

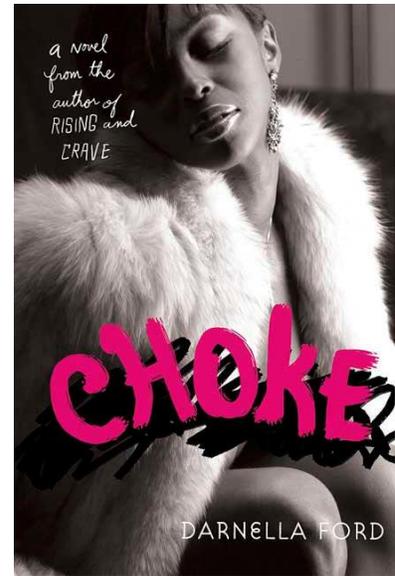
READING GROUP GUIDE

Choke

By Darnella Ford

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About this Guide

The following author biography and list of questions about *Choke* are intended as resources to aid individual readers and book groups who would like to learn more about the author and this book. We hope that this guide will provide you a starting place for discussion, and suggest a variety of perspectives from which you might approach *Choke*.

About the Book

El Mirage — for Vanessa, the low income housing complex in the middle of the Arizona desert represents everything that’s wrong with her life. Her neighbors get it on all night, she sees an abusive husband kill his wife and himself in the courtyard, and her own deadbeat ex-husband keeps showing up and getting into her pants.

The one bright spot is her daughter Kennedy’s piano practice as she prepares to try out for an esteemed music academy. But Vanessa can’t afford to send her, especially after losing her housekeeping job when cranky old Miss Gregory bites the dust. Vanessa isn’t one to give up, though. And she’ll do anything to help Kennedy pursue a better life, even if it means sacrificing her own chances...

About the Author

Darnella Ford, the author of *Crave* and *Rising*, is a spoken-word artist. She performs regularly in the Los Angeles area, where she lives with her daughter. She is currently at work on her next novel.



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Discussion Questions

1. What was the nature of Vanessa's relationship to Yolie and Anese? What was your perception of their connection?
2. What do you believe motivated each woman, and do you believe their motives were similar or connected?
3. Do you identify with the struggles of single mothers in America? If so, what do you think is the greatest challenge facing single mothers and their children today?
4. In your own estimation, how would you critique and/or evaluate Vanessa, Yolie, and Anese's parenting styles?
5. Explore the following relationships: Vanessa and David; Anese and the "Big Black Man"; Yolie and the married man
6. Can you identify with any of these relationships? Why or why not?
7. Which of the women did you personally relate to the most? Why?
8. Why do you feel the women chose to be escorts? Do you feel they had other options? Was it an easy out? Ultimately, how do you feel about their choices? Why?
9. How did escorting affect Vanessa's life? Self-esteem? Relationships? Her ultimate destiny?
10. What do you feel was the moral or central theme of the story?
11. In the end, who, if anyone, found redemption? Why?

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