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Born in Amsterdam in 1975, Ariëlla Kornmehl studied philosophy at the University of Amsterdam. On completion of her studies she spent two years living in Johannesburg, South Africa. The Butterfly Month is her second novel. Ms Kornmehl lives in Amsterdam with her husband and two daughters.

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book club notes

the butterfly month

a novel

ARIËLLA KORNMEHL

translated by Faith Hunter

1. Joni lives a life of routine and control in Africa in an attempt to keep at bay her own inner turmoil. How does the author use the characteristics of Africa and its people to stand in contrast to Joni's sense of rigid order?
2. Joni's trauma about the damage she suffered as a result of her mother's DES use is clear. How do her attitudes toward her own bodily care reflect this trauma?
3. The nation represented in the book is one in which race division is stronger than ever. Do you think there is hope in the post-Apartheid South Africa presented in the book? How so?
4. Zanele is a good mother figure to Joni and a bad mother figure to her own son, Mbufu. What do you think the author is trying to say by giving Zanele these two aspects to her self?
5. At the start of the book, Zanele wants to save the bracelet Joni gave her for when she 'can't wait anymore'. What do you think the bracelet symbolises by the book's end?
6. The ending of the book could be viewed as violent, and lacking in redemption. It could also be understood as Joni arriving at a point at which she can no longer hide and must finally face life in all its harshness and beauty. Which do you think it is?

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