

THE SUPREME LIE

BY GERALDINE McCAUGHREAN

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Madame Suprema, the ruling head of Afaia, runs away fearing she will be blamed for the crisis caused by the flooding. Why do you think she ran away rather than staying and trying to find a solution to the crisis?
2. Newspaper articles punctuate the story. At first the reporting and commentary is genuine, later the editor is coerced into reporting fake news and eventually we find that Myld has taken over as editor. What changes did you notice in the tone and substance of the reporting?
3. Geraldine uses similes and metaphors which bring Afaia and its inhabitants vividly to life. A dog shaking itself dry looks like a “Catherine wheel”; the reflection of a bomber as it flies up-river to destroy the dam resembles “a huge salmon swimming upstream to spawn” and Madame Suprema is described as “barbed wire in a party dress”. Do you have a favourite simile or metaphor from the book? How does Geraldine’s use of simile and metaphor make her writing stand out?
4. On the whole the inhabitants of Praesto comply with the orders to go to the factories to keep the pumps working. Why do you think no one really questions what they are being told?
5. P188: Timor says, “When people are scared, they tend to take their brains out and put them on a high shelf for safe-keeping.” Discuss what he means by that. Do you think he’s right?
6. P289: Gloria thinks, “Surely adults were cleverer than she was.” Do you think adults are cleverer than teenagers? Why?
7. Dogs play an important part in the story. In what ways do the dogs reflect what is going on in the human story? Did you have a favourite dog and if so, why?
8. P316: “When disasters happen, it isn’t anyone’s fault. What’s important is what you *do* about the disaster.” What do you think Gloria means by this? Do you think any one person can be blamed for a disaster? And can you relate that to what is going on in our world now?
9. P326: Gloria has craved seeing her family since we first met her. But when she sees them she turns away and won’t talk to them. Why do you think that is?
10. Did you spot any links between some of the characters’ names and their personalities, for example Kovet coveting Madame Suprema’s power? And if so, did the way their stories unfold surprise you?
11. While Hecuba Lightfoot is the editor each of the newspaper extracts includes an anagram. Did you stop to decode these? If not, go back and see if you can. And did you spot the change of strapline under *The Voice* logo? Discuss why you think Hecuba could only give these coded clues as to what’s going on. How might you have communicated to others that your integrity and your life is being threatened?
12. Do you think Gloria made a good leader? Why? If she had stayed in Praesto do you think she would have been made Suprema in her own right? Give your reasons.