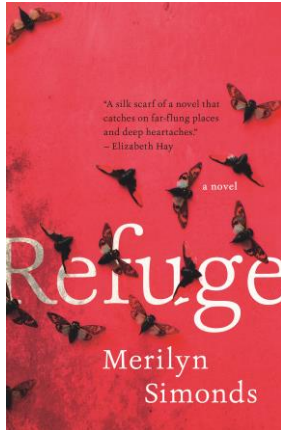


~ Book Club Questions ~

There are no wrong answers!



Refuge is my most ambitious book yet. Fourteen years in the writing, it began with a fiercely independent old woman, Cassandra MacCallum, who leaked her life to me slowly.

Cass has been a fascinating—and sometimes frustrating—companion through these years of finding the right way to tell her story, which takes us from Canada's eastern Ontario to Mexico, New York, and Montreal, with a side trip to Burma, as the secret at the heart of the book is unraveled.

Some questions to ponder as you discuss *Refuge*:

- *Refuge* is a story of family—of sisters, of fathers and daughters, mothers and sons. How does the relationship of Cassandra and May act as a trigger for the unfolding of Cass's life?
- *Refuge* is also a story of legacy—of what is passed on and what is left behind. As Don Arturo says, we die three times: first when we turn inward, away from the world; again, when our body ceases to be; and finally, when no one remembers us. What legacies does Cass receive from her father, her sister, her lover, her son? What legacy does she leave?
- *Refuge* is a story, too, of home—of leaving home, of looking for a home, finding a home, all the reasons we cross borders from one country to another. What is the difference between migration and immigration? Between an immigrant and a refugee?
- The story of *Refuge* turns on the twin notions of citizenship and statelessness. Who belongs where? Somewhere in the world, a child is born into statelessness every 10 minutes—worldwide, 10 million people are stateless, without the usual protections of citizenship. What is Canada's responsibility to displaced and stateless people? What is our individual responsibility?
- What is the role of 'story' in memory, in binding a person to place, in building and breaking apart relationships?
- How does the way that Cass's story is told—the structure of the tale—mirror the workings of memory?



I'm happy that this book took so long to write because it emerges now into a time when its story is more relevant than ever.

I look forward to hearing about your book club discussions: I always learn something new about what I've written.

If you would like me to join your club, in person or by Skype, please be in touch!

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