

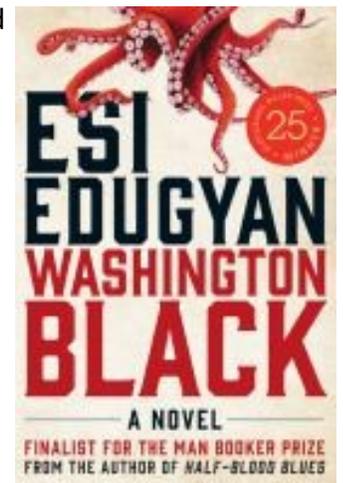


Washington Black

Esi Edugyan

Discussion Questions

1. Big Kit tells Washington that “If you dead, you wake up again in your homeland. You wake up free.” How does this line resonate at the end of the book, in the final moments as Wash asks about Dahomey and looks out into the horizon?
2. Why do you think Big Kit didn’t tell Wash that she was his mother? Do you think he would have responded to Titch’s offer differently had he known? How might his life have been different?
3. Another secret kept in the novel is when Philip delays giving Titch the news of his father’s death—which turns out not to be true. How does this lie compare to Big Kit’s? How is Titch’s response different from Wash’s?
4. Wash describes his scar from the explosion with the Cloud Cutter as “the utter destruction [that] his act had now wrought upon my life.” Discuss the kinds of scars the characters sustain in the novel, both visible and invisible.
5. Tanna tells Wash, “You are like an interruption in a novel, Wash. The agent that sets things off course. Like a hailstorm. Or a wedding.” How does this metaphor manifest in literal and symbolic ways throughout Wash’s journeys?
6. How is Wash sometimes manipulated by those around him? Who would you say is the worst offender? As one example, consider the bounty Erasmus puts on his head. Do you believe Titch’s remark that it was more a way to get back at Titch than a desire to find Wash?
7. Titch’s confession about how he treated Philip as a boy reveals a new side of him to Wash. Does this revelation lead you to feel more or less compassion toward him? Does it complicate his relationship with Wash?





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About the Author

Esi Edugyan is a Ghanaian Canadian novelist whose work has become an influential part of the Canadian literary canon. Imbued with an interest in Black histories and the Black diaspora, her novels explore ideas of nation and belonging — to new and old cultures and countries, to “here” and “away,” to the present and the past. They also examine the effects of Black migration and the resulting presence of Black subjects in predominantly white societies. Her novels *Half-Blood Blues* (2011) and *Washington Black* (2018) both won the Scotiabank Giller Prize, making her only the third writer (with Alice Munro and M.J. Vassanji) to win the award twice.

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