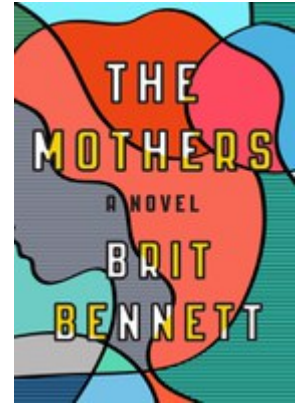


Discussion Questions for "The Mothers"

The following questions can be used to facilitate group discussions on the 2020 All Iowa Reads selection, *The Mothers* by Brit Bennett. The questions were adapted with permission of Penguin Random House from [Teaching *The Mothers* by Brit Bennett](#).



1. While the story is not set in Iowa nor is it set in the Midwest, it features a small town. How are all small towns alike? Does the town in *The Mothers* remind you of any real small town?
2. In what ways is Nadia ambitious? What explains her ambition? Why does her ambition make her feel so uncomfortable?
3. How does race affect how Nadia comports herself among her mostly white classmates? How does this compare to her behavior within the black church community? Does being African American affect Luke in the same ways as Nadia?
4. How are Nadia's views on pregnancy and parenthood shaped by her questions about her own mother?
5. What kind of man does Luke hope to be, and how does this change after his injury? How do Luke's thoughts about fatherhood develop throughout the story? What are some similarities and differences between Luke and Nadia's father?
6. One of the themes of the book is **secrets**: "All good secrets have a taste before you tell them, and if we'd taken a moment to swish this one around our mouths, we might have noticed the sourness of an unripe secret, plucked too soon, stolen and passed around before its season." When is a secret ripe?
7. In what ways do the older generations in *The Mothers* hold younger people to different standards than they may have held themselves?
8. Luke's parents are outwardly very anti-abortion yet arrange for Nadia's when she becomes pregnant. Does the difference between public beliefs and private actions seem realistic? Did you feel sympathetic towards Luke's family at any time in the story? Why or why not?
9. How do Nadia and Aubrey rely on one another? What does their relationship with each other teach them about themselves?
10. How did the omniscient Mother narrators of the Upper Room affect your reading?