



Discussion Questions: *We That Are Young*
“Words, Words, Words” Book Club—September 2021

1. What are your first impressions of the novel? Were there any passages that stuck out to you?
2. How did you feel about the plot and character elements of *King Lear* that author Preti Taneja incorporated into this novel? Were there any parallels that you particularly did or did not enjoy? Were there any that surprised you? Why do you think she chose *King Lear* for this kind of modern adaptation?
3. What did you think of the choice to divide the novel up with different narrators? Did you have a favorite? How do you think that your experience of the story would be different if the author had chosen to commit to a single point of view? Was there one character whose voice and story resonated with you the most?
4. What did you think about the other significant characters in the novel? Did you see parallels or differences between them and Shakespeare’s characters? Was there anyone you wish we had spent more time with?
5. Discuss the treatment of the women in the novel. What roles are they expected to assume by their families and society at large? How do they respond to these demands? How does each of the three sisters resist expectations and what are the consequences of this? How does this align with Shakespeare’s interpretation of these same characters?
6. Both Shakespeare’s play and this novel have a devastating storm as a centerpiece. How did you see this novel interacting with the natural world? Does the book suggest that nature is something we can work in harmony with or instead, that it is something we should be frightened by? What impact do the characters in the book have on the natural world they inhabit?
7. What did you think of the time spent with Jeet in the *basti*? What lessons do you think he took from his experience? How did it compare to the journey of Edgar’s in Shakespeare’s play?
8. The character of Lear is himself a victim of the tragedy that befalls his play. Does Taneja’s adaptation have a victim or victims? If so, who? Can Devraj Bapuji be considered a victim or tragic hero within this novel or is he a victimizer responsible for the tragedy that befalls his family?
9. As the title suggests, this novel offers a portrait of the fierce clash between an older generation and a youthful one—and between the ideals of tradition and modernity. Does one side ultimately win?
10. Discuss the conclusion of the novel—which greatly mirrors Shakespeare’s play, with one notable exception. What do you think will become of the Devraj family and the Company? Who is left at the helm of the business, and what do you think the priorities will be?