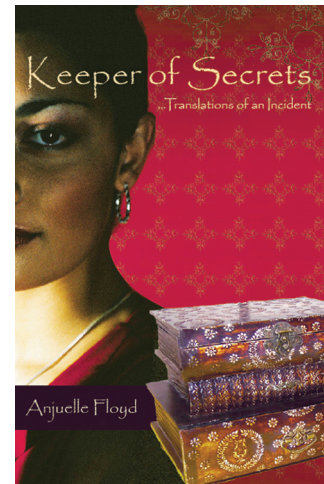


## Reading Group Discussion Guide

### Keeper of Secrets...Translations of an Incident by Anjuelle Floyd

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### Discussion Questions

1. Alfreida's approval/disapproval is a constant thread running through Raven's life—to what extent are the major life decisions she makes in this story either an acquiescence to or rebellion against Alfreida's wishes? How does this affect Raven's view of herself ("Dancing Siva")
2. What does Alfreida's urging of Raven to have the abortion indicate about her guilt over her illegitimate children? Why is Alfreida so insistent that Raven is her child, and hers alone? How would admitting the paternity of Raven affect Alfreida's authority over the household?
3. "Raven had interceded into Fiona's argument out of a desire for silence." (38) What role does this silence play in Raven's life? What is this silence for which Raven yearns? How does silence play into spirituality and emotional relationships?
4. Why does Raven loathe her flickering green eyes? Why is she hesitant to display anger or excitement in front of the significant men of her life?
5. Alfreida tells Raven "the road between hope and reality runs wide. All parents have plans for their children." (46) What did each of these women, as mothers, hope for their children? How did they succeed? How did they fail? How did Alfreida's shortcomings as a mother shape Raven's goals for herself as a mother?
6. What does the recurring figure of Siva signify thematically in "Dancing Siva" and in the book as a whole?
7. What is it about the pink-haired woman's threats toward her husband with the knife that reminds Lahni so vividly of the murder she committed in Nigeria and her mother's death? What were all three women defending? ("Keeper of Secrets")
8. Why does Lahni find safety in Nwoyé's blindness? To what degree has Lahni's secret-keeping affected the closeness she has with the people in her life—is she purposefully blinding them to her true self?

9. Lahni ultimately discovers, with Nwoyé's support, that "a person's truths, however treacherous or sad, defined them, served as the glue holding all intact, but also bound that person to those entrusted with holding their confidence, keeping their secrets." (63) Do you agree? Are there times that the truth does need to be withheld? Discuss the characters in this book you feel have the most devastating secrets and evaluate how eventually telling the truth affected them and their relationships.
10. How do Raven, Lahni, and Sahel all deal differently with being torn between loving two different men?
11. Why did Reynard avoid forgiveness and meditation for so long? In what ways was he trapped in a cycle of anger? ("The Object of Compassion")
12. What is the connection between Michael's recurring visions of the Ascension of Christ and the Annunciation of Mary and "the reality of his two selves"? (114) How do they merge? ("The Bridge")
13. Discuss the role religion plays in each story, especially how characters use it privately or publicly.
14. Ariane's "life revolved around death and dying, the certain and the unavoidable." (123) How does she confront death, and more importantly, life, in the course of this story? ("Three Movements")
15. What does Ariane's saying goodbye to Gayle's reflection in the mirror signify about her new approach to life? What had Gayle come to represent in her life?
16. Compare and contrast how Raven in "Dancing Siva" and Trey in "Myrandha" deal with the discovery that their fathers were not who they thought they were. How is this discovery affected by their own painful childhood memories and their current complicated life situations? How do they come to view their parents as people—real and fallible human beings?
17. Discuss the role of the supernatural in this book (visions, ghost figures, guiding dreams, etc.) How does Anjuelle Floyd treat these subjects in her writing—matter-of-factly, with suspicion, with awe? What does her literary treatment of these subjects seem to indicate about how she views the supernatural on a day-to-day basis?
18. Evaluate how the main characters of each story view the incident of the pink-haired woman with the knife. How do they see their own story reflected in the woman's actions?
19. What does Lisa mean when she tells Daryl, "This war is too close to home"? (174) ("In Baghdad") Discuss this question in terms of racial identity, especially concerning Daryl's guilt over accidentally killing one of his own men at war.
20. For which characters in the book do you think the issue of race is the most powerful? What about their situation or outlook makes this the case?