

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. *Landfall* is set in the wake of Hurricane Katrina, which wreaked havoc on the southern United States in late August 2005. At that time, it was considered the greatest environmental disaster in U.S. history. The book also reflects on another monumental disaster of the same generation: 9/11. How did linking the two events augment or change your understanding of the characters' experience?
2. Gertrude and her daughter Rose appear to be a couple when first introduced. What effect does this sleight of hand have? Where else in the novel did you find yourself needing to adjust your preconceived notions?
3. The author has written from the perspectives of women whose races and/or cultures differ dramatically from her own. Do the voices feel authentically rendered to you? Why or why not?
4. In the cooler scene, Rosy makes a harrowing split-second choice in an effort to save her mother's life. Did you think better or worse of her after reading that passage? In what other ways do characters throughout the book make terrible mistakes, but with the best of intentions? How do you judge them?
6. For Rose, the Gee's Bend quilts are the highlight of the Alabama Folk Art exhibit at the Birmingham Museum of Art. The quilts are described as "resistance pieces, the spirit of Harriet Powers turned indignant." Do you believe that common folk, performing an everyday task, can find themselves players in, or symbols of, a resistance movement? If so, what other examples of this phenomenon can you think of in the last century?
7. When considering how to ride out the storm, Cilla remarks, "Ain't no Red Cross shelters round here. Oh, no. They don't come to New Orleans. They everywhere else, but not New Orleans!" However, the American Red Cross's decision not to immediately set up aid stations in the city was complex and complicated by

numerous external factors outside of Cilla's personal experience. In what other ways does *Landfall* highlight the manner in which misperceptions interfere with a person's ability to access help or make a genuine connection with others?

8. The text is full of regionalisms and vernacular common to Alabamians and New Orleanians. Did this endear or frustrate you? Of the colloquialisms, are there any that stood out as your favorites?

9. Of the four main characters—Rosy, Cilla, Rose, Gertrude—who would you invite into your world and embrace as a friend?

10. *Landfall* is full of characters who are tightly bound to one another, but also to the objects they acquire along the way. Which ones helped move the plot forward? Do you believe objects might have more or less import in the lives of the impoverished or disenfranchised? In a natural disaster, what would you hope carry away with you from your home, and why?

11. The incident on the Crescent City Connection Bridge (also known as the Gretna Bridge) is detailed as if it is part of an editorial. How does transmitting that information in article form work differently than if it had been conveyed through a scene?

12. *Landfall* contains numerous references to racial tensions in the South. Most of these observations are made by Rose, the young white girl, who seems more attuned to racial issues than does her African American counterpart, Rosy. Why do you think this is?

13. There is a significant plot twist near the end of the book. Looking back, are you able to identify clues and allusions to the truth scattered throughout the text? If so, how did your personal perceptions, prejudices, and assumptions lead you to miss (or catch) those clues along the way? Can you identify real-life examples—either personal or historical—when one person's misinterpretation of facts resulted in a significant misconstruing of reality?