



Night Rooms

ESSAYS

GINA NUTT

Reader Guide: Questions and Topics for Discussion

Throughout the essays in *Night Rooms*, author Gina Nutt examines large, overwhelming ideas such as death, suicide, anxiety, and living with grief, by weaving them together with quotes and descriptions from popular films. What effect did this braiding have on you? Why do you think the author chose to write about these topics in this way?

Consider the title the author chose for these interconnected essays — *Night Rooms*. Where in the book do literal and figurative “rooms” come up? Why do you think this title was appropriate?

Concepts of light vs dark appear within the essays: what are some instances? Which do you think the author prefers, and why?

The author recounts movies watched as a child — *Snow White*, *The Wizard of Oz*, *Fantasia* — and as an adult. Why do you think films are so important to her? What are some examples? Do you have any films that have played an important role in your life, and how?

In what ways has suicide — close family members and a childhood acquaintance choosing to end their lives — impacted the author’s own life? If you have also been close to someone who took their own life, in what ways was your experience similar and different to the author’s?

How does water appear, evolve, and shift throughout the book? What do the watery motifs symbolize to you?

Were there any films, shows, poems, books that you took the time to watch or rewatch after reading *Night Rooms*? What were they? What made you feel inspired to seek them out? Did you have any new appreciations for any in particular that you didn’t have before?

What are some examples in the book that show the author is fearful of death? What are some examples showing the author being fascinated or drawn to things that are morbid? How do you think both of these can exist together? Do you think this dual curiosity is universal for humans?



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How does the author's idea of "the final girl" change throughout the book? What do you think of "the final girl" archetype?

There are several references to films that depict an internal battle with the self, rather than an external one with a monster, ghost, or villain: what are some examples of each kind of struggle? Why might this be important to the author?

Night Rooms is a book that lays bare extremely personal experiences and fears, some of which might also apply to you. With your reading group, take turns saying which elements resonated with you the most, and why.

There are scenes in *Night Rooms* when seemingly peaceful landscapes or moments become overwhelmingly possible of danger. Talk about these occurrences in the collection. If there were other people present with the author in the examples, such as her husband, what did you think of the comparison of their reactions? Have you ever experienced intense anxiety? Have you gone through any shared experiences where a friend or family member did? Did reading *Night Rooms* give you any new insights or thoughts on feelings of anxiety?

A frequent theme in *Night Rooms* is how much grief is acceptable to express publicly, outwardly when working through the aftermath of a traumatic event. What do you think of the author's worry that "despair is contagious and if I'm not careful I'll infect everyone around me," and the idea that, as shown frequently in horror films, "suffering privately is preferable to the anticipated betrayal of being cast out"? Have you ever felt this way, and when?

The book ends with a memory of the author as a child in awe of a beautiful and fascinating but tremendously violent and scary storm. How is this ending fitting for the book? What does it encapsulate? Reread the opening paragraphs: what do they have in common as bookends for this collection?

What is your sense of a personal canon? What movies, stories, books, poems, art, TV shows, ads, or images would you add to yours?