African culture and history? Did these stories confirm your expectations and understandings or provide new ways of looking at this country on the African continent?
- Trace the theme of race and cross-cultural contact in *Love Interrupted*. When does connection occur and why? When does disconnection or dissonance occur and why? Does this collection offer you hope that South Africa can emerge from its racist past? Why or why not?
- South Africa is often cited as a country with the highest differentials in income between the poor and the wealthy. What accounts for the strong differences in income levels?
- In this collection, we have characters from all classes—from Lebo, who emerges from poverty to become a “black diamond,” to characters who achieve a kind of cultural middle-class perspective if not wealth through education. How do wealth and poverty shape the lives of the characters in these stories? How do these factors shape the lives of people in western societies like the U.S.? How do wealth and poverty shape the lives of people who live in western nations, such as the U.S.? What are the differences and what are the similarities?