

The Last Panther Discussion Questions

Part I:

1) After reading Chapter 1, make some guesses about the story. Where do you think the story is taking place? When do you think it's happening? Why? What creature do you think the netters have pulled to shore? (As you read on, think about what guesses are right, and what's different than what you expected).

2) At the beginning of Chapter 2, Kiri describes several once-were creatures. Can you figure out what any of the animals she describes are? Why does she call them once-were creatures?

3) Why does Kiri decide to eat the turtle soup? Why is Kiri angry at her da for not doing this? What's most important to Kiri at this point in the story?

4) On page 22 Kiri explains that her full name is Kiribati, and she explains on page 23 that it was "like the name of the once-were creatures—a word for a lost, forgotten, perhaps imaginary thing." Kiribati is a real island nation that's in danger of going entirely underwater this century due to climate change and sea level rise. In what ways is Kiri's name similar to the once-were creatures? Why is Kiribati named this and what does this name suggest about her character?

5) How are Kiri and Snowflake similar?

6) What connections do you see between Kiri's mother and the panther? Why does the panther attack allow Kiri to see visions of her mother? Do you think these visions of her mother are simply "fever dreams" or something else?

Part II:

7) Why does Kiri want to find the panther on her own? What reasons does she give Paulo for this? What reasons does she have that she doesn't speak out loud?

8) According to Paulo, how are the fugees and wallers different (see page 93). Who does Kiri seem to agree with more?



9) Why does Martin (Kiri's dad) want to capture the panther and trade it to the wallers?

10) On page 120 Kiri thinks, "A panther in a cage is no more a panther than water in a bucket is the ocean." What does this mean, and how does this relate to what Kiri decides to do with the panther in the next chapter (Chapter 15)?

Part III:



11) On page 137 Kiri's mother says, "Without the grass the sand will blow and tear the leaves from the tree. Without the leaves the tree will die. Without the tree the birds will starve. Without the birds the sky will weep. Without the sky the fish can't breathe. Without the fish the people will starve. Nothing stands alone." What do you think Kiri's mother is telling Kiri here? How do you think this will influence what Kiri decides to do with the panther?

12) Why does Charro shoot the panther mother? What reasons does he give for this? What reasons might he have that he doesn't say out loud? Why might he keep this secret?

13) What does Kiri do to convince Charro to work with the wallers in the end? How does this action get him to start to see things differently?

14) On page 229 Kiri tells her da, "We can't hide behind walls, waiting for things to get better. We have to change things now. We have to tend the tree." What does she mean by this? How does this influence what her dad decides to do?

15) What convinces Sonia to go along with the plan and turn this section of the coast into a coastal refuge?

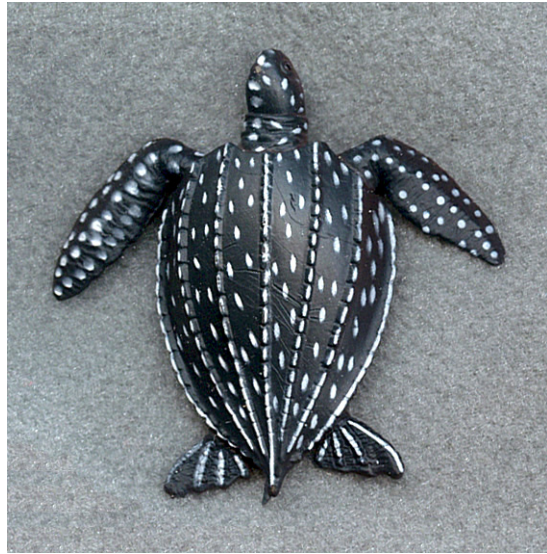
16) Why does Kiri carve the sea turtle hatchling at the end? What does it say about the villagers that others start to do this at the end as well?

17) Does Kiri's village seem to change by the end of the story? How is it different?

18) Does Kiri seem to change by the end of the story? How is she different?

Questions for making connections beyond the book:

1) At the beginning of the book, there's the question *What is a species worth?* The author, Todd Mitchell, said that he wrote the book to explore this question. What do you think a species is worth? Can it be measured with money? Why or why not? What should we do to save species that we're causing to go extinct?



2) How are you like the fugees? How are you like the wallers? Why don't they get along? How can they get along?

3) The fugees and the wallers each have competing interests. For instance, they both want to take the panther and use it for different things, but by the end of the book, Kiri gets both the fugees and the wallers to see the panther and the sea turtles differently, and to work together to protect the environment. Do you think partnerships like this can work in the real world? Can you think of examples?

4) Kiri's name comes from the island nation of Kiribati. Kiribati is a real country, made up of 33 islands in the Pacific, that are already flooding and disappearing due to climate change. How is climate change apparent in the book? What can we do to lessen the destructive impacts of climate change?

5) Why are panthers and/or other apex predators important? Why are they in danger?

6) What animals can you find that are currently threatened or endangered? What can be done to help protect these animals?

7) What do you think it means to "be a protector"?

Note: If you or someone you know does something to protect endangered species or ecosystems, you can tell the author, Todd Mitchell, about it. Once a month he'll post the story of someone who is working to be a protector on the "Do Something Good" page of his website, and he'll send them a Protector Pendant.

To learn more about things you can do, visit www.ToddMitchellBooks.com and click on "Do Something Good"!