

Kindred

Octavia E. Butler

Suggested Discussion Questions

1. “There was no honest explanation I could give them – none they would believe.” How did the prologue shape your expectations of the book? Did you find that these changed as you read on?

2. *Kindred* was first published in 1979—for today’s readers, Dana’s present is now seen as the past. Does this influence your understanding of the book? How do the two different time strands in *Kindred* compare to your experience of the world now?

3. Discuss the portrayal of the Weylin family. How does Rufus compare to his father as he grows up? To what extent can you empathise with Rufus, considering his upbringing?

4. “We’re in the middle of history. We surely can’t change it.” How does the use of time travel in this story affect our perception of the past and present? Could Dana and Kevin have chosen to act differently in the antebellum South? Should they?

5. Think about how Dana and Sarah’s relationship develops throughout the novel. What is Sarah most driven by? And how does Dana’s perception of her friend change over time?

6. Discuss the presentation of love in the novel and how it motivates the different characters.

7. “I never realized how easily people could be trained to accept slavery.” Were you surprised by Dana’s observation here? Discuss the portrayal of complicity and choice in the novel.

8. What do you make of the way Rufus sees Dana and Alice as “two halves of the same woman”? How is power connected to race, class, and gender?

9. Back in their present day, what does the future hold for Dana and Kevin? How do you imagine their lives will continue in the wake of the extraordinary things they’ve experienced?

10. “Octavia E. Butler’s evocative, often troubling, novels explore far-reaching issues of race, sex, power and, ultimately, what it means to be human” - New York Times. How does *Kindred* encourage us to examine our own humanity and the relationships we have with others?

11. To what extent is the title *Kindred* significant to the events of the novel? Did you find it ironic?

