

1. In *Otera*, we learn very quickly that people are judged based on their skin color and girls are categorized based on their blood color. How do these forms of social categorization harm Deka? How do they mimic systems of oppression in real life?
2. Once Deka learns she is an alaki, her understanding of the world around her unravels. The systems and ceremonies she once respected are pulled back to reveal more sinister systems of control, especially for girls. How does Deka's perspective continue to be changed and challenged? What other systems are exposed by the end of the book?
3. Alakis are deemed "worthless" despite having valuable skills many others don't have. Later on, we see the shift from worthless to valuable: "All this time, I've been afraid of my ability, when instead I should have been regarding it as a treasured weapon." What is society's role in shaping how we view ourselves? What does this tell us about societal norms?
4. Britta quickly becomes a support system for Deka, along with the army of other alaki girls. How do these relationships develop throughout the book? How do these relationships emphasize the importance of community and shared experience as a means for survival?
5. Deka's journey – from the discovery of her unique identity to the grueling final battle – is heavy with trauma. How does author Namina Forna approach these serious themes and topics? How does Forna capture the complexity of both empowerment and adversity?

Activity/Writing Prompt:

*Create a new tradition or ceremony. Write about a character that celebrates this tradition. Then, create another character with a different perspective of the tradition. What happens when these two characters meet?*