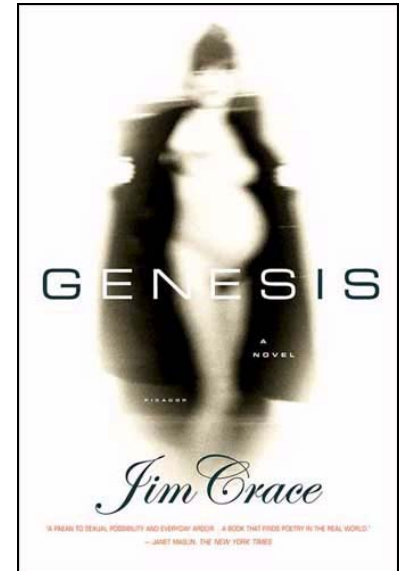


# READING GROUP GUIDE

## *Genesis* by Jim Crace



ISBN: 0-312-42389-6

### About the Book

In *Genesis*, Jim Crace, author of *Being Dead* (winner of the 2000 National Book Critics Award), provocatively examines the complex connections between love, sex and procreation. Felix “Lix” Dern is a renowned actor, irresistible to women, ferociously fertile, and, fortunately for him, “surprisingly shy and timid.” By his mid forties, he’s slept with only five women – a jilted mistress; an overweight, insecure and wealthy activist; a narcissistic actress; a controlling and dominating rebel, and her self-effacing cousin – impregnating all of them. Exploring the manipulations and responsibilities that accompany sexual relationships, *Genesis* is an incisive and humane fable, once again demonstrating why *The New York Times* has described Crace as “the most original and interesting of living British writers.”

### Discussion Questions

1. *Genesis* is comprised of seven chapters, beginning and ending with number 6. What is the significance of structuring the novel like this? Does it affect your experience of the story and the characters? Why? Can you see another way of organizing it? How? Discuss the different ways that writers can use chapters as a narrative device.
2. Where does the story take place? Does the final paragraph of the novel clarify the story’s setting? Why or why not?
3. How would you describe the tone of *Genesis*? Is the mood somber, playful or a combination of both? Explain. In addition, did you find the story realistic, fantastic, or a mix of the two? Explain.
4. How does Lix’s birthmark function as a symbol and metaphor in the story? What was your initial impression of Lix? Did it change over the course of the novel? Explain how and why?

5. Do you think it's significant to the story that Lix is an actor? Why?
6. Which of the five women – Mouetta, the lady at the café, An, Alicja, Freda – in Lix's life did you find most compelling? Explain. What do you think attracts Lix to each of them at the different points in his life? In what ways are the women different and/or similar? Is there one that you think is best suited for Lix? Why might Lix agree or disagree with you?
7. On page 45, Mouetta initiates a game with Lix at the Palm and Orchid House, asking him which of the female customers he would most like to sleep with. Why does she do this? Compare this with, beginning on page 187, the game of Never that Alicja and Lix play. Could you imagine playing such games with your spouse or partner? Why or why not? What might Crace be saying about relationships with these games?
8. "She meant the passion of their marriage to endure," Crace writes of Alicja on page 195. "But passion is not meant to endure. The overture is short or else it's not the overture. Nor is marriage meant to be perfect. It has to toughen on its blemishes. It has to morph and change its shape and turn its insides out and move beyond passion that is its architect. Falling in love is not being in love. Waiting for the perfect partner is self-sabotage." Do you agree? Why or why not? How does Alicja fail or succeed to live up to her own ideals? How can ideals both help and hinder human relationships?
9. How would you answer Alicja's question to herself on page 196, "To want your husband as an undemanding friend and a reliable relative but not a lover, was that the first sign that love was lost?"
10. In chapter five, Lix wonders if he and Freda might still be together if he had not got her pregnant (page 229). What do you think? Why? What does he learn about himself and his reproductive power by the novel's end? How does his emotional and psychological journey connect with the book's title, *Genesis*?

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