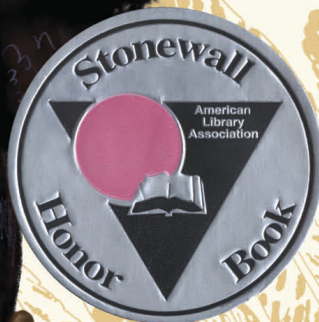
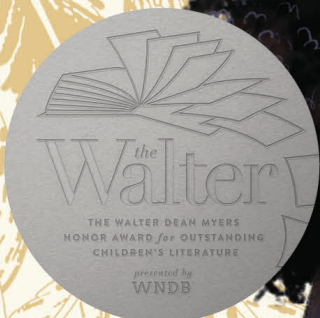


New York Times Bestselling Author

akwaeke emezi

Pet is here to hunt a monster. Are you brave enough to look?

PET



Educators' Guide

about the book

Now in paperback, the National Book Award finalist and genre-transcending novel by award-winning author Akwaeke Emezi that explores themes of identity and justice. *Pet* is here to hunt a monster. Are you brave enough to look?

There are no monsters anymore, or so the children in the city of Lucille are taught. Jam and their best friend, Redemption, have grown up with this lesson all their life. But when Jam meets Pet, a creature made of horns and colors and claws who emerges from one of her mother's paintings and a drop of Jam's blood, she must reconsider what she's been told. Pet has come to hunt a monster, and the shadow of something grim lurks in Redemption's house. Jam must fight not only to protect her best friend but also to uncover the truth, and the answer to the question—How do you save the world from monsters if no one will admit they exist?

Acclaimed novelist Akwaeke Emezi makes their riveting and timely young adult debut with a book that asks difficult questions about what choices you can make when the society around you is in denial. *Refinery29* proclaims, "The word hype was invented to describe books like this."



Grades 7 and up

Trade Paperback: 9780593175446

about the author

Akwaeke Emezi makes their young adult debut with *Pet*, which was a National Book Award Finalist, a Walter Award Honor Book, and a Stonewall Honor Book, and received numerous other accolades. An honoree on the National Book Foundation's "5 Under 35" list, Akwaeke is the author of two acclaimed novels for adults, *Freshwater* and *The Death of Vivek Oji*, which was an instant *New York Times* bestseller. Learn more about Akwaeke at Akwaeke.com or on Twitter at [@azemezi](https://twitter.com/azemezi).



pre-reading activities

1. What does the title make you think about, especially in relation to the cover? Brainstorm possible storylines related to the cover.
2. The theme of good vs. evil has been explored in many stories. What books, movies, or songs speak to this theme? Have any been particularly successful in making you think about good vs. evil?
3. What would you do to keep your friends and family safe?
4. Define *monster*. What does a monster look like? How do you know a monster when you see one?
5. Has your community or society ever tried to shield you from the truth? How? Why?

discussion questions

1. *Pet* examines language and communication, and how listening and speaking are essential to understanding the world. “When Jam was a toddler, she’d refused to speak, which was why they’d taught her to sign instead. She used her hands and body and face for her words but saved her voice for the most important one.” (p. 15) Jam uses their voice to tell Redemption about the monsters and about Pet. Why is this important? Jam decides not to tell Redemption there is a monster in his home. Why does she keep this from him? Describe a time when you or someone you know omitted information at a critical moment. Would you have reacted the same way Redemption did when he discovered what Jam had left out? Talk about the role listening plays in the story.
2. The city of Lucille had a revolution to eradicate all the monsters. How does Emezi describe the city prior to the revolution? (pp. 1–3, 78–79) What allusions to current events do you notice?

discussion questions

3. Bitter, Jam's mother, taught her child that "a lot of things were manageable as long as they were honest. You could see things clearly if they were honest; you could decide what to do next, because you knew exactly what you were dealing with." (p. 7) Give examples of when Jam does not follow this life lesson. What is her rationale for not doing so in each instance?
4. Why doesn't Jam send Pet back into the painting? (pp. 69–70)
5. Reflect on and respond to the following quotations:
 - a. "I could feel how hungry it was to become real." (p. 44)
 - b. "If you do not know there are things you do not see . . . then you will not see them because you do not expect them to be there. You think you see everything, so you think everything you see is all there is to be seen." (pp. 71–72)
 - c. "But the truth does not care about what you want; the truth is what it is. It is not moved by want, it is not a blade of grass to be bent by the wind of your hopes and desires." (p. 95)
 - d. "All knowledge is good knowledge." (p. 102)
 - e. "We should've known. . . . It's not that Lucille failed me, it's more like all of us might have failed Moss, you know?" (p. 149)
 - f. "Masks are useful then; not quite lies, not quite truths. Just decision about what to be and what to show. Curation." (p. 152)
6. The library is a place to gain knowledge. Discuss how the library and Ube, the librarian, helped Jam and Redemption learn about the revolution and the monsters. Reflect on and respond to the ways in which research (inquiry and information gathering) helped Redemption recognize what was happening in his home.

discussion questions

7. Pet “hissed and crackled when Aloe used the word ‘monster.’” (p. 45) Why do Aloe and Bitter view Pet as a monster? How does the term affect the novel’s tone? Discuss ways in which labels confine and define people. Why do we need to be careful with labels?
8. Redemption, we see, is a fighter. He explains, “[My opponent and I are] alive when we fight. We’re magnificent; we’re testing our aliveness against each other. How fast is your alive? How smooth is your alive? How hard, how resilient? We’re alive because we can be hurt; we’re alive because we can heal. I think it’s beautiful. It’s why I fight.” (p. 57) Discuss his poetic view of fighting. What is something that you do that makes you feel alive? A sport? An artistic pursuit?
9. “You’re the monster, Hibiscus.” (p. 180) How was Hibiscus’s monstrous behavior discovered? What was his ultimate punishment? Do you think he got what he deserved? Why or why not?
10. What did this book teach you about humanity? What resonated and lingered after you finished reading?

beyond the book

1. **Creative Writing:** *Pet* is Jam and Redemption’s story; they are two friends on a quest to uncover the truth. What is **your** story? What would your book be titled? What would your book question? And who else would see themselves in the story?
2. **Text to Text, Text to Self, Text to World:** In the acknowledgments, author Akwaeke Emezi shares that they “want *Pet* to reach as many readers as nonhumanly possible, so it can do the work it’s meant to do in the world. We are each other.” Think about the story, the message, and this wish; what does “we are each other” mean in context?
3. **Presentation:** Using *Pet* and various texts (including but not limited to music, film, essays, plays, etc.), analyze and present what is meant by “Forgetting is how the monsters come back.” (p. 20)

Praise for *Pet*:

A National Book Award Finalist

A Walter Award Honor Book

A Stonewall Award Honor

A *New York Times* Best Book of the Year

A *Time* Best Book of the Year

An NPR Favorite Book of the Year

A *School Library Journal* Best Book of the Year

A *Publishers Weekly* Best Book of the Year

A New York Public Library Best Book of the Year

A *BuzzFeed* Best YA Book of the Year

“The word hype was invented to describe books like this.”

—*Refinery29*

“A unique science fiction tale.”

—*Essence*

“With great tenderness, *Pet* questions a society silenced by denial.”

—*Observer*

“A riveting and timely work answering the questions about how you go about the world when the world around you is in denial.”

—*Out Magazine*

★ “An important narrative that teens will want to read to gain some perspective on the modern political environment.”

—*Bulletin*, Starred Review

★ “This soaring novel shoots for the stars and explodes the sky with its bold brilliance.”

—*Kirkus Reviews*, Starred Review

★ “Emezi’s direct but tacit story of injustice, unconditional acceptance, and the evil perpetuated by humankind forms a compelling, nuanced tale that fans of speculative horror will quickly devour.”

—*Publishers Weekly*, Starred Review

★ “A riveting and important read that couldn’t be more well timed to our society’s struggles with its own monsters.”

—*School Library Journal*, Starred Review



***Bitter*, coming in 2022!**

From National Book Award finalist Akwaeke Emezi comes a companion novel to *Pet* that explores both the importance and cost of social revolution—and how youth lead the way.

Bitter thought it was ridiculous that adults wanted young people to be the ones saving the world, as if her generation had broken everything in the first place. It's true that Lucille is a place of rampant injustice, where a few ruling elites control the fates of the many. But it also contains the oasis of Eucalyptus—an art school where selected teens are free to pursue their creative passions.

Bitter, thrilled to be chosen for Eucalyptus, wants nothing to do with the calls for revolution and the protests in the streets. She just wants to forget her dark past and create her art . . . and maybe get to know the new guy at her school, whose voice is strong but tender.

But when a close friend is seriously injured while on the front lines, something is awakened inside her—and inside her art. It's a call for Vengeance.

Acclaimed novelist Akwaeke Emezi looks at the power of youth, protest, and art in this timely and provocative novel, a companion to their National Book Award finalist, *Pet*.

This guide was created by Shanetia Clarke, associate professor of literacy
at Salisbury University in Salisbury, Maryland.

Random House Children's Books School & Library Marketing | 1745 Broadway | New York, NY 10019



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