

Skokie Public Library's Book Discussion Guide

Wide Sargasso Sea by Jean Rhys

- Ford Maddox Ford praised Rhys for her “passion for stating the case of the underdog.” Who are the underdogs in *Wide Sargasso Sea* and how does Rhys state their case?
- Antoinette tells Rochester “there is always the other side, always” [128]. Are there two sides to Antoinette? To Rochester? To the black people they encounter?
- The natural world is a powerful presence in *Wide Sargasso Sea*. What is its role in the book?
- What is Rochester's family history as revealed in *Wide Sargasso Sea*? In what ways is he a victim? In what ways does he lose our sympathy? How is his story similar to Antoinette's?
- In what ways does Antoinette exist in the margins of her society and culture? How does her position as an outsider affect her life?
- How do white and black people interact in the world of *Wide Sargasso Sea*?
- After Antoinette goes to Christophene to acquire a love potion, she hears a cock crow and asks herself, “That is for betrayal, but who is the traitor?” How would you answer her question?
- Is *Wide Sargasso Sea* a feminist book? In what ways can it be seen as one?
- How does Antoinette's experience of her mother's rejection shape her life?
- Her husband calls Antoinette "Bertha." Why does he do so? What does this name change reveal about their relationship? What is the significance of his calling her “marionette”?
- Why is the novel called *Wide Sargasso Sea*?
- How do *Wide Sargasso Sea*'s first lines (“They say when trouble comes close ranks, and so the white people did. But we were not in their ranks.”) set the tone for the novel?



Skokie Public Library

5215 Oakton Street
Skokie, Illinois 60077
847.673.7774 / 847.673.7797 fax
www.skokielineary.info

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