



THE GIRL WHO SAW LIONS

DISCUSSION GUIDE
& CREATIVE
ACTIVITIES

BERLIE DOHERTY
WINNER OF THE CARNEGIE MEDAL

ABOUT THE BOOK

Two girls, from very different places, are brought together in a tale of loss, courage and family. Abela has lost everything, and now she must leave her home in Tanzania and flee to Britain. Rosa's struggling to cope with her mum's wish to adopt a child. When they are brought together, will Abela and Rosa ever be able to love one another like sisters?

From the Carnegie Medal-winning author Berlie Doherty, *The Girl Who Saw Lions* is a powerful and moving story, inspired by the author's visit to Africa.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Berlie Doherty is a novelist, playwright, children's author and poet. She has won the Carnegie Medal twice, for *Granny was a Buffer Girl* and *Dear Nobody*. Her work is published all over the world, and many of her books have been televised. Follow her on Twitter: [@BerlieDoherty](https://twitter.com/BerlieDoherty)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This novel is told from the perspectives of two characters, Abela and Rosa. What impact does this have on how you see the story and the people in it?

In the beginning, Abela's mother is very sick, but we don't learn until later that the disease she has is HIV/Aids. Abela only has a child's understanding of the disease and her mother's death. Discuss the ways in which storytelling choices such as these deepen your sympathy for Abela.

In chapter 11, Abela undergoes a ritual procedure that her grandmother (Bibi) describes as getting her 'clean'. In Britain, it is known as 'female genital mutilation' (FGM), and is illegal because it is a dangerous procedure which causes girls a lot of pain and medical complications such as infection. Ask your teacher or librarian to help you find out more about FGM. Why do you think Bibi agrees to make Abela undergo FGM? How does it make you feel about Bibi overall?

Think about the different lives that Rosa and Abela lead in the novel. Look particularly at things like clothing, housing, education and medicine. How does this novel make you reflect on the different circumstances for young girls in the UK and in developing countries like Tanzania?

Uncle Thomas and Susie come up with a scheme to traffic Abela into the UK. Consider the characters of Thomas and Susie: why do they each decide to do this to Abela? How do you feel about Thomas and Susie throughout the story?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

At the beginning of her story, Rosa is very unhappy about her mother's decision to adopt a child. Discuss the reasons for Rosa's feelings of rejection, and how she changes throughout the book.

Think about the things Abela is able to bring with her to the UK: her forged passport, medical certificate, kanga, Coca-Cola car and key-ring. Discuss what each of these objects mean to Abela, and why they are important to her.

After escaping Susie's flat, Abela is put into foster care by the local authority. She finds settling in very difficult. Think again about the events of chapters 13, 15, 17, 19 and 23, when Abela is living with the Oladipo family. Why does she feel so lonely and angry, and how do things change after she runs away?

The Girl Who Saw Lions is told in both first person (Abela and Rosa's points of view) and in third person (a narrator tells the reader what is happening). Why do you think the author chose to write the novel in this way? Think about what effect it has on what the reader knows and when, compared with what the characters know.

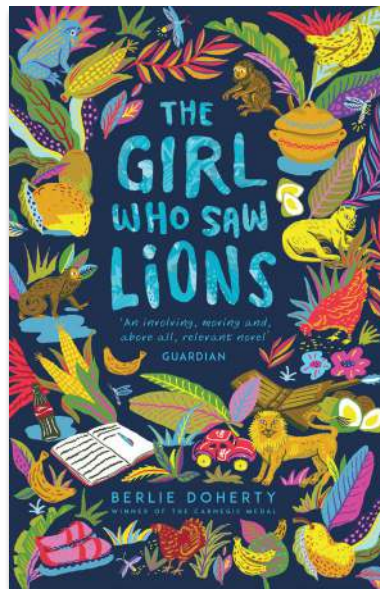
In the end, Rosa's mum adopts Abela and the two girls become sisters. How do your expectations change as the story develops? Did you expect the ending to be happy or sad?

CREATIVE ACTIVITIES

Write a short story, told from the perspective of two characters from different backgrounds, who end up meeting in some way. It could be characters from different countries, or characters with different interests or beliefs, or even a person and an animal.

Design a cover for *The Girl Who Saw Lions*. Think about the different sides of the story, and the many people and things that appear in it. Consider how to give a sense of the story, while keeping the design eye-catching and interesting to someone who hasn't yet read it.

Write a letter from Rosa to her newly adopted sister Abela before she comes to live with her. What things would Rosa tell her? How should she phrase things, given that Abela is ten years old and English is her second language?



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