



Colorado Book Club Resource

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR THE CIPHER BY KATHE KOJA

1. Discuss the characters of Nicholas and Nakota. What motivates each of them, and how do their personalities and backgrounds contribute to their actions throughout the novel?
2. Explore the themes of obsession, addiction, and the search for meaning in *The Cipher*. How do these themes manifest in the characters' behavior and interactions? What commentary do you think the novel is making on these topics?
3. The mysterious hole in the storage room serves as a central element of the novel. What do you think the hole represents symbolically? How does it affect the characters who encounter it?
4. *The Cipher* is known for its unsettling and visceral horror. What techniques does Kathe Koja use to create tension and dread throughout the novel? Were there any scenes or images that particularly disturbed you?
5. Discuss the novel's unconventional narrative structure, which alternates between first-person perspectives and journal entries. How does this format enhance the story's sense of immediacy and intimacy?
6. Consider the portrayal of gender roles and power dynamics in *The Cipher*. How do gendered expectations influence the characters' relationships and interactions?
7. Both Nicholas and Nakota are artists struggling to find inspiration and meaning in their work. How does their creative process mirror their personal struggles? What commentary is the novel making on the nature of art and creativity?
8. *The Cipher* blurs the lines between right and wrong, sanity and madness. Discuss the moral ambiguity of the characters' actions and decisions. Do you think any of the characters are truly "good" or "evil"?
9. The novel explores existential themes such as nihilism and the fear of meaninglessness. How do these themes manifest in the characters' lives and worldviews? What philosophical questions does the novel raise about the nature of existence?
10. Reflect on your emotional response to *The Cipher*. How did the novel make you feel, and did it leave a lasting impression on you? Would you recommend it to others, and why or why not?

Discussion questions generated by ChatGPT.



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