

Dear Reader,

Like most people, I am never sure if I am using my time well. No-most of the time, I know I am not using my time well. Wasted years. Squandered hours. Example: this is the tenth version of this introduction I've written.

Time is so hard to spend wisely.

Not that you'd know if you had. Even in retrospect, when all is said and done, and the pieces have fallen into place—and all those other trite phrases that speak to the predetermined nature of time—you're still not quite sure it was all for the best. That you chose well. That by the end, when whatever god holding open the gate to eternity then judges your years, you will be given full marks for the choices you've made.

There are many reasons why I wrote *The Vanished Birds*, and this "anxiety of time" is but one of them. But it is central. It is the question that most of the characters of the novel ask themselves: whether or not they will by the end be satisfied with the story of their life.

I know that it is no small matter, how one chooses to spend one's time.

There are so many books.

Today, you chose to spend your time with *The Vanished Birds*; for that I am so thrilled, and so thankful. It is a work I am proud of. And I hope what every author hopes for their work: that come the last page, when all is said and done, and the pieces of the story have fallen into place, and the book has had its say, you will feel your time well spent in its company.

With warm regards, Simon Jimenez



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. We first meet Nia through Kaeda, as she weaves in and out of his life in set fifteen-year intervals. Did you like this style of introduction?

- 2. There are many themes running throughout the book, both societal—the effects of climate change, capitalism, and colonialism—and personal—the navigation of identity, relationships, and otherness. Which themes resonated most strongly with you?
- **3.** Nia, Ahro, and Fumiko each experience isolation; how do you feel that loneliness affected and shaped each character?
- **4.** Relationships—platonic and romantic—are an important aspect of *The Vanished Birds* and each character's growth. Which relationship did you connect with most?
- 5. Share a favorite quote from the book. Why did this stand out to you?
- **6.** The book's timeline covers millennia. Do you feel that the author created a believable version of the future?
- 7. The end of the novel sees the characters' goals being met, but leaves their future open-ended. How did you feel about this ending?