

CROSSINGS

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Discussion Questions

1. Right from the opening line, appropriation is a major theme in *Crossings*. How does the novel explore this theme? And to what end?
2. The conceit of the crossing allows the reader to inhabit the bodies of characters of a variety of cultures, sexualities, genders, classes, and races. What does the novel have to say about identity?
3. Discuss how *Crossings* challenges the reader's ability to distinguish the real from the fake, and why this might be important.
4. *Crossings* traverses 150 years and seven lifetimes in under four hundred pages. Discuss how language, form, and genre are used to drive the narrative forward across this timeframe.
5. "I am Alula. I am the one who remembers. You are Koahu. You are the one who forgets." Memory and forgetting are major themes. Discuss how past and present relate in the novel. *Crossings* is preoccupied with history. What kind of history is the book interested in, and why?
6. Alula believes Koahu forgets his previous lives when he crosses, except in his dreams. And yet if he cannot remember his previous selves, what claim does he have to being the person she says he is? How does the novel suggest identity might be possible without memory?
7. If Alula decides on the spur of the moment to cross with Joubert as a desperate act of love, what does she learn about love as a result of her decision?
8. What role do morality and ethics play in *Crossings*? Is there a moral to the novel?
9. What is the nature of the relationship between Balthazar and Artopoulos? And is Artopoulos's final judgment of Balthazar—"You are evil!"—justified?
10. The narrator of "City of Ghosts" claims to fall in love with Madeleine even though he disbelieves everything she believes. Is it truly possible to fall in love with someone whose belief system is so different to one's own that one questions their capacity to reason?
11. *Crossings* is, in fact, two books, with two beginnings, middles, and ends. They're quite different from each other, but they consist of exactly the same words. What is the effect of this structure? Which is the better book? Could a third sequence be envisaged?
12. *Crossings* may be a fantasy concept, but what corollaries does it have in our real lives? What religion or other belief system does crossing most resemble?