



Half-Blood Blues

Esi Edugyan

Discussion Questions

1. What was your impression of the book when you first began reading? What did you think of the use of the vernacular?
2. Have you ever before read about the Afro-German experience during World War II? What struck you most about this experience?
3. To what end does the novel take the reader back and forth in time and place, from Berlin to Paris in the 1930s and 40s and Europe in the 1990s? How does this affect the reader?
4. Delilah is a major female character in an otherwise largely male populated novel. How does she push against the gender relations in the novel, and how does her romantic involvement with the other characters affect the reader's sense of her character? Would you describe her as an early feminist?
5. Do you think that Sid, the narrator, is at the heart of *Half Blood Blues*? Whose novel is this?
6. *Half-Blood Blues* explores, among other things, the jazz era of the 1930s. In what ways does jazz affect the novel's structure, the voice of its characters, the tone of the book?
7. One reviewer criticized the novel on the grounds that the Afro-German experience has been sidelined. How does telling Hiero's story from the point-of-view of a different character affect it? What are the moral implications of doing so?
8. There are many examples of female authors who have chosen to write from a male perspective, and vice versa. To what end do you believe the author chose to write this novel from a purely male perspective? How might *Half-Blood Blues* be a different novel if it were written using the female voice—say, if it were told by Delilah—or using a third person narrative?
9. What do you think of the end of the novel? What would you tell someone this book is about?





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About the Author

Esi Edugyan is a Canadian novelist, born and raised in Calgary, Alberta, to Ghanaian immigrant parents. She studied creative writing at the University of Victoria and Johns Hopkins University before publishing her debut novel, *The Second Life of Samuel Tyne*, in 2004.

Published in 2011, *Half-Blood Blues* was shortlisted for that year's Man Booker Prize, Scotiabank Giller Prize, Rogers Writers' Trust Fiction Prize, and Governor General's Award for English language fiction. She was one of two Canadian writers, alongside Patrick deWitt, to make all four award lists in 2011. On November 8, 2011 she won the Giller Prize. Again, alongside deWitt, *Half-Blood Blues* was also shortlisted for the 2012 Walter Scott Prize for historical fiction. In April 2012, *Half-Blood Blues* also won an Anisfield-Wolf Book Award.

Edugyan lives in Victoria, British Columbia, and is married to novelist and poet Steven Price.