

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- The author makes many references to Cynthia's last name 'Adegoke' often being mispronounced. Mr Jordan gives up on pronouncing Cynthia's surname correctly whereas Thomas makes an effort to pronounce it correctly. Discuss the importance of names as a marker of identity and what sort of effect mispronouncing someone's name may have
- Cynthia's family have experienced a major loss before the book begins, with the death of Michael. Each member of the family deals with their grief differently. Discuss how Mr and Mrs Adegoke and Cynthia each handle their grief, making comparison and identifying differences
- Consider how difficult it must be for Isaac to have been taken from where he grew up and placed with a new family in a completely different setting. Isaac confides in Cynthia that he feels he can be himself when he is with her, in contrast to how he feels with his adopted family. How is a person's identity influenced by their surroundings? What contributes to someone feeling like they can be themselves?
- Cynthia's dad labels Isaac 'a charity case', saying 'boys like that are no good'. Where do you think these assumptions come from? How can we educate people to show empathy rather than making unfair generalisations?
- Thomas is extremely persistent in his efforts to build a friendship with Cynthia. What impact does this have on your perception of Thomas throughout the novel?
- The author showcases many instances of microaggressions and racism within the book. Cynthia remained silent when she was mistaken for a waitress rather than a guest at the party. Discuss the impact this type of racism can have on someone's mental health and well-being. What would you say to the lady who mistook Cynthia for a waitress? How would you have dealt with this situation?
- Cynthia protects her parents' memories of Michael by hiding what she learns about his involvement with drugs. Do you think this was the right thing to do? What would you have done in this situation?
- At the end of the novel, Cynthia can't forgive Isaac, for being the brother of someone who was involved with Big Mike's death and for hiding the truth from her. Would you have forgiven Isaac for what he did? Can you sympathise with him for not revealing his true identity to Cynthia?



CUTS BOTH WAYS
FROM **CANDICE BRATHWAITE**