Here Comes the Sun by Nicole Dennis-Benn

Working as a prostitute near the pristine beaches and turquoise seas of Jamaica to pay for a younger sister's education, Margot hopes that a new hotel that is reshaping her home will grant her financial independence and allow her to pursue a forbidden affair with another woman.


About the Author: Nicole Dennis-Benn is the author of Here Comes the Sun, a New York Times Notable Book and winner of the Lambda Literary Award. Born and raised in Kingston, Jamaica, she teaches at Princeton and lives with her wife in Brooklyn.

Questions for Discussion

1. Riding to work one day, Margot says, “Can't wait to leave dis godforsaken place.” When the taxi driver says, “we live by di sea,” Margot responds “This is not paradise. At least, not for us.” Talk about the disparity between Jamaica's image as a tourist destination and Jamaica as a place to live for its residents. If you’ve visited Jamaica or other Caribbean Islands, where you surprised by life portrayed in Here Comes the Sun?

2. What do you think of the three women characters – Dorlores, Margot, and Thandi? The choices they make are problematic, to say the least. Can their choices be understood, even acceptable, given the dire poverty the women face?

3. (Follow-up to Question 2) What do you think of the “extra job” Margot undertakes in order to raise money for Thandi’s schooling? What else does Margot do to get ahead? Is she blameworthy or can her choices be defended?

4. Dolores believes that in her culture a woman is valued for “what's between her legs.” Is this a realistic assessment or a warped and cynical one?

5. What are the promises – and threats – of the proposed new hotel? Will it bring hope for prosperity or only destruction of the village?

6. Discuss Thandi’s decision to undergo skin bleaching and the hierarchy of race as explained by the woman who administers the skin treatment.

7. The book poses significant questions about greed and sacrifice, about being desperate in paradise. What are the many humiliations undergone in order to achieve security? What would any of us do – what would you do – in order to survive in a culture and economy like these women face?
8. Discuss homophobia in Jamaica. The author, herself a lesbian, chose to leave rather than live in a hostile environment. What about Margot and Verdene? Will living in a gated community offer them protection Margot dreams of?

9. Given the desperate lives the women lead and choices they make, do you find this book difficult to read? Is it simply too grim? Or does the writing – in particular, the depth of the characters and the complexity of the issues – redeem the book in your eyes? (There is no single or right answer to this question!)

(Questions provided by the litlovers.com)