

A Study Guide for Miss G and Me

Global questions

- How do the themes of *calling* and *home* recur throughout *Miss G and Me*? Why are these important threads? Are they one in the same—why or why not?
- What stood out for the author in her first trip to Jamaica? (page 18) How did these memories inform other instances or experiences mentioned in the book?
- What did the author mean by “Do they feel colour?” (page 20)
- How does *belonging* factor into the book? Where, when and with whom, did the author or Miss G experience a sense of belonging? How does the question “Where do you come from?” (p20) affect this sense of belonging?
- Did Miss G and her family members face discrimination? What were subtle examples or microaggressions that they faced? What were clear and overt examples of racism or discrimination? How can you be sure?
- “Education is the only hope a child growing up in Jamaica has for a better life.” (page 41) Is this an overstatement? Why or why not? How did education play a role in *Miss G and Me*? What kinds of education stand out in the book?

Relationships

- “Why is it all about my hair?” the author asked. (page 125) How did the author and her mother’s experiences with hair affect their relationships and perceptions of who they are?
- Ruth, being a mother and a nurse, were significant attributes in her relationship with Jennifer, the author. How did this dual nature affect their relationship? Was it healthy or unhealthy? Did the roles ever get reversed? Why or why not?
- How are mother, grandmother and child relationships outlined and perceived in the book?
- How are father, grandfather, and child relationships outlined and perceived in the book?
- Early in the book, the author said that Miss G grew up with veils of privacy, and keeping things to herself (page 14, 15). Later the author (p148) mentioned “stories not mine to tell.” She came back to this notion “On Speaking and Silence” and how it informed her parent’s relationship. (p162-166) How is silence detrimental? How is silence important? How can speaking be detrimental or important? When is it time to be silent and when is it time to speak or write?

Language

- What are some excerpts that used sensory language that are particularly effective? Why are they effective and memorable?
- Although the author did not grow up in Jamaica, she inserted the language and expressions throughout the book. How does language in the book work as a bridge to draw the reader in? Is it inclusive and culturally sensitive in the way it is done? Explain your reasoning.
- The title of the book is from a pet name given to the author’s mom. It was an early shaper of her mother’s identity. Names that the author was called by bullies (p123, 125) affected her and

informed her decision to straighten her hair. In Appendix I: Pseudonyms, the author chose names that fit time, place, and carry meaning. Was too much weight placed on names in this book? Why or why not? Do names help define who we are? Why or why not?

Personal questions

- *Miss G and Me* is non-linear. In your opinion, does this work for a memoir, why or why not?
- The author used three symbols throughout the book, (introduced on page 9), to help the reader situate themselves in relation to Miss G and to understand time and place. What symbols would you use to represent your life, times, or places?
- How did this memoir compare to other memoirs you have read?
- What was a favourite scene or passage in the book?
- What was your least favourite part in the book?
- What surprised you in the book? Did any part make you wonder and what did you wonder? What did you learn or what was new information to you?
- Did the book make you want to look up anything in the appendices or elsewhere after reading *Miss G and Me*? If so, what?
- What scene or experiences in the book were you able to relate to? How did this memoir make you reflect on your own experiences or relationships?
- What parts elicited an emotional or physical response, laughter, crying or head nodding?
- Did you reread any passages? If so, which ones?
- Was this a book you read through straight, or did you set it down and pick it up? Why?
- Did you feel like the author over sentimentalized or left out anything that needed to be in the book? Was there anything that you felt was left wanting?
- What are your questions for the author?