

GOOP BOOK CLUB

A Reading Guide for *Lot* By Bryan Washington

Sure, you might get made fun of if you underline your books. But we like being able to look back at the passages, scenes, words, quotes, and turns in a story that affected us. And we like being able to talk about them with you. Let us know what you think in our book club Facebook group.

Here, we picked some of the most poignant moments from *Lot*.

1. Page 3, “Lockwood”: “Ma told her to wait it out. That’s just what America did to you. They’d learn to adjust, she’d crack the code, but what she had to do was believe in it.” How does *Lot* challenge the notion of the American dream from the very first pages?
2. Page 12, “Alief”: “Of course we got all of this after the fact.... The details are tricky, the certainties muddled, but we knew enough of the story to re-create this: Aja on the mattress with James, in that liminal crease between strangers and lovers.” This chapter is told through a neighborhood chorus. How did that affect the way you interpreted the story of Aja and James?
3. Page 26, “610 North, 610 West”: “Es solo para mujeres y maricones, he said, because the real men of the kitchen were out killing pigs or whatever.” Our protagonist’s father tells him this at the family’s restaurant. What is the protagonist learning about masculinity, and how does this shape him?
4. Page 43, “Shepherd”: “Gloria blew through our lives on a Wednesday, and our mother told us to treat her like pottery, not ask questions, to creep around the house like ants before their queen.” The chapter with Gloria’s visit contains some of the most memorable character descriptions and metaphors in the book. Later in this chapter, Washington writes that her dress “glowed a shade of margarita.” On pages 50 and 54, there are moving passages that show what books and reading meant to Gloria. What was your favorite description of Gloria? Were there other lines that stuck out or surprised you?

5. Page 46, “Shepherd”: “I’d never in my life seen an actual whore (according to Nikki), a night worker (my father), or a calf in the wilderness (who else), so I looked her in the eyes for the thing that made it so; but all I saw was just some lady.” In what ways did Gloria and other characters show that labels fail?
6. Page 53, “Shepherd”: “We tried our hand at a dime of weed (courtesy of Jeff ’s older sisters downtown) but I spent that evening lost inside of myself, marveling at all of the space in my head no one had taken the time to tell me about.” *Lot* could be called a coming-of-age story. Did you relate to the protagonist’s sense of how much he hadn’t been told—of how much he had to learn about himself?
7. Page 71, “Bayou”: “That these things could keep happening and life could keep going was more mysterious to me than whatever the fuck he was showing me.” What did TeDarus mean by this?
8. Page 89, “Bayou”: “And weirdly, suddenly, and don’t ask me how this happens, I saw myself.” Why was it significant for TeDarus to see himself in Mix? Did you catch glimpses of yourself in this book?
9. Page 104, “Lot”: “It didn’t take long to see that there’s the world you live in, and then there are the constellations around it, and you’ll never know you’re missing them if you don’t even know to look up.” How did this metaphor apply to all the characters in the book?
10. Page 105, “Lot”: “She said if we remembered nothing else she taught us, to know that love was a verb.” What’s the distinction? Do you see love as something you feel or something you do?
11. Page 106, “Lot”: “When our father split, he took every sound in the house with him.” Another brilliant example of how Washington says so much in so few words. What did this line convey for you? Were there other succinct sentences you loved?
12. Page 149, “Fannin”: “It took me a while to figure out that we’re only who we allow ourselves to be.” How was Jan distinct from her family and the other characters in the book? What did you think about her?
13. Page 156, “Waugh”: “This made Poke, Rod figured, a true victim of circumstance.” What did this mean to Rod? Was Poke any different in this regard from the other men he lived with?

14. Page 202, "Elgin": "But after the storm, they pushed the rest of us out, too: if you couldn't afford to rebuild, then you had to go. If you broke the bank rebuilding, then you couldn't stay. If you couldn't afford to leave, and you couldn't afford to fix your life, then what you had to do was watch the neighborhood grow further away from you." Did this book change the way you think about gentrification and systemic racism?

15. Page 221, "Elgin": "This is the furthest I've been from the city, my city, in years, but it doesn't feel like anything's changed, and honestly, why would it. You bring yourself wherever you go. You are the one thing you can never run out on." What do you think Nicolás learned about internal and external change?