



Book Club Kit

Discussion Questions

1. In the beginning of the book, Petra says, “Yes, I love thinking about beginnings. I don’t like endings, though I suppose I’m like most people in that. An ending can be staring you right in the face without you knowing it.” Do you feel the same way? What do you think about the beginnings and endings in this novel?
2. Discuss Petra and Alikí’s relationship. Why do you think there is a push/pull nature to their dynamic? How do mothers and daughters often lose and find each other?
3. The line “You see, I thought you were a different person” repeats throughout the novel. Why? In what ways are the characters often different people than they appear?
4. What did you think of the shifting perspectives in the story? What about the chapter breaks in italics? Why do you think the author decided to structure the novel this way?
5. Lefteri writes, “Now that I could hear this woman’s song—a melody that told a story I couldn’t understand—I hoped with all of my heart that it wasn’t too late.” What role does song play in the novel and what do you think it symbolizes? How are voice and sound used throughout *Songbirds*?
6. Lefteri describes the book as being about entrapment. How are each of the characters—Yiannis, Petra, Alikí, and Nisha—trapped in different ways? How do some of them break free?

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7. Discuss the treatment of domestic workers in the novel. Why do you think Petra never really saw Nisha until she disappeared? How does the treatment of domestic workers in Cypress compare to that of maids and housecleaners in the United States? Did this book make you reconsider those dynamics?
8. *Songbirds* shifts perspectives between those of Petra and Yuannis but never shows Nisha's—a decision the author made intentionally. Read the author's note at the back of the book and discuss. Do you think Nisha should have had her own voice, or do you agree with how the author handled this?
9. "You see, when you clump people together and don't understand their personal stories, you can make up any bullshit and convince yourself it's the truth." Do you agree with this statement? How does this apply to migrants and other groups of people in the United States? How does Lefteri use personal stories to confront big issues?
10. What did you learn from reading *Songbirds*? How did the book impact you?
11. If you read Christy Lefteri's 2019 novel, *The Beekeeper of Aleppo*, how does *Songbirds* compare? In what ways are the books similar and in what ways different?
12. If you're interested in learning more about the real-life disappearances of domestic workers in Cypress, read this article: [*The New York Times: Domestic Workers are Killed in Cypress, and Authorities Face a Reckoning.*](#)