

BOOK DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR *SYMPHONY OF SECRETS*

- What was your first impression of the book as you began to read it, and did your opinion change as you continued to read?
- How did the book affect you? What emotions did you experience as you read?
- What were your feelings about the various characters at the start of the book? Did your opinions of any of them change by the end of the story?
- Which character did you connect with the most, and why?
- Do you relate to how any of the characters cope with their circumstances?
- What character(s) did you root for as you read the book?
- How did the dual timeline structure of the novel work for you? Which timeline did you enjoy the most: the 1920s with Josephine or modern-day with Bern? Which supporting character was your favorite?
- What makes Josephine's story compelling?
- What alternate history can you imagine for Josephine if she does not meet Freddy?
- How did you feel about Freddy Delaney as you continued to read the book?
- Josephine experiences sound as colors through synesthesia. Do you ever experience art or music in an unconventional way, giving you a unique perspective?
- Music is necessary in the lives of Josephine and Bern. What role does it play in your life? When do you enjoy music?
- Eboni and Bern connect through their quest to find great pizza. What shared interests help you connect with special people in your life?
- What responsibility do you feel cultural institutions have to address historical injustices, even when doing so might diminish their reputations?
- How do you find that technological advancements change your relationship with art and the ways that you understand authorship and ownership?
- How does the author's use of musical terminology in the book affect your reading experience?
- What do you think Freddy's champagne ritual tells us about his character and his relationship with guilt?
- How do you see clothing as a symbol of identity and power in this novel?
- Which musical piece in the book would you most want to hear? What colors or emotions would you associate with this music, based on its descriptions?
- Do you have a deep personal connection to an artist, as Bern does to Frederic Delaney?
- To what extent do you equate the artist with their art?
- Do you feel that lyrics and music are equally important? Why or why not?
- What would you describe is Freddy's relationship to music compared to Josephine's? Does that change during the novel, and if so, how?
- How satisfied are you regarding how much Bern and Eboni were able to learn about Josephine?
 - Does it make you wonder how much history we don't know?
- How did you feel about the Delaney Foundation's response to Bern and Eboni's findings? If you were on the board, how would you respond?
- What do you think is the line between inspiration, ethical borrowing, and harmful appropriation in music?
- How do you feel about the pace (fast, slow, exactly right) of the story?
- What do you think of the dialogue between the characters?
- Are you satisfied with the novel's conclusion? Why or why not?
- What do you feel are the book's greatest strengths?
- What do you think is the author's main theme or message in the novel?
- What surprised you in this book?
- What passages in the book stand out to you, and why? What will stay with you after this year's One Book, One Elmhurst ends?
- Would you recommend this book to a friend or relative? Why or why not?

HAVE A QUESTION FOR THE AUTHOR?



Following Brendan Slocumb's virtual author visit, EPL will host a moderated Q&A. Submit your questions for review by scanning the QR code, or visit elmlib.org/onebook.