

## **Discussion Guide**

### ***Eye Brother Horn* by Bridget Pitt**

As Daniel and Moses grow up, they receive various gifts from their loved ones. How do each of these gifts affect their relationship with each other, as well as their peers?

- The sailor suits
- The gun and the knife
- The clay animals
- The incweba
- The books from Kazi

After shooting the jackal, Daniel realizes that he cannot kill animals, and gives his gun to Moses. How does this moment change the course of their relationship? How might things have been different if Daniel kept the gun?

Stories play a critical role in *Eye Brother Horn*—whether in regards to the boys’ origins, the stories Gogo tells them, Biblical stories, or the stories they each tell themselves about their intentions and actions. How do these stories weigh on the boys as they age? When are stories helpful, and when are they dangerous?

Specifically, the story of the Iseququmadevu monster has a particular significance for both Moses and Daniel. What does the story mean to each of them? How does this story highlight the difference in their circumstances?

Similarly, language helps the boys define the world around them. In particular, on page 59, Moses corrects his brother when Daniel calls them “blood brothers”, saying instead that they are “brothers in blood.” How is this distinction reflective of each boy’s understanding of their relationship?

On page 63, Moses says that Umfundisi would likely kill the jackal cubs because they were “born with a killer instinct.” Discuss what this suggests in regards to the nature vs. nurture debate, and how this reflects a bigger question in the book about Moses’ heritage and upbringing, and about Umfundisi’s hopes and fears regarding his adopted son.

Discuss the meaning (real or implied) of the following names and how they relate to the events of *Eye Brother Horn*:

- Umfundisi
- Inkosikazi (“Kazi”)
- Moses
- Daniel
- Gogo/Agnes

Both boys question the Christian faith on which they were raised, but for very different reasons. What are some of those reasons? What are some of the critical breaking points the boys experience

with their faith?

Moses' understanding of the world is informed both by his adoptive parents and his Gogo; these two worlds, Moses explains on page 16, live "side by side" inside of him. How do these conflicting belief systems play out in Moses' personality?

How could the upbringings of Moses and Daniel's be compared to that of "third culture kids", or expatriate children who spend their formative years overseas?

Kazi and Daniel are similar in many ways. Particularly, their attempts to help Moses are typically well-intended but misguided. In what ways is Daniel an ally to Moses and the Zulu people, and in what ways does he fail to be one? In what ways does Kazi succeed in wanting to help Moses, and in what ways does she unwittingly harm him?

The incweba is the first of many secrets that Daniel keeps from Moses. Why is he unable to give Moses the incweba? How does this secret change their relationship over the years? How does the "unspoken" between the brothers—and between the boys and their parents—play a role in the story?

On page 136, Kazi says, "It doesn't matter what I believe!" And when Hushamoya comes to the mission station, Moses notices how he seems intimidated by Gogo—and yet Gogo agrees to return to her homestead with him. What do Kazi and Gogo's characters and their choices reflect about the role of women at this time?

On page 221, Daniel decides he must keep an eye on Moses so that he doesn't "drown". A few chapters later, he almost dies trying to rescue Moses from the sea. What does Daniel's sense of responsibility for Moses suggest about his understanding of the inequalities between him and his brother, even from a young age? In what way does Moses also feel like his "brother's keeper", responsible for keeping him out of trouble?

Throughout the book, society is relentless in its attempt to drive Daniel and Moses apart. Name a few ways the boys rebel against this pressure to keep their brotherhood strong.

Both boys are strongly drawn to nature. What is similar and what is different about the way they connect to nature? In what other areas do they connect?

Read the following description of the family portrait, mentioned on page 246. What can you surmise about the characters based on the portrait? "There they are, all outside the Baker's house. Umfundisi and Kazi sit on chairs in front, Daniel behind them in the center, himself on the side, half-behind Kazi. Both boys are in their suits. Kazi is staring straight ahead and smiling with a kind of grim unfounded optimism. The other three are looking slightly to the left with apprehension as if they can see an approaching danger."

On page 256, Moses challenges Daniel's understanding of religion, saying, "Who is to say that the Holy Spirit dwells in that church?" Discuss how the concept of "the church" in *Eye Brother Horn* both shelters and injures the boys.

When the spirits in Ma Ndlovu's hut refer to the stolen child, Daniel says that Moses was saved, not stolen. In what ways was he saved? In what ways was he stolen? What does this response suggest about Daniel?

Throughout the book, many characters are compared to animals—at some points even "becoming" the animals which they embody. How do these attributions help the boys cope with the world around them? What does this tendency say about our misattribution of "good" and "evil" in regards to our fellow species?

The metaphor of being an owl raised by chickens is primarily attributed to Moses, born in a Zulu clan and raised by white missionaries. But how is this metaphor also appropriate for Daniel?

On page 315, Daniel makes a decision not to "harden" himself against the suffering of others. In what ways do we all harden ourselves against the suffering of other people and other species? In which ways is this necessary, and in which ways is this cruel?

Rhino poaching—as well as big game hunting—is one of the many ways in which the colonizer has wreaked havoc on the environment in Southern Africa. How is this violence against other species connected to the violence against indigenous people in *Eye Brother Horn*?

What do the events in *Eye Brother Horn* suggest about being forced to pursue a career dictated by social or parental expectations vs. pursuing one's own passions?

Discuss the following power dynamics and how they relate to the characters of *Eye Brother Horn*:

- Parent and child
- Colonizer and indigenous
- Male and female
- Human and animal
- Class divides
- The hierarchy of the church
- The individual and the collective
- Western science and traditional knowledge systems

On page 328, Cousin Roland explains to Daniel that while Daniel believes himself to be "blameless" in the colonial aggression against indigenous people, his life was only "made possible by slavery". Do you think descendants of colonizing nations are culpable for the systematic oppression of indigenous peoples and cultures that still continues today? Do you believe we should

be held accountable for the actions of our ancestors? What actions might help us overcome this painful legacy?

Daniel claims that his actions against Sir Roland were necessary, perhaps motivated by the belief that those actions could atone for Sir Roland's wrongdoings. Who or what does Daniel want this atonement for? In what ways does what happens to Sir Roland bring about peace, and in what ways does it put the characters in further harm's way?

The ending of the book subverts the expectations Umfundisi and Kazi had for their children. Discuss the ways in which the ending subverts or sustains your expectations for the characters of *Eye Brother Horn*.