

skin & bones

Reading Group Guide

1. During Lena's doctor's appointment at the beginning of the book, she states that there is "always a lesson from Honey and Grandma about taking care of myself, but never for myself." What is the significance of this phrase?
2. *skin & bones* explores living through various types of grief—grieving the loss of loved ones, grieving the loss of relationships, and grieving loss of home due to gentrification. What part does community play in Lena's grieving?
3. In meetings with her work colleagues for Portland: Black, Lena readily and confidently speaks up and speaks out in interest of the business. Why may she find it easier to do that over speaking up for herself in other areas?
4. How does the novel explore the intersection of motherhood, race, and body image?
5. When Lena is thinking about her relationship with Malcolm early in the book, she says that she knew she loved him when she realized they could survive Wednesdays. What is your interpretation of a "2:26pm Wednesday kind of love"?

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6. What are the different ways that Lena's relationships with her friends, coworkers, and family influence her struggles with her body image? How does Lena grapple with internalized messages about beauty standards?
7. How does the setting of Portland, Oregon contribute to the story? How does Watson make Portland itself a significant character in the novel?
8. What is the significance of Malcolm's sermon in "harvest"? How does it relate to Lena's father's speech in "sunday sermon" and the novel as a whole?
9. What are your thoughts on Lena's relationship with Bryan versus her relationship with Malcolm?
10. How does *skin & bones* explore the impact of societal beauty standards on Black women, particularly in relation to body image and self-worth? What do Lena and Aaliyah's stories tell us about how these standards get passed down through generations?