



Discussion guide

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home is a verb

This new novel from speculative fiction author and ecologist, **Kes Otter Liefte**, explores burnout and despair, collective collapse and recovery.

In a shifting world, marginalised characters must face their traumas and embrace change. In their search for healing, they are brought together, finding home in the least expected of places.

Learn more about this novel and Kes Otter Liefte's other work at

www.otterliefte.com





this guide

From the beginning, I've dreamed of my stories bringing people together. Friends reading out loud to each other, sat on the bank of a fast-flowing river. A reading group in an old bookshop... or a brand new squat. Something online with fabulous dressing up.

I've created this guide with questions and subjects from my novel, *home is a verb*. Designed for reading groups or to share with your friends. Or just for yourself to reflect after reading. Feel free to get creative with them.

love, Kes



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part 1 - threat

Memory

On **page 4**, Brook reflects: "I've discovered that memory, for me at least, can be a deceitful companion. In my recollection, life is a series of blurred out events with the occasional moment of shame remembered in perfect high definition."

What do you think this means? Have you ever felt the same way? How accurate are our memories and the stories we tell ourselves about our own lives?

Language

On **page 6** (see also **pages 98-100**), we meet Brook's use of animist grammar for the first time in the sentence "I remembered the storm **who** had rolled in that night".

Did you notice it the first time you read this sentence? What difference might it make to a language like english if we spoke as if storms and rivers and trees were more than just objects?

Chronic illness

On **page 18**, Brook reflects "Overcoming obstacles can make us stronger and more resilient, and even—for some—inspirational. But a lot of the time, pain is just pain."

What did Brook mean here? Brook is marginalised in several ways - in typical stories of disasters and societal collapse, this isn't the kind of person who usually survives. Why do you think that is?



part 2 - fight

Love

On **page 99**, Brook reflects “I know that we marginalised people don’t need to produce work, or culture, or even social change to be deserving of love.” Why do you think this was on their mind? Can you think of any examples where marginalised people are made to feel they have to earn love?

Food

On **page 105**, Brook is frustrated by the lack of food at the organising meeting. What role does food play in your friendship groups, social movements, or family? What is it so important?

Mindfulness and feelings

On **page 131**, when Brook jumps into the cold river, they reflect on feeling deeply in the present moment.

What makes you feel this way?



part 3 - flight

Environmental grief

On **page 156**, Brooks describes the avian flu pandemic as “a parallel, silent apocalypse” that “had ripped through wild bird populations” destroying entire species. They also think: “Too few mourned their loss.”

How important is environmental grief in your life? Are there any ways you’ve learned to sit with those feelings or turn them into action?

Brook’s new ability

At the cave, Laguna teaches Brook something life-changing about who they are. How does Brook’s new ability change them? How would it change you?

Ecology

On **page 219**, Brook is in the forest learning (or remembering) how to communicate with non-humans. Brook reflects on the importance of competition, cooperation and complexity in ecology.

What examples can you think of? What stories about nature have you been told and what are the impacts of those stories?



Extra space

for your discussion ideas

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