



TRIANGULUM

A NOVEL BY

Masande Ntshanga

Reader Guide: Questions and Topics for Discussion

1. TRIANGULUM makes use of different genres (mystery, science fiction, coming-of-age) to mark the narrator's journey from girlhood to adulthood, and South Africa's transition from apartheid to a technocratic future state. What effect does this blending of genres have on the narrative?
2. One of the central questions in TRIANGULUM is whether or not the imagination can be posited as a "memory of the future." Did you pick this up? What do you make of the assertion?
3. In seeing "the machine," the narrator, much like Nongqawuse, Cassandra, and Joan of Arc before her, can be described as an imperfect vessel of a communication much bigger than herself. Can you locate other historical or modern women figures who could fit this description?
4. TRIANGULUM positions South Africa as integral to the survival of the planet. This is different from most science fiction narratives, which tend to have the West or USA as the center. How did this difference influence your reading of the novel and your expectations of the genre?
5. The narrator ponders the following:

I thought about the Accelerated Christian Education program I'd attended as a child—an operating system, I now saw, unsuited to the continent's hardware—along with the various other iterations of formal education I'd encountered; all harmful, but necessitated by our dispossession and status as immigrants in industrialized South Africa.

What do you make of the narrator's idea that Western education might not be suitable to Africa's indigenous population (and by extension, other colonized peoples)—that it's "harmful to a degree," but "necessitated" by dispossession?



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6. In her memoir, the narrator mentions that in 1981, when her parents met, Lennox Leslie Sebe, the first ruler of the Ciskei Homeland, was awarded the Order of Good Hope, the apartheid republic's highest accolade. He was, of course, a black man. In what way does this highlight the inconsistency in apartheid's logic and the perennial collusion of power across racial lines?
7. In TRIANGULUM, The Tank, a radical hacker group, is seen as existing in opposition to The Returners, a radical environmentalist group. Whose philosophies did you find yourself gravitating toward and why?
8. In detailing the narrator's upbringing, TRIANGULUM deals with the melancholy of small-town girlhood, the hollowness of lower-middle-class childhood under unjust authorities, and the power imbalance between adults and children. How did you relate to this, and how would you say it informs who the narrator grows up to become?
9. TRIANGULUM is a novel of patterns and allusions, the most dominant being the number three and the shape of the triangle. How many references to this shape and number—and their implications—did you find in the text, in terms of its content, structure, and themes?
10. TRIANGULUM posits an alternative perception of mental illness and its diagnosis. In what ways, and to which degree, do you think we should be open to differing knowledge systems when it comes to mental health?