

READER'S GUIDE

1. What role does silence, both voluntary and involuntary, play in this book?
2. Have you ever been in a situation where you wanted something, but couldn't communicate your wanting?
3. Who is the most powerful character in this story? Does your answer to that question change depending on where you are in the novel?
4. Do you trust Milla as a narrator? Why or why not?
5. What constitutes language in this book? What are some of the ways the characters communicate beyond words?
6. Have you ever been confronted with a past version of yourself, as Milla is through her past diary entries? How did this make you feel?
7. What do Jak and Milla's different approaches to farming say about them, and by extension, the country's changing values?
8. In her introduction, Mary Gaitskill notes that the author herself "feels a *particular* lack of sympathy for Milla, whom she described as an emotional vampire in an interview with Toni Morrison." Do you agree with this characterization of Milla?
9. How do the various parts of each chapter—the present moments and the flashbacks—affect your reading of the book? Why do you think the author chose to structure the chapters in this way?
10. How did you see the setting change over the course of this book? How is the South Africa of the 1950s different than the South Africa of the 1990s?