



### Discussion Questions: *The East Indian*

Folger Book Club—May 2024

1. What are your first impressions of the novel? If asked, what would you say this novel is about?
2. Tony frequently remembers a production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* he saw while in London. What works of art do you find yourself frequently recalling?
3. How does Tony respond to the “Indian lad” in Shakespeare’s play? Were you aware of that character before reading this?
4. Throughout the novel, Tony struggles to find his place in the world. How does he fit into the different communities he encounters? Where do you see him experience his greatest sense of belonging, and what supports that feeling?
5. On page 65, Tony reflects, “As the men chattered on, I realized, once more, how few of them considered this home . . . for home is singular and unique: everywhere else is but a stopping place, a bed in a stranger’s house, eating off plates not one’s own, an unfamiliar view from a casement.” How do you define home? Do you agree it’s a singular place? How does Tony’s perception of home change throughout the novel?
6. On page 91, Master Walsh explains, “. . . for many loyal to king, Virginia is but the western edge of England—not the first post of an entirely new world, but the last border of an old one.” How is this idea reflected in the colonists' treatment of the land and the Native populations they encounter? What roles do borders and boundaries play in this novel?
7. Were you familiar with this time in America’s history? What surprised you? Are there subjects you hope to learn more about?
8. Regarding Ganter’s dead body, Tony reflects, “The dead, simply by passing into death, somehow become innocent of all charges; it is we, the living, who bear the burden of guilt” (pg. 205). What guilt do you think Tony is referring to? Which moments do you think he regrets, or wishes he had handled differently? Could he have, based on his circumstances?
9. How do different characters regard the past? Is it something to be learned from, or left behind? Do those who seek to leave it succeed?
10. This book takes place at a time of increased travel and cultural exchange, “a world in motion” (91). What similarities do you see between this time period and continued globalization today? What dangers should we be aware of?