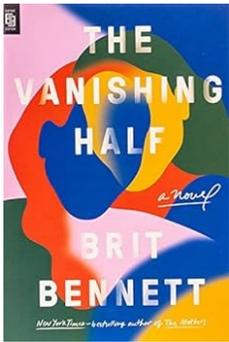




Discussion Guide



About the Book

The Vanishing Half

Author: Brit Bennett

Published: Riverhead Books, 2020

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Questions for Discussion

1. What were your general impressions of this book?
2. Would you say this book's storyline was predictable or unpredictable? Explain.
3. What do you enjoy about Brit Bennett's writing? Why would you say this book a bestseller? Why do you think Barak Obama loved this book?
4. What difference do you think the color of your skin makes in our society? For you? What awareness do you have of how various shades of skin make a difference for people of a color?
5. What does the title of the book mean? Who vanished?
6. Why do you think Stella decided to pass as white and why did Desiree make a different decision? How did that impact them?
7. Compare and contrast Jude and Kennedy. How did their socioeconomic and skin color affect their lives? Does growing up with privilege tend to help or hinder a child?
8. Think about the performers in this book. Kennedy, Barry, Reese, Stella. What is the performance for each of them? What does it say about roles? Do you ever feel you're performing instead of being yourself? Explain.
9. Read over the MAMs comments on this book. With whom do you agree/disagree and why?
10. As we continue to overcome racism in our society, what help does this book give you personally? Do you think it could help others change? Explain.

The Author on YouTube

Author Brit Bennett talks about her book, 'The Vanishing Half' (5:48)

Brit Bennett - Colorism & Racial Passing in "The Vanishing Half" | The Daily Social Distancing Show (5:46)



NANCY: A very well-written intriguing story that takes the reader into the experience of racism from a variety of perspectives. It exposes the challenges for people with very dark skin, and also with very light skin. I listen to my Black friends talk about this and this book helps me understand that more.



ABIGAIL: I appreciated the transgender story line in the book. So much talk about this these days. I liked the way the author dealt with it kindly, and the love between the transgender individual and his partner seemed so good and authentic.



SALLIE: I thought the author did a good job depicting the way children accept each other across racial differences. You see how what their parents say and tell them makes all the difference. It was a little hard to believe that Stella would actually tell her daughter what she did. Later she regretted it. And her daughter was able to transcend her mother and her lies.



PRISCILLA: I think my ancestor, Moriaya must've passed for white, too. So weird that generations later, I didn't even know I was part Black, until we did our DNA test. I identified with Stella, or at least she made me think how my ancestors must've felt. It's not fair, the way we put people into categories and treat them differently just because of their skin color.



MOLLY: I read this book because Barack Obama liked it and I can see why. So many of us are biracial and it's challenging to identify with only one ethnic group. We shouldn't have to make a choice, but racism requires that. This book shows there are problems both ways. Also Black folks are sometimes too judgmental of their own.



JANE: A lot of strong women in this book. Desiree and Stella both established careers in their own right, as did their daughters. I was cheering them all on. And good for Stella to go back to school after all those years! They all triumphed over racism, each in their own way.



KATHARINE: Yes, This one made me think. Good for all of our students, I think, to explore the issues of racism. You realize how complicated things get within the Black community when it comes to skin color. White supremacy causes these problems. It's so important to continue to talk about racism and work to stop it.