Olive The Lionheart
by Brad Ricca

Olive the Lionheart is an adventurous love story that takes place across colonial Africa as a single woman searches for the answers to the fate of her lost fiancée. Brad Ricca tells the true, unforgettable story of Olive MacLeod through accounts of her journey, local African sources, and her personal diaries and journals.

These questions are designed to act as a guide to your reading group’s own discussion.

Questions for Discussion

1) Why do you think Olive ended up where she did (and with whom)? Were you completely surprised or did it make sense? Did it remind you of a famous novel? Why do you think she made this choice? Do you think she was happy?

2) At the end of the book, a newspaper account about Olive claimed that “All the World is Kin.” What do you think she meant by this? What brought her to this conclusion — and perhaps led her in the direction her life followed afterward? Was this a radical notion in the early twentieth century? Has it changed much?

3) How did Olive’s status as a woman affect her journey? Did it hinder or empower her?

4) What did you think of Olive’s visions? Do you think they were real or that she imagined them? Why did she continue to write letters to Boyd? Why did she stop?

5) In the opening chapters and near the end, we get a glimpse of the relationship between Olive and her sister Flora. What did you make of their relationship, both what is shared by her and by what is left unsaid?

6) Why did Olive write? Do you think she meant for her work to be discovered or do you think it was meant for her alone? Do you think Olive would or would not be pleased that her story has been told this way?

7) Olive’s adventure in Africa takes place during the height of colonialism, which was devastating to African resources, its cultures, and, most important, its people. Does Olive write about this or ignore it? How does Olive fit into this? Was she a colonialist herself? Or an observer? Or even an ally? Or something else entirely?

8) Why do you think Boyd was in Africa? Does your opinion of him change throughout the book? Do you think Olive’s opinion of him did? Why?

9) The journey that Olive and the Talbots take across Africa was dangerous — what do you think was their most harrowing moment?

10) What do you think is Olive’s greatest accomplishment? Why has she been utterly forgotten by history? Do you think that was a mistake, or because of something else?

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