

Confrontations For Discussion

1. Salomé is a Dutch Cameroonian living in Holland. How does her experience compare to that of a minority living in the United States? What similarities or differences do you see?
2. What kind of influence did Aunt Céleste have on Salomé? Do you think it was positive or negative? Why?
3. What does *très sec* mean and why does the author use it as a refrain throughout the novel? What special meaning does it have for Salomé?
4. What does Frits do on his show that Salomé views as racist? How do you understand his comments and behavior? Can you think of travel shows today in which the hosts display similar behaviors toward the people they visit?
5. We don't know until the end of the novel what Salomé did to get her sent to the detention center. Was her crime what you had imagined? Do you think her punishment fit the crime? What, if any, symbolism is there about Paul losing an eye?
6. As in the Bible, there are two Salomé's in this novel. What similarities and differences do you see between their stories?
7. Frits acknowledges that the show was ultimately for entertainment, and though it wasn't his intention to display harmful behavior, that he did choose to go along with it. What are things in your life you "go along with?" Do these things ever make you feel uncomfortable?
8. Throughout the novel, Salomé both imagines and dreams about herself disappearing. What do you think this means in the context of the novel? Do you think there is any one thing that is driving her to feel this way?
9. How did her trip to Cameroon affect Salomé? What was different for her when she returned to Holland?
10. Frequently Salomé makes references to time: the past, its passage, the ticking of time, being stuck in time. In the detention center, she lives in the Donut, the circular ward. How do these two things work together in the novel? What do you think they represent to Salomé?
11. Salomé often draws upon various Greek myths. Do you see parallels in her story to these myths? Do you think her story could be considered a tragedy? Why or why not?

12. The novel includes several recurring storylines that move Salomé's history forward, giving the reader more with each visit. Why do you think the author chose to write the novel this way, rather than linearly?
13. This is a lyrical novel. What are some things you notice that are different about it from the traditional novel form? How did the form affect the imparting of the story?
14. Salomé experiences many confrontations in the book; which do you think is the most significant one for her?