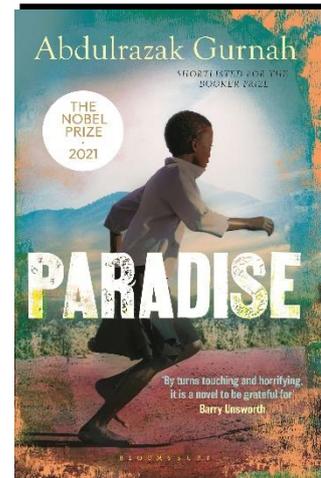




Reading Group Guide

PARADISE

ABDULRAZAK GURNAH

**In brief**

A beautiful story of African life, from the winner of the Nobel Prize in Literature 2021.

In detail

Born in East Africa, Yusuf has few qualms about the journey he is to make. It never occurs to him to ask why he is accompanying Uncle Aziz or why the trip has been organised so suddenly, and he does not think to ask when he will be returning. But the truth is that his 'uncle' is a rich and powerful merchant and Yusuf has been pawned to him to pay his father's debts.

Paradise is a rich tapestry of myth, dreams and Biblical and Koranic tradition, the story of a young boy's coming of age against the backdrop of an Africa increasingly corrupted by colonialism and violence.

Author Biography

Abdulrazak Gurnah is the winner of the Nobel Prize in Literature 2021. He is the author of ten novels: *Memory of Departure*, *Pilgrims Way*, *Dottie*, *Paradise* (shortlisted for the Booker Prize and the Whitbread Award), *Admiring Silence*, *By the Sea* (longlisted for the Booker Prize and shortlisted for the Los Angeles Times Book Award), *Desertion* (shortlisted for the Commonwealth Writers' Prize) *The Last Gift*, *Gravel Heart*, and *Afterlives*, which was shortlisted for the Orwell Prize for Fiction 2021 and longlisted for the Walter Scott Prize. He was Professor of English at the University of Kent, and was a Man Booker Prize judge in 2016. He lives in Canterbury.

Further Reading

Afterlives – Abdulrazak Gurnah

The Memory of Love – Aminatta Forna

Do Not Disturb – Michaela Wrong

The Fisherman – Chigozie Obioma

Measuring Time – Helon Habila

Burger's Daughter – Nadine Gordimer

'Many layered, violent, beautiful and strange ... a poetic and vividly conjured book about Africa and the brooding power of the unknown'

Independent on Sunday

'An aural archive of a lost Africa ... Tangling travel adventures, social documentary, political indictment and a doomed love story ... Paradise is alive with the unexpected. In it, an obliterated world is enthrallingly retrieved'

Sunday Times



Questions

1. Yusuf says that he wishes his parents told him that they were in debt. Do you feel it would have been better for Yusuf to know/not know?
2. What did you think of Yusuf's and Khalil's relationship?
3. Do you think Yusuf is a reliable narrator and why?
4. **"Do you know why they're so strong? Because they have been feeding off the world for centuries. Your grumbling won't stop them"**. Colonialism is a key theme explored within this book. How do the characters deal with it?
5. Yusuf's beauty is highlighted throughout the book by both men and women. Do you often see male characters described as such?
6. Abdulrazak Gurnah ends the book on a cliff-hanger, how would you have liked the story to end?
7. **Paradise** is described as a 'coming of age' story, would you agree and why?
8. What do you think Yusuf's idea of paradise is?
9. **"Yusuf's beauty both liberates him and keeps him a prisoner"** do you agree?
10. Would you describe Yusuf and Amina's relationship as a love story?

'Paradise is that rare thing, a novel that is totally convincing in the vivid physical world it presents, yet transcending that world and reaching into the universal. Folk tale, travel story, drama of love and loss, by turns touching and horrifying, it is a novel to be grateful for'

BARRY UNSWORTH