

Princess of the Hither Isles

A BLACK SUFFRAGIST'S STORY FROM THE JIM CROW SOUTH

Discussion Questions

1. The author employs a blend of deep historical research, family lore, and literary imagination to bring her own grandmother, the black suffragist Adella Hunt Logan to life. What do you think of this genre-defying approach?
2. What do Adella's experiences suggest about the importance, efficacy, and possible pitfalls of interracial relationships?
3. Discuss the importance of family as a determining factor in Adella's world and in the black community.
4. In the context of contemporary thinking and parlance, discuss whether Adella Hunt Logan should be characterized as a black feminist.
5. Adella's life includes both extraordinary achievement and significant tragedy. How does she cope with loss and stress at various stages of her life?
6. Even though they have many privileges compared to other African Americans of their time, Adella and her family face racial discrimination in all aspects of their lives. What has changed? What has stayed the same?
7. Adella endures two risky and unwanted pregnancies following a nephrectomy (kidney removal), a complicated and dangerous procedure. How does this experience impact her views on women's right to control their own bodies? How does the requirement that her husband provide permission for this serious medical procedure affect Adella's thinking?
8. The book includes instances when Adella passes as white, as well as occasions when she corrects people who misidentify her as a white woman. Discuss the ways Adella and members of her mixed-race family navigate the complex racial landscape. Does passing for white constitute a moral betrayal of the African American community?
9. The biases of prominent activists of her time—people she worked with and otherwise admired—disappoint Adella on several occasions. Both Susan B. Anthony's racism and Booker T. Washington's sexism frustrate her. How does Adella handle these situations? How might she handle them differently today?
10. Instances of sexual abuse of girls and women by powerful men appear throughout the book. Discuss the ways sexual misconduct and violence are handled in Adella's world and in her time. How do racial factors play an exacerbating role with respect to such abuse? Have things changed? How?
11. Adella's struggle to juggle motherhood, marriage, a demanding career, economic strictures, and a compelling moral and political mission feels very contemporary. How do her experiences resemble or differ from those faced by American women today?
12. How does Adella's Cherokee background affect her life and thinking? What did you learn about the places and roles of Native Americans in the racial, social, political, and economic hierarchy of 19th-century America?
13. Adella is involved in debates over the nature and scope of higher education for African Americans. What did you learn about the early years of America's historically black colleges and universities? How have educational opportunities changed for black students, male and female, since Adella's time?