



Vengeance Road

A DISCUSSION GUIDE FOR READERS

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ABOUT THE BOOK

When Kate Thompson's father is killed by the notorious Rose Riders for a mysterious journal that reveals the secret location of a gold mine, the eighteen-year-old disguises herself as a boy and takes to the gritty plains looking for answers and justice. What she finds are devious strangers, dust storms, and a pair of brothers who refuse to quit riding in her shadow. But as Kate gets closer to the secrets about her family, she also gets closer to the truth about herself and must decide if there's room for love in a heart so full of hate.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1 Why does Kate choose to disguise herself as a boy? What does this tell you about life in 1877 Arizona?
- 2 Henry's note to Kate warns: "Gold makes monsters of men" (p. 38). Do you agree? Can you think of anything else that causes people to act out in frightening ways? Explain.
- 3 Is Kate's quest for revenge justifiable? In what ways, if any, are the murders she commits different from those committed by Rose and his gang?
- 4 There is a lot of racism in Kate's world. Name some examples from the text. Do you think things have improved in the 21st century? Why or why not?
- 5 After Kate shares the truth about her father's journal with the Colton brothers, Jesse and Will have very different thoughts about how to proceed. What does their initial argument on p. 103 (and those that follow) say about the boys' relationship?
- 6 Liluye's tale about Coyote (p. 224) suggests that she doesn't think Kate should forgive the Coltons for stealing the journal. Do you agree? What would you have done in Kate's position?
- 7 What role does religion play in the novel? How have Kate's and Liluye's opinions on religion shaped each of them?
- 8 Consider Jesse's treatment of Liluye once she joins the group. Do you think he is deserving of her tribe's aid when he is injured later in the story? How might the outcome have changed if Liluye did not "owe [Kate] a life" (p. 246)?
- 9 Kate eventually admits, "It ain't like the killing's been making me feel better" (p. 250). What does this say about her character?
- 10 Even though Kate's father is deceased for the entirety of the story, he gets plenty of page time and feels like part of the cast. How is this accomplished?
- 11 Over the course of the novel, Kate and Jesse come to respect each other. Do you think there was a pivotal turning point in their relationship? How do they challenge and support one another? Similarly, look at the relationship between Kate and Liluye. Why are these two women from very different walks of life able to have a rapport?
- 12 Maria claims that Kate's father is the true villain (p. 291). Do you agree? How were Henry's actions different than those of Maria and Rose?
- 13 Why do you think the author chose to write *Vengeance Road* in first person? Additionally, what does the dialect add to the story?
- 14 How do you feel about the creative liberties that the author took while integrating the Lost Dutchman legend into her novel (see Author's Note, p. 319–323)? Does it change how you view the story? What about the legend's key player, Jacob Waltz?
- 15 When Kate finally shoots Rose on p. 296, is it done out of pity, for revenge, or both? How has Kate's opinion of revenge changed by the end of the novel? How has *she* changed?