

BEYOND THE SAVANNA

Reader's Guide

- 1) The story both begins and ends in Africa with Hannah, her beloved lion, Yatima and her fiercest enemy, Sefu. Yet, everything in Hannah's world is drastically changed. Discuss how the author uses this device to bring the story full circle. How does Hannah grow from a naïve, headstrong girl to a capable, driven woman over the course of the novel?
- 2) Nature and setting play an important role in the story. What impact does her rural African upbringing have on Hannah? How does it influence her throughout the story? What impact does the contrast between her two worlds reveal—about Hannah and society?
- 3) Our relationship with animals is a primary theme of the novel. What is the significance of Hannah's unspoken connection with the wild things? How does it impact her human relationships? Her fate? Elephants appear at significant moments during the story, what is their importance and symbolism? What is the meaning of her relationship with Lindsay? Discuss the connections that might be drawn between Yatima and Lindsay.
- 4) The novel uses many methods to suggest both a mystical connection between all things and a determined destiny awaiting each of us. How does the story suggest we are each connected to this mysterious force? What role do dreams play? Discuss Hannah and Sam's shared fate and the forces drawing them together to serve a higher purpose.
- 5) Hannah's juvenile lion, Yatima, is physically absent for large portions of the story, but always spiritually present. In many ways, their connection defines and sustains Hannah. How does the author use their relationship to drive the story? Could it be considered the central love story?
- 6) There are multiple love stories in the novel. How does the author use the various relationships to reveal love in all its forms? Discuss the difference between love and possession. How do these relationships move Hannah forward? What role does forgiveness play in the story?
- 7) In many ways Sam is every one of us. He lives his life disconnected from his day to day, more in touch with his dream life than his real life. Yet, when his dream girl enters, he fails to recognize her? How does the author use routine and expectation to trap Sam in a life he doesn't want?
- 8) Hannah has a conviction that she was put on the savanna to defend the animals. Ultimately, recklessly chasing her calling leads to both her worst nightmare and her greatest joy. How does this contradiction impact Hannah? Discuss her journey to come to terms with this paradox. How does her struggle ultimately strengthen her conviction?
- 9) The novel presents all sides of the poaching problem. Discuss how Sefu, Jamilla, Dalton and the villagers provide other perspectives. What is the benefit of understanding these perspectives? In what other ways is our relationship with animals explored?
- 10) What is the message of the story?