



# Book Club Discussion Questions

## The Gilded Ones – Namina Forna

1. The Gilded Ones is told in first person, entirely from Deka's perspective. Why do you think the author chose to write it in this way? How do you think your reading experience would have been different if she had used a third-person narrator? Is there another character whose perspective you would be interested to read?
2. Namina Forna has described the "safety of examining things through the lens of fantasy". What are some ways in which fantasy can help us to navigate issues that exist in the real world?
3. When talking about her inspiration, Namina Forna has said "Sierra Leone is deeply patriarchal, and girls are often considered lesser than boys. When I moved to America, I hoped things would change, but I quickly realized it was the same. Perhaps the message wasn't as in your face, but it was still there." Patriarchy is a social system in which men hold primary power, and take prominence in political, social, moral and economic roles. Have a think about the patriarchal systems in the novel. What are the most obvious and more subtle ways that you can see these in play throughout Deka's story?
4. In The Gilded Ones, women's destinies are determined by the reveal of their blood during the Ritual of Purity. Explore the author's choice to use blood in this way. Why do you think she picked gold for the blood of the alaki?
5. The alaki of The Gilded Ones were partly based on the Dahomey Amazons of West Africa. Do some research on the Dahomey Amazons, and see what parallels you can draw between them and the characters of Deka and her sisters. Why do you think the author was inspired by them?
6. Think about the development of the deathshrieks in The Gilded Ones. Look at pages 353–354, where Deka discovers that they are actually alaki, reborn after their final death. Did you expect this twist? How did it affect your original perception of the deathshrieks?
7. In the story, Katya talks about how all she ever wanted was to get married and have children and a home. How does this idea of traditional womanhood tie into the novel's themes of feminism and patriarchy?
8. Consider the evolution of Deka's concept of family throughout The Gilded Ones. What does the idea of bloodsisters come to mean to her? And how does discovering the truth of her mother and her conception affect the way she sees herself?
9. In The Gilded Ones, we see various parts of the kingdom of Otera through Deka's eyes. Is there a particular setting in the novel that you can imagine clearly in your head? Find a passage where it is described, and examine the techniques that the author has used to bring it to life.
10. Are there any parallels that you can draw from the world and the story of The Gilded Ones that you feel are comparable to today's society?