

DISCUSSION GUIDE

**"A stand-out YA fantasy debut with
a powerful feminist slant."**

The Guardian



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**YOUR PRESENCE IS REQUESTED AT
THE ROYAL COURT OF GALLA**

GODDESS CROWN

SHADE LAPITE

ABOUT THE BOOK

Lapite's gripping debut is a gloriously expansive examination of female empowerment, patriarchy and the place of myth and religion in society. With a heady blend of fantasy, politics, feminism and romance, the reader is swept into the world of Galla and all its intrigue. Kalothia, hidden in a remote forest for her entire life, dreams of finding her parents. When her whole world changes in a flash, she must travel to the heart of the kingdom in search of family, answers and the truth of her past. Drawing on the author's British-Nigerian heritage, *Goddess Crown* is a work of deeply layered storytelling and world-building, to keep readers engaged from first page to last.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Shade Lapite is British-Nigerian and has drawn on her heritage to create the world of her debut novel. She spent a significant slice of her childhood nestled in the library, inhaling books by Diana Wynne Jones, Tamora Pierce, Lois Duncan and Mildred D. Taylor. Her love for the arts led her to a degree in Media Arts at Royal Holloway, University of London. She now lives in Toronto and juggles writing with her career in digital marketing. Her blog, Coffee Bookshelves, celebrates writing and promotes titles by authors of colour. You can find her fangirling over Korean dramas on Twitter @TheShadyFiles or sharing her favourite books on Instagram @shadelapite.

GENERAL INTRODUCTION:

As a high-fantasy novel spanning multiple genres, *Goddess Crown* provides a wealth of topics for discussion and exploration. From romance and action through to politics, feminism and a West-African-inspired societal structure, the novel gives opportunities for groups to follow their interests and develop conversation organically. As the book deals with violence, murder, family loss and oppression, it is worth ensuring all members are comfortable discussing these topics, before beginning.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Getting started:

Ask what the group liked about the book. What did anyone particularly enjoy? Why? How did the book compare to other novels members have enjoyed – was it similar to anything else? How did it differ?

1. Kalothia

"Dresses were nice enough to look at but decidedly impractical when you were planting in the garden, hunting, rethatching the roof, climbing trees, or any of the other things Kalothia liked to spend her days doing." – p. 11

What did anyone think of Kalothia at the beginning of the novel? How did the author present the character? By the end, had anyone's opinion changed? Look at the given quotation – how does this hint at what is later to come for Kalothia?

2. Nahir

"Thinking of Nahir made her kick mindlessly at a tuft of grass and sigh." – p. 7

How is Nahir presented to the reader? Do we have an impartial view of him? Why, or why not? What impact does this have? Does the reader understand Kalothia's feelings before she does? How about Nahir's actions and motivations – is he right to do what he does?

3. Faledi Forest

"You are the princess of Galla, the highest ambassador of this country, you cannot behave like a girl in the forest." – p. 236

Does Kalothia's life in the forest prepare her for what's to come? Is her upbringing typical of the setting? Why? Or why not? Consider her journey from a rural, secluded forest to a bustling capital city – how are the two presented differently? Why is Kalothia so keen to leave at first? Discuss whether or not she really fits in either world?

4. The King's Highway

"You travel with a monkey and no extra clothes? No food? What is it your husband does?" – p. 81

What does the King's Highway symbolize in the novel? Why is it significant? Kalothia quickly feels less self-assured once she sees the reality of how the road operates – what effect does this have on her? On the novel?

5. Secrets

"There are so many secrets in this building..." – p. 148

What drives Kalothia throughout the novel? Is it a desire for knowledge? Uncovering mysteries? Empowerment? How important are secrets in the novel? Why? Is it inevitable that Kalothia is the missing princess? How would the novel be different if, for example, Bukki was the main character?

6. Hadley

"Kalothia realized what she'd always known Her mother had been betrayed not only by this one man, but by the whole rotten court, by the whole kingdom that didn't place any value on women." – p. 279

Did anyone suspect Hadley of being responsible for everything, before it was revealed? Why? What does the author do to lead the reader away from this conclusion? Why does Hadley do what he does? What's his reasoning? Is there any truth in this?

7. Lords of Galla

"Kalothia held in a sigh. Royal court politics were indeed complicated and draining." – p. 184

How does the novel shift once Kalothia arrives in Port Caspin? How is the capital presented to the reader? Discuss the Lords of Galla – how do they differ? How are they the same? Are there any real-life comparisons you could make to these Lords? Is the politics in the novel reminiscent of world or domestic politics? How? How not?

8. The Goddess

"There are rules," she said again. 'I can only bend them so much. I cannot prevent a person's death.'" – p. 165

The Goddess has limited power in the novel – why is this important? Her existence, though, is indisputable to the reader – how does this change the novel? Consider the episode with the kori egg – what changes because she achieves the task set to her? How do the Lords respond? Why is this significant? Is there any way Kalothia could have been accepted by the court?

9. Power and sacrifice

"Everyone is concerned with their own territory. With power for the sake of power. But there are problems that must be fixed." – p. 193

Why is Kalothia reluctant to take power? What does it mean for her? What does it mean for Galla? For women? What is the cost of power in the novel? Who is willing to make sacrifices? Does anyone not have to make sacrifices? What does this mean for the characters?

10. Genre

"The Goddess's eyes hardened. 'Men have tampered with my writings. That was never the teaching.'" – p. 165

How would anyone describe the novel? Does it fit into one genre? Is it a thriller? Romance? Coming-of-age? Political? Fantasy? Myth? Discuss how the author plays with genre expectations in *Goddess Crown*. What is the overall effect?