

- 1) We typically think of sewing as an activity that repairs damaged cloth or in the case of embroidery, beautifies it. What does sewing mean for Stella? How is it different for Lily?
- 2) The authors have capitalized both Black and White in the novel. Did you notice this? Did you ever ponder why White is not traditionally capitalized, but Black is? How has this change affected how you perceive descriptions of race in the written word?
- 3) William's musical skills allow him more freedom than other enslaved men, which eventually leads to his relationship with Stella and his escape. However, his uniqueness does not shield him from the horrors that befall the Black soldiers at Port Hudson. For members of marginalized groups, what impact does individual talent have (or not have) in improving one's circumstances?
- 4) Jacob and William find themselves forging a strong friendship against the backdrop of war, despite coming from completely different backgrounds. What do you think draws them together? How does music and outsidership play into this novel? Is there an unusual friendship that you have forged?
- 5) What surprised you the most reading "The Thread Collectors?" Were you aware of some of the historical events? For example, the Louisiana Guards' participation in the Battle in Port Hudson or the burning of the Colored Orphan Asylum in New York City?
- 6) At Port Hudson, the Black soldiers sing "Amazing Grace," a hymn originally written by John Newton, an 18th century slave trader. While he underwent a spiritual conversion, he continued in the slave trade for some time. Can you separate the present beauty of art from the past sins of the artist? Can you think of modern examples of this dilemma?
- 7) The sisterhood between Stella and Ammanee plays an important role in the novel. How does the unequal nature of the sisters' circumstances affect their relationship? How does the relationship change over the course of the story?
- 8) Tilly, Janie and Stella all make sacrifices in the name of motherhood. Were you surprised by any of their choices?
- 9) Love is communicated in many ways in this novel - humming by Tilly, sewing by Stella, quilting and writing by Lily. Are some ways more effective than others? How do you communicate love?