

# FOLGER BOOK CLUB



## Discussion Questions: *Birnam Wood*

Folger Book Club—August 2024

1. What are your first impressions of the novel? If asked, what would you say this novel is about?
2. Are you familiar with *Macbeth*? Where did you see themes and echoes of the play within the novel?
3. On page 35, Shelley comments that her father's favorite joke to ask about the group is "Who's Macbeth?" Who would be your answer? What criteria do you use to decide?
4. *Birnam Wood* describes itself as "Shakespearean in its drama." What do we mean when we use this adjective? Do you think it is applicable to this novel?
5. How does communication function in the novel? What incidents may have been prevented with more direct communication?
6. Considering what knowledge she had at the time, did you agree with Mira's decision to partner with Lemoine? Why or why not?
7. What did you think of Tony's speech to the collective? Are there points you agree with? What, if anything, do you think reflects Catton's philosophy?
8. Catton said in an interview, ". . . when you [the reader] change points of view, you know a little bit more than the character that you've just joined. You have an advantage over them. I was kind of borrowing that from *Macbeth* actually. Macbeth and Lady Macbeth are never on the same page at the same time. He's really gung ho and she's really not sure. Then they flip and she's really gung ho, and he's not sure." Where do you see these character pivots? Do you recognize the Macbeths in these moments?
9. Why do you think Catton specifically chose to set this in 2017? What would be different had the novel been set today?
10. On page 136, Sir Owen summarizes Lemoine's character as "American." How does Lemoine embody American qualities, especially as may be seen by other countries? Is that a fair assessment?