

Suggested Questions for Book Club Discussions

PLACE OF COOL WATERS

Much of the book takes place in Nairobi, the capital of Kenya. Nairobi comes from a Maasai word meaning “Place of Cool Waters.” Conor also makes a reference to the cool waters in relation to the sockeye salmon life cycle. Does the title have a deeper meaning that possibly integrates these two concepts?

At the beginning of the book, there’s a verse from Proverbs: “A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity.” Why do you think the author chose this particular quote to set the stage for this book?

Did the overt racism of Jude’s boss, Luanne, seem realistic to you? What did you think of the way Jude chose to deal with it? Did you approve of Tessa’s solution to the issue?

What do Qadir’s experiences as a Somali immigrant and Muslim in Nairobi tell you about the cultural and religious diversity in that city? Were you surprised to learn about the discrimination he encounters? In what ways were his experiences similar or different to Jude’s?

How did Jude’s training as a Boy Scout prove advantageous when he found himself alone in the wilderness of Kenya?

Did you feel that the author effectively transported readers into Nairobi with descriptions of unscrupulous taxi drivers, the night club-style city buses, details about running a kiosk, etc.? Share other examples of how the author created a sense of place, both in Africa and in Clarksville, Wash.

How did Conor’s death have a life-changing impact on Jude? Do you think Conor would have approved of Jude’s decision to travel to Kenya?

Did you suspect that Jude and Qadir were possibly related before someone mentioned that they looked alike?

Do you think that Jude and Qadir will forge a strong relationship as brothers? Why or why not?

What were the similarities and differences to the brothers’ family, upbringing, values, etc.?

Both Jude and Qadir had “guardian angels” who came to their rescue at various times? Who were some of them and what was the result of their intervention?

What did you think of the somewhat mysterious Mr. Harrison? Do you think his reasons for holding Jude overnight and questioning him were valid?

Did you want to learn more about Lord Baden-Powell and/or Captain Tom Wilson after reading the book? Why or why not?

Were you surprised to learn about the hostility that many Kenyans felt toward Capt. Tom Wilson versus the way that Jude and his father had thought about him? Also, were you surprised to learn that many local Kenyans had never heard of Lord Baden-Powell, even though his grave is a national monument in Nyeri?

What was your favorite part of the book? Which character did you identify with most and why?

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "ndurang'u". The signature is written in a cursive, lowercase style with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.