

HOME Book Discussion Group, Lynden Sculpture Garden

<https://www.home-at-lynden.org/home-book-discussion-group>

Admiring Silence, by Abdulrazak Gurnah

January-April 2022

READING GUIDE & DISCUSSION

The reading guide below is based on book group meetings over four sessions. Please adapt accordingly to your needs, as some of the guiding points are intentionally repeated for clarity of discussion, or to connect old and new discussion points brought up at different points of the book and by different authors.

1) Part One, until page 60:

- **Tone, mood and style of fiction:** What is the tone of the narrator? Why would the narrator have such style and tone? What is Gurnah's intention and what mood might he be attempting to create? Using *Admiring Silence* as an example, how may the feel of fiction be different from the works of nonfiction we have previously covered?
- **Theme and message:** What might this first half of part one tell us about the theme of the story? In the interest of our book group, what might be other underlying issues of displacement that are being told in the story? What might Gurnah's messaging be, and how might it be understood?

2) Remaining Part One, page 60 to 111:

- **Fiction and tone:** What kind of humor or 'senses' is employed in *Admiring Silence*? And what is the use of this type of humor? Is humor imagination or reality?
- **Narrator perspective and theme:** Why is the book called 'Admiring Silence'? Why would the narrator, and possibly anyone, be admiring silence? What would silence represent? Other than the narrator being a refugee, who is telling this story?
- **Author focused:** Why, or how, is Gurnah considered a postcolonial novelist?

3) Part Two:

- **Narrator perspective and theme:** Why is the book called 'Admiring Silence'? Why would the narrator, or anyone, be admiring silence? What would silence represent? Other than the narrator being a refugee, who is telling this story?
- **Writing style and approach:** How would you describe Gurnah's writing style? To what philosophy, system or worldview would the author be approaching his work, and other understandings or systems he would be responding to?
- **Identity and belonging within migration and movement:** How secure is the narrator's identity? How reliable is the narrator's word? Why would it be so, or not be so? Is his identity dependent on place, time or circumstance? What are instances in Part 2 (or parts you have read) to support this? In what ways do familial (private) and social (public) institutions and lives change with migration, or forced migration?

4) Part Three:

- What overall **perspectives and voices** are heard, dismissed or silenced in *Admiring Silence*
- What is the overall **theme**?
- What are your **impressions** of the book, including how the story unfolds, from beginning to end?
- As our first **fiction** title, how does Gurnah's work differ from **nonfiction** titles that you've read on the issue, or that we've covered?