

Book Club Kit Discussion Guide
Queen Sugar
By Natalie Baszile

Author:

Natalie Baszile holds an MFA from the Warren Wilson Program for Writers and an MA in Afro American Studies from UCLA. She lives in San Francisco with her family. This is her first novel. (*From the publisher.*)

Summary:

Charley Bordelon is a widowed single mother who is just barely scraping by, teaching art to inner city kids and living in a dilapidated rented bungalow in Los Angeles. But when she discovers that her late father has left her an 800-acre sugar cane plantation in rural Louisiana, she suddenly sees a chance to steer her life back on course. No one in the family had any idea that Ernest Bordelon sold everything he had in order to secure a cane farm outside his tiny hometown of Saint Josephine, and certainly no clue as to why. With nothing left to lose, Charley decides to honor her father's wishes and heads south to start her new life as a sugar cane farmer. So begins *Queen Sugar*, the debut novel from Natalie Baszile that charts Charley's successes and struggles as a novice farmer, as a dedicated mother and a grieving daughter, and as an African American woman in the Deep South. (*From the publisher.*)

Questions:

1. What is the future for Charley and Remy?
2. Race plays a major role in *Queen Sugar*, affecting the characters in both overt and subtle ways. How does the challenge of being African American in Southern Louisiana vary from character to character? Consider the separate experiences of Denton, Ralph Angel, Charley, and Micah.
3. What is the reason behind Miss Honey's constant support for and forgiveness of Ralph Angel?
4. Why is Charley so reluctant to ask her mother Lorna for help?
5. Both Ralph Angel and Charley have lost a spouse. How does each person face that loss and loneliness? In what ways are their approaches similar, and how are they different?
6. What is the significance of *The Cane Farmer* to Charley? Why did her father give it to her?
7. Why was it so important to Charley's father to own those particular acres of sugar cane?
8. Charley speaks of the satisfaction of farming—the hard work, the beauty of the land, the sense of accomplishment. Is there anything in your life that provides you with a similar sense of satisfaction?
9. It takes a great deal of bravery for Charley to completely overhaul her life—move to a different state, start a new job, and make a new home. What is the scariest thing you've ever faced?
10. Who was your favorite character and why?
11. Charley faces a lot of obstacles through the course of the novel. What do you see as the most significant milestone in her development as a character?