

BOOK CLUB QUESTIONS FOR *ELEGY IN SCARLET* BY BV LAWSON

1. There are several references to hard objects - Drayco felt like a concrete statue, chairs he sat on were as hard as cold, leg-numbing stone. Another chair that felt like sitting on tacks. What does this say about the state of Drayco's emotions and his state of mind about his mother?
2. There are several references to "masks" in the story: Benny's face formed into a mask of wrinkles, all pointing downward; Brock's no-nonsense mask he keeps firmly in place; the witch doctor's mask on Edwin's fireplace mantel; the head protectors with face masks Gogo uses in his martial arts. What does the concept of masks represent in the book, and how does each character wear their own? What secrets do they hide?
3. There are also several references to fish: Drayco missed his friend Sheriff Sailor's wall-mounted fish with the piranha teeth; Nelia's husband has a shellfish allergy; fish-shaped barang knife at Gogo's studio; the fish tank with dead fish in Jerold's condo; Edwin saying Ashley couldn't possibly be involved in something "fishy"; the Potomac River's fishy, rotting compost odor; Detective Halabi being fond of fish and chips; a reference to the elderly victims being baitfish in a silver sea; the fish at the luncheon with Rena and Drayco; the fried catfish sandwich Nelia has at the marina. What significance does this have to the plot and Drayco's quest?
4. Drayco is feeding a little stray cat outside his townhome and begins to form an attachment to the animal. When it doesn't show up for two days, he realizes he misses it. Are there parallels between the missing cat and his missing mother?
5. There are frequent references to "gray" in the book: shades of the gray life in the nation's capital; Edwin's close-cropped gray beard; the gray duplex; the sound of Major's voice being like gray steel wool; the assisted-living "home," with its mangy gray-and-white wallpaper; Nelia Tyler's soft gray V-necked sweater, etc. Is there a special significance to this? Do you think it has anything to do with the fact that the stress over his mother has caused Drayco's normal synesthesia to be more muted and colorless?
6. At one point, Iago says to Drayco, "Family is what we make it. You should remember that." How does that theme permeate the book? What does it say about Drayco's relationships with others?
7. There's a strong Shakespeare motif throughout the book (Iago, Ophelia, drowning, etc.). How do you think that ties in with the over-arching family-centered themes? What Shakespeare character does Scott Drayco most resemble, if any?
8. Do you agree with Darcie that Drayco's mother abandoning him makes it harder for him to trust women or relationships with women?
9. At one point, Drayco thinks about how one little word - truth - can manifest itself in so many different ways, haven, hope, heaven, or hell. Do you agree? What are some examples from the book?