BKLYN BOOK CLUB KIT

WHAT STORM, WHAT THUNDER

MYRIAM J.A. CHANCY

2022 BROOKLYN PUBLIC LIBRARY BOOK PRIZE FINALIST
BOOK SYNOPSIS

At the end of a long, sweltering day, an earthquake of 7.0 magnitude shakes the capital of Haiti, Port-au-Prince. Award-winning author Myriam J.A. Chancy masterfully charts the inner lives of the characters affected by the disaster—Richard, an expat and wealthy water-bottling executive with a secret daughter; Anne, his daughter, an architect who drafts affordable housing structures for a global NGO; a small-time drug trafficker, Leopold, who pines for a beautiful call girl; Sonia and her business partner, Dieudonné, who are followed by a man they believe is the vodou spirit of death; Didier, an emigrant musician who drives a taxi in Boston; Sara, a mother haunted by the ghosts of her children in an IDP camp; her husband, Olivier, an accountant forced to abandon the wife he loves; their son, Jonas, who haunts them both; and Ma Lou, the old woman selling produce in the market who remembers them all.

Brilliantly crafted, fiercely imagined and deeply haunting, What Storm, What Thunder is a singular, stunning record, a reckoning of trauma and a testimony to the tenacity of the human spirit.

BKLYN BOOK CLUB KIT: WHAT STORM, WHAT THUNDER
Myriam J. A. Chancy is a Haitian-Canadian-American writer, the HBA Chair in the Humanities at Scripps College in Claremont, California and a Fellow of the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation.

LEARN MORE ABOUT MYRIAM AT MYRIAMCHANCY.COM AND IN SELECT MEDIA INTERVIEWS

- *The Center for Fiction* - "Myriam J.A. Chancy on *What Storm, What Thunder* with Nicole Dennis-Benn"
BOOK CLUB DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

WARNING: DISCUSSION QUESTIONS INCLUDE SPOILERS!

1. Why do you think Myriam J.A. Chancy chose Ma Lou to frame the story?

2. Which character in *What Storm, What Thunder* do you most identify with, and which do you identify with least? Why?

3. How do violence and tenderness coexist in the makeshift relief camps in Haiti?

4. After reading this story, what takeaways do you think might stay with you if you were to face a natural disaster in the future?

5. How did you react to the death of Richard? Of Olivier? Do you think their deaths could have been avoided?

6. *What Storm, What Thunder* creates a multivoiced narrative of the earthquake through the experience of related and interrelated characters. If you and your family or friends were to live through a natural disaster of this magnitude, how do you think you or others around you would react?
The characters in *What Storm, What Thunder* all experience some form of loss, including the loss of a sense of home. What would you miss most in terms of personal or historical landmarks if they disappeared overnight?

In what ways does the earthquake affect characters like Anne and Didier differently, since they were not physically present in Haiti at the time it happened? In what ways does it affect them similarly to those who were there?

What similarities and differences exist between siblings Didier, Sonia, Taffia and Paul? What accounts for such contrasts, and what do they reveal about generational differences or issues of class?

If you could summarize the novel's theme in one word, what would it be?
CULTURAL CONNECTION IN BROOKLYN

If you’re looking for more ways to learn about Haitian culture, visit the Haiti Cultural Exchange at 558 St. John’s Place.

This nonprofit organization was established to develop, present and promote the cultural expressions of the Haitian people. Founded in 2009 by seven Haitian women with the aim to create a permanent presence for Haitian arts and culture in our city, their programs in the arts, education and public affairs raise awareness of social issues and foster cultural understanding—within and beyond the Haitian community.

Find out more at haiticulturalx.org.

MAP OF LITTLE HAITI, BK

You can also explore Little Haiti, Brooklyn (including restaurants Bebe Fritay, Kreyol Flavor, Yo Yo Fritaille and more!)

BKLYN BOOK CLUB KIT: WHAT STORM, WHAT THUNDER
BKLYN BOOKMATCH READALIKES

Did you enjoy *What Storm, What Thunder*? Want to read something similar? Check out these readalike titles below.

- *Ayiti* by Roxane Gay
- *Haiti Glass* by Lenelle Moise
- *God Loves Haiti* by Dimitry Elias Léger
- *Voices from Chernobyl: The Oral History of a Nuclear Disaster* by Svetlana Alexievich
- *The Light Pirate* by Lily Brooks-Dalton

YOU CAN ACCESS THE LIST AND PLACE HOLDS ON THESE TITLES IN MULTIPLE FORMATS THROUGH THE BPL CATALOG: BORROW.BKLYNLIBRARY.ORG

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