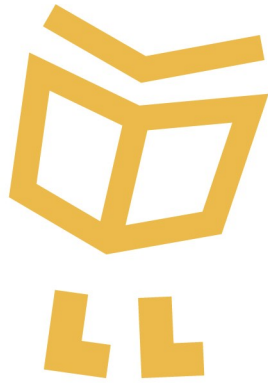


BOOK CLUB in a bag

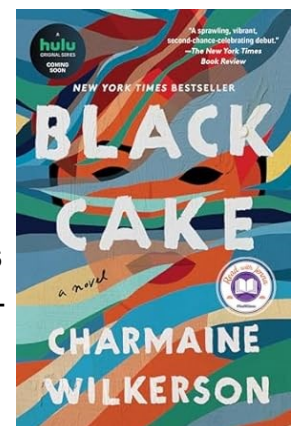


Black Cake

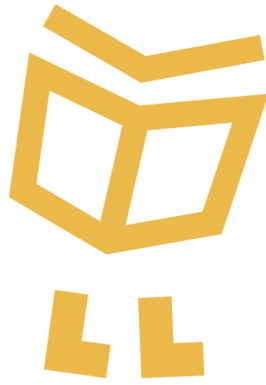
Charmaine Wilkerson

Discussion Questions

1. In *Black Cake*, Eleanor Bennett leaves behind a voice recording for her children, disclosing the story of her life. What was the most surprising part of her past for you? The saddest? The most interesting?
2. Secrets are a huge part of the novel. Why do you think Eleanor kept her story from her children for so long and only shared it posthumously? What do you think is more complicated: the secrets you keep or the secrets you share?
3. Eleanor wanted Mr. Mitch, Benny, and Byron to listen to the voice message she left behind when all together. Why do you think she specifically made this request? What would have been different if Benny and Byron had listened to everything separately?
4. What was your favorite part of the story? Favorite location and time period? The character who interested you the most?
5. Black cake was a Bennett family recipe, made for weddings, anniversaries, Christmas, and other special occasions. Do you have a traditional family recipe? What does it mean to you?
6. Benny recalls her first memory of Byron: *“They are sitting on the couch, she is settled under her brother’s arm, and Byron is reciting adventure stories to her from a book. His feet can already touch the floor.”*
7. Discuss Benny and Byron’s relationship. Why was it complicated? How had they grown apart after being so close? If you have siblings, did you understand the push and pull of this relationship?
8. Eleanor didn’t tell Bert about her firstborn daughter out of fear of what he might think, just as Benny was afraid to disclose details of her sexuality. Do you find this fear to be reasonable given all the love Benny and Eleanor receive from their family? Why or why not? How do you think Bert would have responded if Eleanor had told him the truth?



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About the Author

Charmaine Wilkerson is the *New York Times* bestselling author of *Black Cake*, which was named a Read with Jenna Book Club Pick and adapted as a Hulu streaming series by Oprah Winfrey and Kapital Entertainment. She is an American writer who has lived in Jamaica and is based in Italy. A graduate of Barnard College and Stanford University, she is a former journalist whose award-winning short fiction has appeared in various magazines and anthologies.

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