

RIVER SING ME HOME

ELEANOR SHEARER

READING GUIDE

1. “Rachel did not mind that she lacked Hope’s hard outlines and clear sense of self. That was how she had chosen to survive—by letting little pieces of herself fall away without resistance.” What do you make of Rachel’s character and of her attitude to survival? Do you think her attitude changes during the novel?
2. What does Rachel’s journey say about motherhood? What do you think Rachel learns about being a mother over the course of the novel?
3. Each of Rachel’s children chooses a different path out of slavery. Are they all, in some sense, free? Are some paths better than others?
4. Lots of characters in this novel get a chance to tell small fragments of their stories. Why might this telling be important? What role do these stories play in Rachel’s journey? Are they able to teach her something about herself?
5. Rachel does not mention much about the fathers of her children. Do you think this is deliberate? Are there any clues in the text as to who the fathers might be?



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6. What roles do music and song play in the novel?

7. Thomas Augustus tells Rachel that in the runaway village, some people love to tell and retell the past, while others just want to forget it. How does the novel deal with the themes of remembering and forgetting? Do you think there is a right choice between dwelling on the past and leaving it behind?

8. What do you make of the character of Mary Grace? Why do you think Nobody is so drawn to her, and her to him?

9. The natural world plays a significant role in the novel. How does the landscape of the Caribbean relate to Rachel's journey? Do you think Rachel sees nature as benevolent, malign, or something in-between?

