

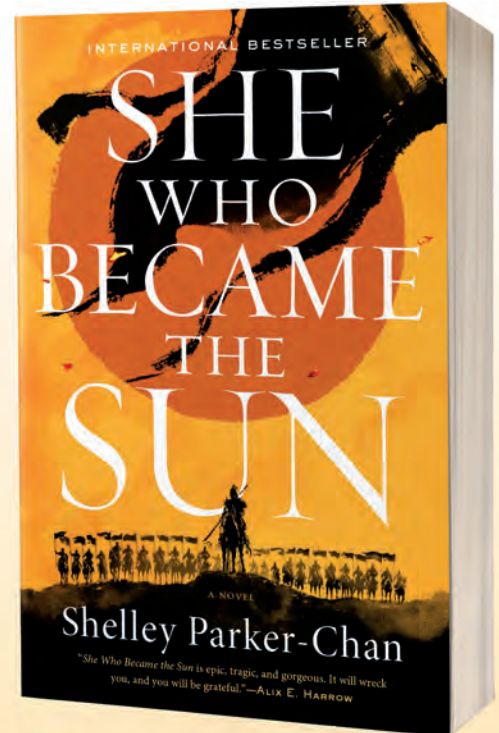
# Reading Group Guide

## SHE WHO BECAME THE SUN



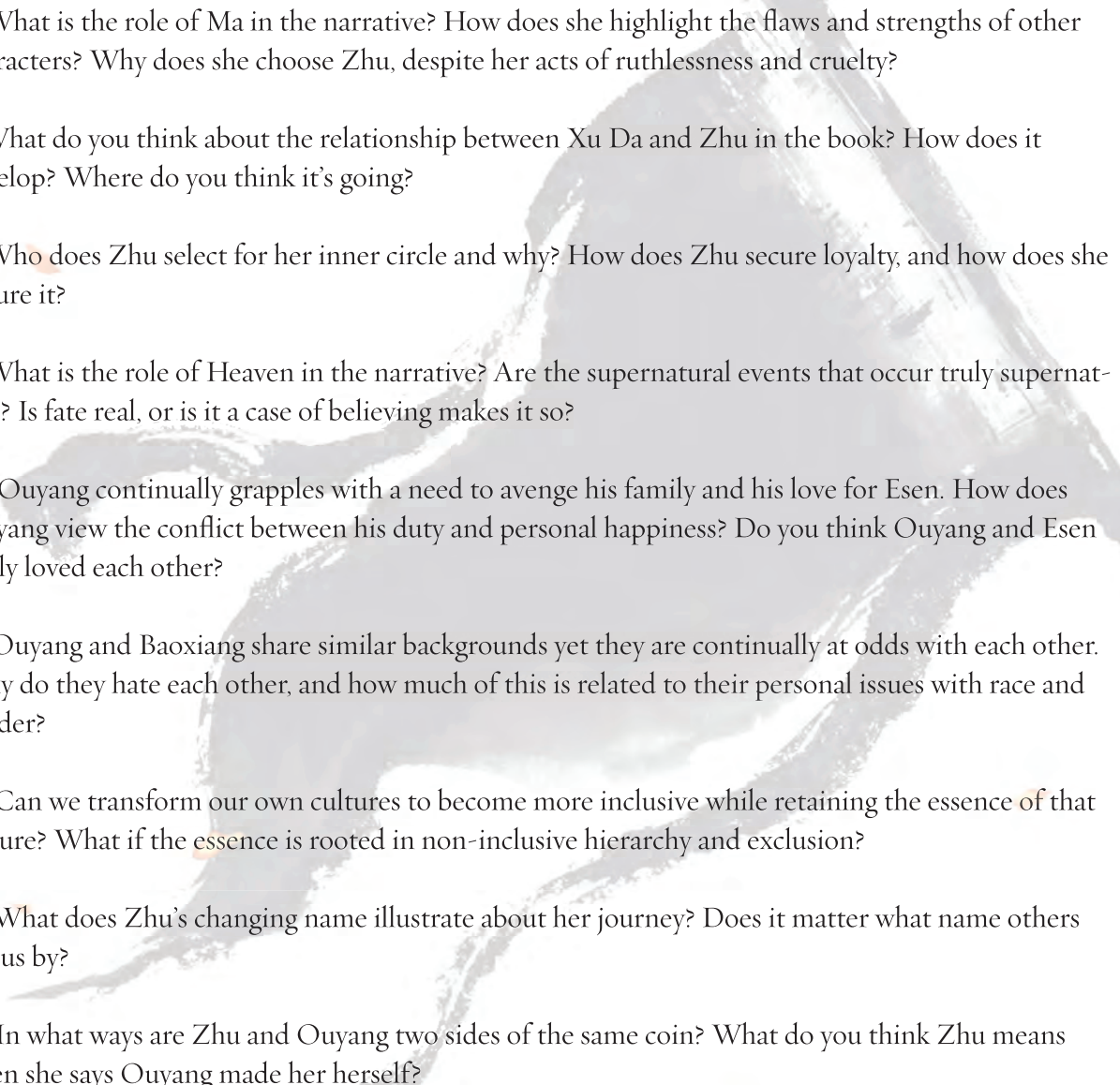
Shelley Parker-Chan is an Australian by way of Malaysia and New Zealand. A 2017 Tiptree Fellow, she is the author of the historical fantasy novel *She Who Became the Sun*. Parker-Chan spent nearly a decade working as a diplomat and international development adviser in Southeast Asia, where she

became addicted to epic East Asian historical TV dramas. After a failed search to find English-language book versions of these stories, she decided to write her own. Parker-Chan currently lives in Melbourne, Australia, where she is very grateful to never have to travel by leaky boat ever again.



### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why do you think Zhu can see the ghosts?
2. How is gender handled in the novel? What do you make of Zhu's gender identity? Why do you think 'she' was used as the third-person pronoun?
3. How do you think the Buddhist lessons Zhu learns in the monastery relate to the queer themes throughout the novel? Do they conflict with each other or work in harmony?
4. What is the importance of female knowledge and female solidarity in resisting the patriarchy?
5. Most people can relate to Zhu's desire for more than what life has given her but perhaps not to the extremities she goes to get it. For you, at what point did Zhu go too far, or do you think that point is yet to come?

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6. What is the role of Ma in the narrative? How does she highlight the flaws and strengths of other characters? Why does she choose Zhu, despite her acts of ruthlessness and cruelty?
  7. What do you think about the relationship between Xu Da and Zhu in the book? How does it develop? Where do you think it's going?
  8. Who does Zhu select for her inner circle and why? How does Zhu secure loyalty, and how does she ensure it?
  9. What is the role of Heaven in the narrative? Are the supernatural events that occur truly supernatural? Is fate real, or is it a case of believing makes it so?
  10. Ouyang continually grapples with a need to avenge his family and his love for Esen. How does Ouyang view the conflict between his duty and personal happiness? Do you think Ouyang and Esen really loved each other?
  11. Ouyang and Baoxiang share similar backgrounds yet they are continually at odds with each other. Why do they hate each other, and how much of this is related to their personal issues with race and gender?
  12. Can we transform our own cultures to become more inclusive while retaining the essence of that culture? What if the essence is rooted in non-inclusive hierarchy and exclusion?
  13. What does Zhu's changing name illustrate about her journey? Does it matter what name others call us by?
  14. In what ways are Zhu and Ouyang two sides of the same coin? What do you think Zhu means when she says Ouyang made her herself?
  15. Zhu claims that Ouyang voluntarily chose to bind himself to his ghosts and his past. What pressures was he acting in response to when he committed himself to his path of betrayal and revenge? Could he have chosen differently?