

# Discussion Questions

## *The Sentence* by Louise Erdrich



Source: Women's Prize for Fiction 2022 Short List,  
[womensprizeforfiction.co.uk/features/book/the-sentence](https://womensprizeforfiction.co.uk/features/book/the-sentence)

1. Tookie believes at one point that a sentence in the handwritten memoir killed Flora. Can books kill, in a figurative sense? How? Conversely, how can they save lives?
2. Tookie tells us about 'cowbirds', the name for self-published books that authors sometimes leave in the shop. Have you read any self-published books (or written any?) and what did you think of them/how did you find the experience of writing them?
3. Consider Laurent and Pollux as fathers. How do they compare and contrast?
4. Did you relate to the character Dissatisfaction? Are you an insatiable reader like him? Do you have similarly rigid reading requirements, or do you like broader categories of books?

Source: Vox, [vox.com/culture/22927681/sentence-review-louise-erdrich](https://www.vox.com/culture/22927681/sentence-review-louise-erdrich)

1. What do you believe we owe the dead?
2. Erdrich makes a cameo in this book! She's the owner of the store where Tookie works, which bears a striking resemblance to Erdrich's real-life bookstore, Birchbark Books. How does her appearance here strike you?
3. We're in the midst of the first wave of pandemic novels, with likely more to come as time goes on. How do you feel about this one?
4. *The Sentence* veers pretty wildly between emotional tones. Tookie's theft of Budgie's body is very madcap and fun, and then her early days at the bookstore are settled and restrained and slice-of-life-esque. By the time Erdrich gets into the pandemic and the protests over George Floyd's murder, she's writing something close to narrative nonfiction. For me, the shifting tones work because of the lightness of Erdrich's touch. What did you think?
5. We love a book that comes with its own syllabus. Have you read any of the books recommended at the end? What did you think?
6. What would be on your personal ghostbusting playlist?