



Colorado Book Club Resource

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR FUTURE HOME OF THE LIVING GOD BY LOUISE ERDRICH

1. Talk about Cedar Hawk Songmaker. How would you describe her? What traits does she possess that enable her to navigate this new world? What about her adoptive parents, Sera and Glen Songmaker: has Louise Erdrich drawn them as parodies or as authentic liberals?
2. What is it about the letter from Mary Potts that irritates Cedar? Why does she decide to make the trip up to the reservation to meet Mary? What are her expectations for the three Mary Pottses—and do the women fulfill those expectations? Consider the moment when Sweetie speaks before the Indian Council and uses the word "caveat": were you surprised at her choice of the word? Or were you surprised at Cedar's surprise that she used the word? In other words, was Cedar condescending in her attitude toward Sweetie? What about Eddy—what is he like? Were you surprised by his erudition?
3. Why did Cedar convert to Catholicism? How would you describe her spiritual/religious beliefs? Why is she so fascinated by the article, "The Madonna's Conception Through the Ear," and in what way is her curiosity connected to the coming birth of her own child? What is your own thinking about the "word" or "Word" whispered to Mary—is it an actual word ... or an idea?
4. *Follow-up to Question 3:* Why does Cedar refer to the baby's father as an "angel" and to his brown wings? What is the symbolic significance of the couple's love-making in the various costumes in the basement of their church.
5. Cedar writes, "The first thing that happens at the end of the world is that we don't know what is happening." What does she mean? Are there parallels (or warnings?) in Erdrich's book that pertain to our own world, the one we're living in? In what way are our current societal anxieties given voice in this novel?
6. Why is the government rounding up pregnant women? How are women seen as the possible salvation of the human species?
7. Why is Sera, as she admits to Cedar, not happy about Cedar's pregnancy? Is it right that she's unhappy? Or do you think she is wrong, perhaps selfishly so? How would you feel in her situation?
8. Eddy tells Cedar, "Indians have been adapting since before 1492 so I guess we'll all keep adapting." Then he adds, [The world's] always going to pieces." Is he right—that societies have always regrouped, reformed, and rebuilt after disasters? Or this current disaster, the one in the novel, different?



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9. Earlier, Cedar writes that "Our bodies have always remembered who we were. And now they have decided to return. We're climbing back down the swimming-pool ladder into the primordial soup." Is there a cause given for the devolution of the species? Is it the activation of redundant genes that have lain dormant for millions of years (p. 106)? If so, why is it happening all at once—throughout the animal and plant kingdoms? Or is it that God has simply tired of human kind, as Phil suggests?
10. As society begins to collapse in the novel, does it unravel the way you would expect it to? Consider the New Constitution or the postal service's hiring of private contractors to protect the mail deliverers on their rounds. Does the unraveling seem unrealistic, maybe over-the-top? Or is Erdrich's dystopian vision realistic, perhaps even feasible—in other words, can you see it actually happening?
11. **SPOILER ALERT:** What do you think of Phil—both at the beginning of the novel, when we first meet him, and by the end? Do you blame him for giving up names? Cedar is angry with him ... or is she? Does his turn-coat action at the end seem out of character for him?
12. **SPOILER ALERT:** Were Sera and Glen right to have withheld from Cedar the truth about her birth father? Did your attitude toward Glen change after learning of his affair with Sweetie?
13. What is the meaning of the book's title? On August 9, as Cedar is driving up to meet Mary Potts, she passes a billboard in a bare, weedy field that reads "Future Home of the Living God." Why might Erdrich have taken it as the title for her novel?

Questions by LitLovers.



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