

# BOOK CLUB in a bag



## Gingerbread

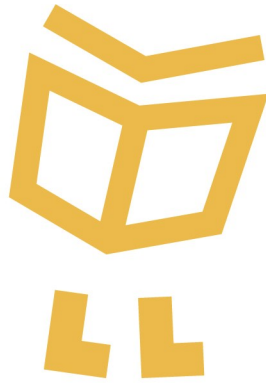
Helen Oyeyemi

### Discussion Questions

1. How did you experience the book? Were you engaged immediately, or did it take you a while to get into it? How did you feel reading it—amused, sad, disturbed, confused, bored...?
2. Describe the main characters—personality traits, motivations, and inner qualities. Why do characters do what they do? Are their actions justified? How has the past shaped their lives?
3. Are the main characters dynamic—changing or maturing by the end of the book? Do they learn about themselves, how the world works and their role in it?
4. Discuss the plot. Is it engaging—do you find the story interesting? Is this a plot-driven book—a fast-paced page-turner? Does the plot unfold slowly with a focus on character? Were you surprised by complications, twists & turns? Did you find the plot predictable, even formulaic?
5. Talk about the book's structure. Is it a continuous story...or interlocking short stories? Does the time-line move forward chronologically? Does time shift back & forth from past to present? Is there a single viewpoint or shifting viewpoints? Why might the author have chosen to tell the story the way he or she did? What difference does the structure make in the way you read or understand the book?
6. What main ideas—themes—does the author explore? (Consider the title, often a clue to a theme.) Does the author use symbols to reinforce the main ideas?
7. Is the ending satisfying? If so, why? If not, why not...and how would you change it?



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## About the Author

Helen Olajumoke Oyeyemi is a British author with several novels to her name. She was born in Nigeria and raised in London, England. Oyeyemi studied Social and Political Sciences at Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, graduating in 2006. While at Cambridge, two of her plays, *Juniper's Whitening* and *Victimese*, were performed by fellow students to critical acclaim and subsequently published by Methuen. She wrote her first novel, *The Icarus Girl*, while still at school studying for her A levels at Cardinal Vaughan Memorial School. In 2007 Bloomsbury published her second novel, *The Opposite House* which is inspired by Cuban mythology. Her third novel, *White is for Witching*, described as having "roots in Henry James and Edgar Allan Poe" was published in 2009. It was a 2009 Shirley Jackson Award finalist and won a 2010 Somerset Maugham Award. *Mr Fox*, Oyeyemi's fourth novel was published in 2011. Aimee Bender said in a New York Times review: "Charm is a quality that overflows in this novel." Kirkus Reviews, however thought that while readers might consider *Mr. Fox* "an intellectual tour de force," they might also find it "emotionally chilly." Oyeyemi's fifth novel, *Boy, Snow, Bird*, published in 2014, is a retelling of Snow White, set in Massachusetts in the 1950s. *What Is Not Yours Is Not Yours*, released in 2016, is a collection of intertwined stories, all involving locks and keys.

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