

The Summer Prince Study Guide

The Summer Prince by Alaya Dawn Johnson

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Plot Summary

NOTE: Due to the structure of the novel, this study guide refers to sections and quote by page numbers, using the Scholastic Paperbacks/Arthur A. Levine August 2014 First edition.

“The Summer Prince” is a young adult dystopian novel by Alaya Dawn Johnson which follows the efforts of 17-year-old June Costa to not only become a successful artist, but to win the love and save the life of recently-elected Summer King Enki in the City of Palmares Tres, Brazil. Hundreds of years after a nuclear war devastated the Earth, much of mankind survives in cities. Some cities, like Palmares Tres, are totally contained by glass and steel. Palmares Tres is ruled primarily by a Queen and a Parliament composed mainly of women called “Aunties”. (The rare man who serves in office is referred to as an “Uncle”).

Palmares Tres has adopted the custom of electing and sacrificing a king every five years. This is done because the horrors of the past are blamed on men, because mainly women rule Palmares Tres and serve in politics, and because the first king and queen instituted the policy to ensure both the democratic process through the election of the one-year summer king, and the sanctification of the gods through the king selecting the Queen to rule for the next four years as he dies. June considers the practice barbaric.

June and her best friend, Gil, are always seeking new ways to expose the public to June’s artwork. June’s mother, Valencia, doesn’t think June has a future in art, while Valencia’s wife, Auntie Yaha (a high-level politician) does her best to encourage June. June hates her mother for cheating on her father with Yaha while he was on his deathbed. Because of Auntie Yaha’s connections, June and Gil are able to attend elite events and parties, including the reception for new King Enki. June recognizes a fellow artist in Enki, and hopes to catch his eye. But it is Gil who catches Enki’s eye, making June jealous and sad. June creates a stunning mural of Enki and Gil kissing after the reception which ultimately catches Enki’s eye. Enki and June agree to collaborate with one another on art while June falls more and more in love with Enki.

As the year passes, Enki begins to return June’s feelings. Gil, who is also in love with Enki by this point, begs June to find a way to save Enki’s life. Enki, however, has no concerns about dying. He simply hopes to bring attention to the plight of the lowest class of citizens in Palmares before he is killed. Enki has also had his body modified with nanotechnology, so that he can tap into the technical consciousness of the city. He predicts the collapse of a massive maintenance spider bot, which saves the lives of thousands and ignites a political war over technology. The technophiles believe Palmares must open up to the world and get on the cutting edge of technology. The isolationists oppose radical changes. June herself believes the city needs to update itself, but doesn’t need to go to the extreme the way the technophiles advocate. Queen Oreste herself favors humanity over technology. Enki sides with the technophiles. The violence is temporarily abated when the leaders of the technophiles are arrested following the deaths of innocent bystanders during a massive protest, and the issue is

set to be debated in Parliament. Meanwhile, June learns that Queen Oreste and her inner circle staged the deaths of the bystanders in order to put down the rebellion. June is horrified.

June convinces Enki to run away with her. They flee Palmares Tres for Salvadore, Enki's homeland, where a local betrays them to Queen Oreste. Enki explains that whether or not he ran away, he would still die because he has been implanted with nanobots designed to kill him at the appropriate time. He explains he ran away with June just to make her happy. While awaiting the arrival of Queen Oreste, Enki recovers a digital copy of Salvadore's entire library (now destroyed), which is later given to June. As Enki dies, he selects June to be Queen for the next four years. June doesn't want to be Queen, but knows she has no other choice. Examining the library files, June discovers an audio account from the very first Queen, Odette, who reveals she never wanted the sacrifices to last more than two cycles of kings. June decides to make this information public, and waits to see what will happen.

Spring

Summary

At the age of eight, June Costa remembers being taken by her father to the park in the pyramidal city of Palmares Tres, Brazil, to see the king die sacrificially. The entire event is remembered as something like a sad carnival, with everyone crying. June remembers seeing a hologram-projection of the event, with Summer King Fidel tied down and his wife, Queen Serafina, delivering the cut to the throat. During this time, King Fidel put a bloody hand on his wife's stomach, marking the woman to become the next queen for the next four years. June explains that Summer Kings are selected in the spring.

June and her best friend, Gil, seek to draw attention to June's artwork in the stadium. The pyramidal city is divided into tiers, with King Alfonso Stadium at the bottom. Tier Ten at the top is where the Queen and the most important people live. While travel outside the city is not forbidden, most people prefer not to leave. June's stepmother, Auntie Yaha, is a rising star in the government. June knows neither of her parents, Mother, or stepmother Auntie Yaha, will be happy with what she is up to. She and Gil take their seats in the stadium. Auntie Isa, the second-most powerful person in the city, appears onstage to announce finalists for the election for king.

Among them is Enki. Enki is very dark-skinned, and very handsome. His mother is a native of what remains of Salvador. Enki and his mother live by the hydrogen producing algae vats, referred to as "the stink (catinga)" by the upper tiers, and "the verde (the green)" by residents. June explains that Enki clearly wants to die, otherwise he wouldn't want to be a summer king. Summer kings are meant to choose a Queen and die. The other finalists include the brilliant and shy redheaded Pasqual, and the indifferent Octavio, who writes love poems to an unknown person. Whoever is selected will have little power since it is a moon year. The ambassador to Tokyo, Ueda-sama, will ask the finalists a question. June thinks about how technologically advanced Tokyo is, and thinks about how they can turn living humans into "immortal data streams". The ambassador asks the finalists what they will do if they do not win. Enki says he has already given up his life to choose the city, and he hopes the city will choose him. The audience cheers. June and Gil set off projectors to display a holograph image of June's latest piece of artwork, a political statement which depicts the pyramidal city, a dark handprint for its heart, and words voicing support for Enki. Security then asks them to leave.

June explains there was a nuclear war followed by a series of terrible natural and manmade events some 400 years before. June explains the first Queen, Odette, was willing to do anything to prevent such a tragedy from occurring again – including the symbolic and ritual sacrifice of men, who destroyed the world centuries before. Palmares Tres brings together Candomble, which respects the power of women; Catholicism, which understands the transformation of sacrifice; and Palmares, a city carved by escaped slaves into the jungle in the hopes of a better world. June has no



desire to be royal, however. She only wishes to be a famous artist and for Enki to win. Her classmate, the beautiful Bebel, declares her support for Pasquale, while Paul voices support for Octavio.

Thinking of how Gil almost sought to run for king gives June an idea for her next art project: using glowing skin implant gel to decorate her body like a tree while Enki is announced the winner on hologram. Enki dresses as a commoner, which insults Queen Oreste. Auntie Yaha has secured tickets for June and Gil to the victory reception that night in the Royal Tower. June sees her mother, but even more so hopes to catch Enki's eye. When Enki enters the room, it is Gil who catches his eye. The two dance and kiss while camera bots look on. June is heartbroken. At home that night, she feels like a fool for ever thinking that Enki might like her. Unable to sleep, June hails a pod through the city, watching as giant spider bots repair the pyramidal city. She goes to the hydrogen algae vats, and climbs above them. As she begins to paint a mural, she think of Gil's mother, an amazing artist who works as a tailor. When June returns home, her own mother is angry that she has stayed out all night, and dislikes June's desire to live as an artist because so few people can do it. June and her mother do not get along, for she began sleeping with Yaha before June's father died.

King Enki and Queen Oreste visit the Verde, where thousands turn out to cheer. June watches on hologram. It is then that June's massive mural is seen. It depicts Enki kissing Gil. Enki is incredibly impressed, and salutes the artist responsible, from one artist to another. June is thrilled. In school, June and Bebel called before Principal Iyascu to discuss the Queen's Award, essentially a year of college tuition, a showcase for the winner's talents, and additional funds. June and Bebel are two of the ten finalists. Both girls are stunned and excited, but June suspects favoritism. June goes to see Auntie Yaha, who is just finishing up a meeting with the Tokyo ambassador, who is amazed men have such little power in Palmares Tres. June asks about the Queen's Award. Yaha explains she made sure the Queen knew of June, but has done nothing more. June is let down because she didn't get the Queen's attention on her own, but happy that Yaha cares enough about her to do this. June decides she will do whatever she must to win. Meanwhile, Gil begins seeing Enki. June worries that Gil will fall in love with Enki, only to be hurt in the end.

June explains that the average life expectancy is 200 years old. While lifespans have increased, in Palmares Tres, many freedoms have diminished. June and Gil attend King Enki's first public address in City Hall. Among those assembled are a rare handful of men who have entered politics, called Uncles. June looks forward to seeing Enki, for her pulse races when she does. Enki appears onstage with thirty young Verde workers. The audience is stunned. June realizes he is making a political and artistic statement about hypocrisy. June passes along a message to Enki, asking to meet with him as one artist to another. She has decided on her entry for the Queen's Award. She receives a text message from Enki, telling her to meet him in the spider webs at midnight – the lowest part of the city where the spider bots reside. June wants to work with Enki, using his body as a canvas. Enki asks why he should work together with June. June says it is because she is the best artist in the city.

Analysis

“The Summer Prince” is a young adult dystopian novel by Alaya Dawn Johnson. Dystopianism becomes an important theme in the novel as events begin. The entire background for the setting – centuries after a nuclear war and a series of other disasters – has prepared the way for things as they exist in the present. One normally believes that cities of the future will be far more fair and just than cities of the present day, but this is not so. Things like ritualistic sacrifices – more attuned to the very distant past – are very much central to the future through the ritualistic killing of the king to pave the way for rule by a queen. The instability of the past following the nuclear war has led to a velvet-gloved, steel-fisted government that holds to traditions for the sake of stability at any cost. June finds the entire practice of killing the king to be barbaric. The fact that no one seemingly challenges the way things are speaks to the silent but unquestionable power the government holds. Only Enki dares at first to challenge the status quo – not according to gender, but according to class.

The government itself is quite distinct as well in that it is a matriarchy. While men are not forbidden from serving in political office, it is clear that women run things. The vast majority of the members of Parliament are Aunties. Between the King and Queen, only the Queen has any real power in governing. Indeed, the entire process of selecting a King is merely to determine the next Queen. Indeed, the most dominant characters in the novel are female. June’s current parents are both women. Enki was raised by a woman. Gil lives with his mother; information about his father is lacking. Even the ambassador from Tokyo, Ueda-sama, is surprised by how little power or say men have in Palmares Tres.

Politics in Palmares Tres are thus largely determined by the ritualistic traditions of sacrificing kings and anointing queens, and by the dominance of women in ruling. Likewise, politics are determined by the will of the people in selecting the King that will select the Queen. However, it is apparent that the King has relatively little power beyond choosing the Queen; his function is seen purely as ritualistic show. The citizens of Palmares have relatively little say in government, either, as is reflected in how stationary the classes of citizens are. While upward and downward mobility are possible (June’s mother’s marriage to Auntie Yaha elevated the family; Enki is from the lowest possible social class in Palmares), such mobility is an exception rather than the rule. It is among the reasons why Enki seeks to bring attention to the plight of the lowest classes among them.

One of the ways in which Enki seeks to bring attention to the plight of the most vulnerable is through artistic statement. This is why he appears in lowly clothing to the Queen, and why he appears onstage with thirty residents of the Verde. Enki uses his artistic expression to counter the bigotry that residents of the lower class face at the hands of the upper classes, who look upon them with disdain. Enki seeks to demonstrate that the people of the Verde are not just faceless numbers, but actual human beings worthy of respect.



The reader should also remember that June finds the practice of killing kings to be barbaric, and that she deeply misses her father.

Discussion Question 1

Why does Ueda-sama find the politics and culture of Palmares Tres to be so strange? What amazes him about it?

Discussion Question 2

Why does June find the practice of ritualistically sacrificing kings to be barbaric? Why do so many people support the practice?

Discussion Question 3

What does June recognize in Enki? Why does she so desperately want Enki to notice her?

Vocabulary

orixas, jostled, austere, finality, idle, parsed, luminous, arteries, contemptuous, frenetic, improbable, utiopia, blithely, intricate, laborious, reductive, customs, consort, virility, senescence

Summer

Summary

On December 25, Enki and June decorate the cliffs of the island O Quilombola with Christmas lights. June also tries to avoid thinking about how much she likes Enki, and how much she likes spending time with him, but is unable to do so. She thinks about how Gil and Enki, though not steady, are still the golden couple to the media. At a family dinner with Gil, Mother uses prayer time as a way to lecture June about fulfilling her potential. June is angered and storms out. Gil follows to make sure June is alright. June assures him she is.

June's ancestry is a mix of Brazilian and North American. She explains her great-grandfather and his daughter, April, moved to Japanese-designed Palmares Tres, and she explains her widowed great-grandfather opposed the arrival of plague-stricken war refugees from Sao Palo and Rio, while April wanted to help them. The refugees were ultimately settled on a quarantined island that came to be called A Quarentena, where April ultimately died a mysterious death while helping the refugees. June's great-grandfather ultimately remarried a local woman.

June and Enki meet down in the verde. As they move along, Enki is able to deter and control robots with his modifications, which explains that he is still getting used to things. They collect algae, seeking to turn it into carbon dioxide. At school, June comes upon Bebel, who is preparing a musical performance with Pasqual for her entry in the Queen's Award. June looks forward to the five year summer king's parliament, which discusses reforms and new legislation. Kings are free to offer their opinions. June watches on television as the stink from the algae vats is released just as Enki convenes the meeting. The Aunties are not pleased, and talk about the event continues long after. Enki is suspected, but no one knows how he was able to do it because he was present at the time. June can only grin.

At the Queen's Award finalist dinner, June meets Lucia, a computer code writer for nanobots that self-assemble and replicate. Lucia explains that she thinks none of the finalists are doing anything the Aunties are completely comfortable with. She agrees with June that it is strange the Aunties have picked them. On Sunday, Mother remains home from church services to speak with June about her father, but June doesn't want to talk. She blames Mother for his death. June meets up with Gil later. He can sense something is wrong. He reminds June that her father made his own decisions, but she doesn't want to hear it. She misses her father terribly. She overhears Bebel practicing an original song called "Roda Viva (Wheel of Life)". She encourages Bebel to sing it at a big event coming in about a month. Pasqual reminds June not to forget about her own project.

On the way home from school, June goes to her secret place in a beautiful area of trees. She strips-down half-naked and begins masturbating, but is interrupted by Enki.

They then go to the spider web. There, the locals gather for a fight club. Among them are Enki's old friend Pia and Felix. Felix and Enki fight, with Enki gaining the upper hand. As he does, one of the mechanical spiders comes to life, for it is being called to work. In the rush to flee, someone stabs Enki. It is only a graze, but it is enough to worry June.

A month later, June and Enki are cuddled up on a boat outside the city, waiting for events to unfold. Enki says he used to hate everyone in the city, but no longer does because he has infected himself with bio-nanobots to block the hate. He thinks unkindly about how the Aunties turn away thousands of refugees each year. He says he loves everyone, and kisses June. They then watch as the four islands in the bay light up. The lights blink and glow in time with the song that Bebel and Pasquel are performing back on land. Enki has recorded a series of voices as well, including one of Queen Oreste unhappy with Enki's election. As the song ends, Enki tells June something is going to be collapsing in the city. He can feel it because of all the nanotechnological mods his body has undergone. He predicts a spider will fall apart. He rushes to tell the Aunties. The Aunties are stunned. Ambassador Ueda-sama confirms that Enki can feel things others can't because of the mods. June joins Auntie Yaha, pleading to evacuate Tier Nine, Eight, and Seven, where the collapse is expected. The Queen wishes to know how June knows about this. June explains she is the king's collaborator.

Analysis

Art becomes a dominant theme in this section of the novel as Enki and June begin working on a number of different pieces, including lighting the islands of the bay. Both believe that the use of art will bring about some sort of social change, such as the release of the smell of the Verde into the Parliament chambers. However, the social change that begins to draw attention beyond class inequalities is technology. As June reveals, Enki has undergone a series of nanotechnological modifications which the Queen and the Aunties are not thrilled with. Likewise, June and Lucia find it interesting that everyone the Queen has selected for competition in the Queen's Award are people who are working on things the ruling women are not exactly thrilled about.

The reader can surmise the decision of the Queen and her Aunties to select individuals who are doing things that may be detrimental to the city is for two reasons. First, they want to keep their enemies close and be aware of the things those individuals are working on and how they might help or harm the city. Secondly, by keeping their enemies close, the Queen and the ruling body will be able to either exert control, influence, or shut down the individual should what they are working on become detrimental to the city and the governing body. It is a stroke of genius from the governing body, and consistent with the theme of dystopianism in which the greater good comes at the expense of the individual in favor of the government. It is a politically-cunning move.

The debate that begins to arise is about technology. This is seen through the introduction of Lucia, who programs nanobots, and Enki, who has modded himself to



the point of almost superhumanity. His ability to predict an impending disaster relating to one of the mechanical spiders pushes the boundaries of human consciousness by linking it to technology. It ignites a debate about technology in which Enki clearly favors rapidly catching up with modern technology, but the consequences of this debate will be far-reaching and deadly as the reader will come to find out in future chapters.

Interestingly enough, the reader should note the performance art between June, Enki, and Bebel that occurs toward the end of the summer season. The song has a section of recorded audio clips, including one where Queen Oreste expresses her displeasure with Enki's election. While to the casual reader this may seem merely an embarrassment to the Queen, it should be understood that the clip has much deeper ramifications. It demonstrates that the Queen herself does indeed have limited power in this situation, in that she must accept the will of the people in having chosen Enki. It further demonstrates that the people of Plamares Tres are not completely without power, but have the potential to effect changes in how their society functions should they decide to take the risk. This will be crucial in the final two chapters of the novel.

Discussion Question 1

June and Lucia find it strange that the finalists for the Queen's Award are all doing something the government isn't necessarily thrilled with. Why do you believe June, Lucia, and the other finalists have truly been selected? Explain.

Discussion Question 2

Why does Enki agree to work on art with June? What do the two seek to do with their art? Why?

Discussion Question 3

What is important about the audio clip of Queen Oreste voicing displeasure with Enki's election to be king? Why is this so important?

Vocabulary

exclusive, prestigious, transgression, irreverence, iconoclasm, maudlin, diffident, officious, incongruous, collaborator

Fall (Section 1, Pages 145 -194)

Summary

Gil, Enki, and June get together for dinner in Enki's apartment. June is saddened because her kiss with Enki has not led anywhere else. Gil is angry that Enki has been sleeping around with people to get things in return, such as mods from Ueda-sama. Since the near-disaster, technology is the primary issue on everyone's minds. Lucia has been thrust into the spotlight as a result – including her ability to do illegal things, such as picking up banned newsfeeds. Enki later turns 18, and his birthday party is televised. Gil is still upset about Enki sleeping around, and thinks that June can keep Enki safe.

June's mother is unhappy with her newfound fame, and worries her daughter is sleeping around with everyone she can. June says it is none of her business what she does or does not do. Auntie Yaha tries to get June and her mother to make peace, but both refuse. June then goes out for dinner with Auntie Yaha and Ueda-sama. Ueda-sama explains that the older a body is, the less capable it is to accept a mod. Ueda-sama is 304 years old, himself. June begins to wonder if the Aunties have a point about too much technology in life. While the people of the lowest levels are crazy for technology, the upper levels are cautious. Around the cities, stencils have been appearing everywhere. The stencil depicts Enki and June taking in the world and putting out light, and are in support of advanced technology. They are making people upset. June denies to Gil that she has anything to do with them. June herself believes that Palmares must modernize its technology, but that it can be done without getting extreme.

Sebastiao, a famous reporter, interviews June on technology issues, including a new bill that would give the Queen complete say over what technology is and is not allowed. Sebastiao also presses the possibility of a love triangle with her, Enki, and Gil, but June denies this. People in the city are dividing up on the issue of technology. One is either an isolationist or a technophile. Weapon-bots have been seen in the city, which can be traced to Salvador. Enki believes an Auntie is responsible. A technophile mob takes Ueda-sama prisoner. Two innocent 19-year-old bystanders are killed by a nano-cloud. Enki demands Ueda's release. Lucia is revealed as one of the leaders of the technophiles. She says she will release Ueda when a unilateral trade agreement with Tokyo 10 for better technology is made, to be followed by other cities. Ueda calls the technophiles barbarians, and says the Aunties and the Queen are trapped in the Royal Tower. Enki agrees to help open the city. Lucia is arrested and Ueda is freed. A funeral is held for the dead bystanders. The Queen delivers a statement, saying that humanity is valued over technology.

Enki and June talk. Enki believes in greater freedom in the city. He also believes the Aunties have too much power. Imprisoned, Lucia reveals herself to June as the creator of the warbot nanocloud responsible for the deaths of the bystanders. She explains she only intended for the cloud bot to shoot paper bullets, not the chunks of metal that killed them. The cloud has since disappeared. Lucia refuses to say who her ally is who helped

make the cloud a possibility, but confirms the ally is in the government. Finally, she relents and outs Auntie Maria, head of security, as her ally. Later, Mother reveals to June that the other Aunties know Maria is to blame, but are biding their time before they strike. It upsets June because innocent people have died.

Analysis

Rather than creating a debate about class and privilege, June and Enki have unwittingly unleashed a debate about technology. Politics becomes crucial here as two primary movements emerge – the technophiles, who favor openness and advanced technology; and the isolationists, who oppose the kind of technology the technophiles are seeking (such as the kind the residents of Tokyo 10 use to secure their consciousness with data streams). The political turmoil leads to mass protests and open violence as the technophiles take Ueda-sama hostage, and two innocent bystanders are killed. June, enraged at what Lucia and the other technophiles have seemingly done, insists on knowing how they have managed to bring in weapon-bots. Lucia confesses that she is working with Auntie Maria, a surprising revelation.

June herself takes something of a middle road. While she believes that Palmares Tres must catch up to the rest of the world technologically, she believes that there is such a thing as too much technology – including the Tokyo 10 practice of data consciousness. This sort of thing denies that which makes human beings most human – their human bodies and human nature. As a result, she believes that both sides have points, but neither side is willing to compromise with one another. It is a question of politics that seems to have a solution that will satisfy neither side fully.

As it becomes apparent, the Queen and the Aunties seize upon the opportunity to invest the government with more power. In keeping with the theme of dystopianism, the Queen presents a new piece of legislation to the Parliament to be discussed wherein the Queen herself will have final say over what is and what is not allowed in Palmares with respect to technology. The Queen will ultimately have immense power as a result, and will be able to deny the very thing the technophiles are seeking. Interestingly enough, while June seeks a middle road, Enki is willing to open up the city and initiate trade with Tokyo 10 for advanced technology. Ueda himself does not like how things have proceeded, and he has no hesitation in calling the technophiles barbarians.

June is devastated by the outcome of everything as a whole, however. She is upset because innocent people have died, that more people have been imprisoned, that people have no stake in things – such as Ueda – have been thrown in the middle, and that things only seem to have gotten worse. June was hoping for peaceful changes; instead, what is happening is violent digging in. The government is seeking to assume more power rather than giving it up. For a society dependent upon order and tradition, violent change is a poison that must be treated as such.



Discussion Question 1

Why is June so horrified with how things have turned out regarding the political division on technology? What did she hope would happen instead?

Discussion Question 2

What are the two primary positions people take in the debate on technology? Where does June come down on the issue? Why?

Discussion Question 3

How do the Queen and Parliament respond to the violence over technology? Do you believe their reaction is appropriate? Why or why not? How does June feel about this? Why?

Vocabulary

domesticity, uncharacteristically, municipal, prominence, detritus, comport, conservative, conspicuously, approximation, nonchalance, unilateral, affixed, apropos, implacable, ululation, reaggregated, handsbreadth, secluded, serenely, loquacious

Fall (Section 2, Pages 195 - 239)

Summary

June meets with Gil, who encourages her to keep focusing on winning the Queen's Award. June is still sad from all she has learned. She dwells on the fact that Enki, like the bystanders, will soon die. She does not want Enki to die. Neither does Gil. But June sees no way to stop it. The king must die so his choice of a queen is incontestable. Leaders who make sacrifices encourage citizens to make sacrifices. The elected king is legitimized by the people, and his choice of Queen is sanctified by the gods through his death. June considers it all barbaric. During exams, a note arrives for June who is not doing well. The note is from the Queen. The Queen explains she is having June pulled from the exams so that her grades can be altered to keep her in the running for Queen's Award. The Queen wants June to win, but the final decision will be based on politics. A Queen's Award cannot be given to a bad student. June is stunned. Principal Ieyascu is angered but forced to follow orders.

The following day, Queen Oreste announces a full-scale investigation into the Pernambuco Affair –the death of the two innocents, so called due to the weapon originating with the Pernambuco militia in Salvador. Auntie Maria is called to testify. Enki calls June to testify. Enki asks for the name Lucia gave to June, but Queen Oreste suddenly adjourns the investigation for the day. In private, Oreste, Maria, June, and Enki meet. Maria reveals that it has all been a sham: the weapons bot has been given to the technophiles in order to create an incident that the government could capitalize on to crush the technophiles. June and Enki are stunned. Oreste promises June the Queen's Award in exchange for her silence.

June has Enki throw a party to get her mind off things. During the party, June dances with Bebel, who says she considers June a friend and will have no hard feelings toward June should June win, because she has worked so hard. It makes June feel horrible. She tells Bebel she will disqualify herself so Bebel can win. Before Bebel can respond, June leaves her, goes off alone, and cries. Enki finds her. They have sex. June encourages Enki to run away with her. He agrees to try it with her. Ueda is asked to help provide a distraction. Ueda agrees to help. June, meanwhile, gives her Mother the gift of several beautiful drawings. Her Mother is deeply touched. She then meets up with Enki, who reveals the distraction Ueda has provided. Ueda has killed himself. June and Enki then flee the city for Salvador.

Analysis

In keeping with the theme of dystopianism, the truth behind the violence surrounding technology is horrifying. Auntie Maria was working with the technophiles not to help them, but to create a situation in which government action and gathering of more power was necessary. As a result, the government has indeed gathered more power, all under



the guise of doing things for the greater good. Two innocent people have died as a result of the power play made by the government. June herself is sickened by the truth, because she never intended to unwittingly help the government gain more power through her efforts at seeking change.

June wishes she could change the politics of everything as well. The deaths of the innocents remind her of the pending death of Enki. She does her best to rationalize the ritualistic killings – but the ideas that they bring stability, that they legitimize and sanctify leaders, and that they keep things orderly do not seem to be sufficient justification for June to accept. She continues to consider the entire practice barbaric, and certainly at odds with what a modern city should be. Indeed, the Queen's note to June that the Queen's Award itself will be decided by a matter of politics rather than genuine artistic talent is disturbing to June.

At last, June has had enough of Palmares Tres and its customs. The power grab by the government, the duplicity of the government in the violence that has broken out, the seeming inability to make changes possible, Gil's request that June try to save Enki, and knowledge that Enki's death is only a few months away lead June to convince Enki to flee Palmares Tres with her. Leaving the city means abandoning the traditions and customs of Palmares, but Enki is determined to go with June. Surprisingly, he doesn't put up much of a fight – something which the reader should remember for later.

Discussion Question 1

What is the truth behind the deaths of the two innocent bystanders? Who is to blame? Why? How does June react? Why?

Discussion Question 2

How does the government justify its role in the death of the innocent bystanders? Do you agree or disagree with the government's reasoning and its actions? Why or why not?

Discussion Question 3

For what reasons does June run away from Palmares Tres with Enki? Why does Enki seem so willing to go? If you were in June and Enki's position, would you flee the city or stay and fight? Why?

Vocabulary

catechism, irrevocable, unassailable, unprejudiced, impartiality, brusque, convivial, egregious, withering, hiatus, reconvening, enigmatic, ambiguity, berth

Winter

Summary

June and Enki have been traveling for over a month now by foot. June is glad they have run away because she could not imagine Enki ever dying. As they walk, they discuss things like politics. If June had a city, she explains, she would let men run things as well as women. This is stunning to Enki, who has grown up believing only women can truly run things. As they continue to travel, they avoid people and homesteads, just in case the people might be connected to the Aunties. As they pass a town, they must hide from a scout flier from Palmares, which offers a reward for information about June and Enki.

As they arrive in Salvador months later, a dead body greets them on the beach. Enki says they must move quickly into High Town, for the lower areas are controlled by vicious gangs. They meet two teens, Zanita and Tomas, who travel with them around the gang violence that breaks out in the evening. Tomas is seriously wounded by a gunshot as he tries to get through. They take shelter in Enki's mother's old house, where he digs up an old rag doll she had buried there years before. The doll is given to June. It contains one of two copies of the entire old library of Salvador. The other copy was Enki's mother's way to convince the Aunties to let her into Palmares. Meanwhile, Zanita begins carving a piece of wood into a four-legged animal. Enki asks her to show him how. June is impressed with Zanita's talents. They each decide to carve a third of the tree.

It is then that Enki confesses to June that he is going to die. June is stunned to learn that Enki has been implanted with nanobots that will kill him within a year of being elected, whether or not he is in the city. He has no chance of survival. He only came to Salvador for June. Suddenly, Auntie Maria and security forces arrive to bring June and Enki back to the city. Zanita has betrayed them. June can only think of death. It makes June reflect on her own father, who begged to be legally put to death rather than linger in life in pain. June remembers how she blamed her mother for letting it happen, and how she spent the last few months of her father's life angry rather than spending time with him.

Back in Palmares Tres, June's body art is forcibly removed and she is imprisoned. The Queen visits June. June asks to see her mother and Gil. The Queen agrees. Gil visits the next day. He and June have both realized how much Enki actually wants to die. June's Mother visits that night. She reveals that Yaha thinks a deal can be cut for June's freedom if June is willing to publicly recant and take a government job. Mother then explains that some of her husband's final words to her were to support June's love of art. June's Mother believes she has failed. The next morning, as he dies, Enki chooses June to be the next Queen with a red digital handprint. Oreste vows to fight the choice, but June reminds her that Enki's blood has sanctified the choice. Oreste has no choice but to step down. Among the files in the doll's memory chip is Queen Odette's deathbed confessional, wherein she describes the ritualistic king killing as being her husband's

idea, and wherein she did not want more than two more cycles of such killing. June has released this information to the public, and is waiting for the public response. Having bonded parts of himself with the city through modding, part of Enki's consciousness remains around June and still speaks to her.

Analysis

The reason why Enki does not put up a fight, and leaves Palmares Tres so willingly with June is because he knew he would die whether or not he remained in the city. The same nanotechnology that Enki used to give himself extraordinary capabilities also stands poised to kill him whether or not he is back in Palmares Tres on the appointed day of sacrifice. Here, the reach of the Queen and Palmares Tres is so great that it extends to other lands and other cities. June is devastated to learn that all of her efforts to at least save Enki have been in vain. It would appear as if the dystopian government of Palmares Tres has won in the end – and won handily.

However, things do not work out the way Queen Oreste has hoped. As it is revealed, men are blamed for the wars of the past, so in the present, men are held accountable for the actions of their ancestors. In a blatantly bigoted statement earlier in the novel, and speaking for the collective city, June's own mother explains that no man is to be trusted with power because no man will give up power because they are men. It is implied that women are not power-hungry and willingly cede power, but as demonstrated in the case of Oreste, this is not true. Women are just as prone to corruption and ambition of power as men are. Enki's selection of June as the next Queen does not meet with peaceful acceptance on the part of Oreste, but protest.

Now the ruler of Palmares Tres by Enki's sacrifice, June has the power and the ability to change things for the better in ways that she never could have done before. Her first major act as Queen is to put knowledge – and therefore, power – in the hands of the people by revealing that Queen Odette – the first queen – never intended for the ritualistic slaying of kings to last more than two more cycles, even after she opposed her husband's plan in the first place. How the public responds to this is not revealed in the novel, and June herself has no idea how the public will respond. If the slaying of kings is to be done away with, the entire nature and structure of the society of Palmares Tres will be undone. Whether or not this will be disastrous or beneficial is also left unknown.

Discussion Question 1

Why has Enki decided to go to Salvador with June? How does June react upon learning the truth? Why?

Discussion Question 2

Even though June does not want to be Queen, she accepts. Why?



Discussion Question 3

At the end of the novel, June exposes the public to the original intent and reasoning for the king-killing ritual. How do you believe the public will react to this? Do you believe it will bring about change for the better, change for the worse, or no change at all? Explain.

Vocabulary

pilgrims, fugitives, bombril, surreptitiously, bemused, studiously, sedation, lingering, blasphemous, recant, abdicate

Characters

June

June Costa is the main character and narrator of the novel “The Summer Prince” by Alaya Dawn Johnson. June is an incredibly artistic and beautiful 17-year-old girl from a mixed-racial background, with North and South American ancestors. June is incredibly intelligent and perceptive, benefitting from an elite education due to her life in the upper classes of Palmares Tres. June does not get along well with her mother, who cheated on June’s father while he was dying. June gets along far better with Auntie Yaha, her stepmother. June spends most of her time either creating art or with her best friend, Gil. Unlike the vast majority of people in Palmares, June finds the ritualistic killing of kings to be barbaric and backwards. Her opposition to the custom increases as she falls in love with Enki.

In Enki, June finds a fellow artist and a wonderful person – but she is made jealous by the fact that Enki only seems to have eyes for Gil. June and Enki begin working on art projects together, as June seeks to win the Queen’s Award which will pay for college and allow her to begin her life as an artist. However, their efforts lead to political division in the city. June later becomes horrified to learn that the government has fueled the fire further between technophiles and isolationists in order to gain more power over the people of the city. June and Enki flee the city for Salvador, where June learns the Enki only ran away with her to make her happy. She is devastated to learn that, due to nanobots, Enki will die with or without being in the city. Back in the city, as Enki dies, he names June the next Queen. Though June doesn’t want to be Queen, she knows the position will allow her the power to try to change things for the better. Her first official act as Queen is to release to the public information about the original cause and intent of sacrificing the king.

Enki

Enki is an 18-year-old native of Salvador who grew up dirt-poor in the Verde in Palmares Tres. Described as very dark-skinned, bisexual, and artistic, Enki is determined to die for the city because he believes more will be gained by his death than his life. He hopes to bring attention to the plight of the lower classes of Palmares Tres, and change things for them for the better. Enki celebrates his last year alive as king, sleeping with everyone he can (usually in exchange for some sort of favor, such as technological modifications to his body) and beginning an open relationship with Gil. Enki comes to support the technophiles advocating for a more open and technologically-advanced society, and later journeys with June to Salvador out of love for her. He ensures that June has a copy of the now-destroyed library in Salvador, and ensures that June becomes Queen upon his death so that she can change the city for the better.

Lucia

Lucia is a pretty girl of 17 who is adept at nanotechnological programming, and is selected as one of the finalists for the Queen's Award. She becomes a leader of the technophiles, determined to bring more freedom and technology to Palmares Tres no matter the cost. To this end, she becomes part of a plot with Auntie Marie wherein weapons are used during a protest, and where Ambassador Ueda-sama is taken hostage. Lucia is arrested for her part in events, and imprisoned. It is Lucia who sells out Auntie Marie to June.

Gil

Gil is June's best friend. Seventeen, Gil is the gay son of a tailor and amazing artist who works for the upper classes. Gil begins an open relationship with Enki, though he dislikes how promiscuous Enki is. Gil later pleads with June to find a way to keep Enki safe.

Mother

June's mother, Valencia, is a former professor-turned-housewife to Auntie Yaha, with whom she had an affair prior to her husband's death. Valencia is a strict woman who disagrees intensely with June about how she is living her life and how she seeks to make a living as an artist. Valencia believes no good can come of it because artists are rarely successful. Ultimately, Valencia admits to June she has failed in the job of supporting her daughter – especially because her husband told her on his deathbed to support June's artwork.

Auntie Yaha

Auntie Yaha is June's stepmother, and Valencia's wife. The two women began seeing one another prior to Valencia's husband's death, insulting and hurting June deeply. Auntie Yaha is a rising star in Parliament, and is a close confidante and ally of Queen Oreste. It is Yaha who first brings the Queen's attention to June's artwork, encouraging the Queen on her own to choose June as a finalist for the Queen's Award.

Bebel

Bebel is a beautiful 17-year-old girl who is incredibly musically-talented. When the novel begins, she is something of an antagonist toward June, but through the course of the novel, the two become friends. Bebel is one of the finalists for the Queen's Award, and tells June she will not be angry or upset if June wins. This is the degree to which Bebel has come to admire and respect June by the end of the novel.

Pasqual

Pasqual is one of the three finalists for King, but he does not win. He goes on to work musically with Bebel, growing very close to her by the end of the novel. Pasqual reminds June throughout the novel to remain focused on her project for the Queen's Award.

Queen Oreste

Queen Oreste is the reigning ruler of Palmares Tres. Oreste is a cold and calculating woman whose primary duty is to ensure the continuance of tradition in the ritualized killing of the king, and to ensure order and tranquility in Palmares Tres. She is disappointed in Enki's election, and is annoyed by his constant social reform efforts. Oreste becomes part of a conspiracy to grow the power of the government by staging a violent attack to make it look like the technophiles are responsible. Oreste later contests Enki's decision to choose June as Queen, but has no choice other than to abdicate.

Ueda-sama

Toshio Ueda-sama is the ambassador to Palmares Tres from the City of Tokyo 10. Ueda-sama is over 300 years old, and represents one of the most technologically-advanced civilizations on the planet. He befriends Enki and June, and is later taken as a hostage by the technophiles whom he calls barbarians. When June and Enki ask Ueda-sama for his help in their escape, he commits suicide in order to distract the authorities.

Symbols and Symbolism

Candomble

Candomble is one of the three central tenets and systems of belief in the society, culture, and city of Palmares Tres. Candomble is a religion which emphasizes the power and importance of women, and is common among natives and mixed-racial people of Brazil. The belief in women becomes central to the politics and culture of Palmares Tres.

Catholicism

Catholicism is one of the three central tenets and systems of belief in the society, culture, and city of Palmares Tres. Catholicism, a widely popular religion in Brazil, is prized in Palmares Tres for its emphasis on tradition and transformation through sacrifice. This is taken to undergird the ritualistic sacrificial slaying of the kings, and becomes crucial to politics in Palmares Tres.

Palmares

Palmares is one of the three central tenets and systems of belief in the society, culture, and city of Palmares Tres. Palmares was a city built in the jungle by slaves centuries before when they sought to begin the world anew. Palmares Tres is named after Palmares in the hopes that a new civilization will be established on the ashes of the old which ended in nuclear war.

Holos

Holos, short for holograms, are the form of television and communication used by the residents of Palmares Tres. Holograms, three-dimensional images, are projected wherever hologram generators are set up. They are used to broadcast programs ranging from political in nature to entertainment. June sees her first king killing at the age of eight by way of hologram. She later witnesses the death of Enki by hologram, and witnesses her own selection as Queen by hologram.

Mural

A mural depicting Enki kissing Gil is created by June on the side of a vat of algae in the Verde. When touring the Verde, Enki sees the painting, and salutes the artist as one to another. June is able to claim responsibility for the mural by passing along a message to Enki as one artist to another. The mural thus signals the beginning of an artistic, and later sexual relationship between June and Enki.



Sack clothing

Sack clothing is worn by Enki upon presenting himself to Queen Oreste after winning the election. Sack clothing is also worn by thirty residents brought up from the Verde during Enki's first public address. The sack clothing is worn to distinguish the Verde workers from the other elites gathered in the audience, and to make a social point about hypocrisy wherein the elites say they want a better future for all, but do nothing to make it happen for some.

The Queen's Award

The Queen's Award consists of one year's worth of college tuition, a showcase of talents, and a year of funding for the winner to begin a career in whatever path the individual decides upon. Ten finalists are selected for the award, among them June, Lucia, and Bebel. The Queen's Award, however, has nothing to do with talent but everything to do with politics. The contestants are each responsible for doing something the government is not exactly comfortable with – such as June's politically-motivated art. The Queen wants to keep their enemies close and be aware of the things those individuals are working on and how they might help or harm the city. By keeping their enemies close, the Queen and the ruling body will be able to either exert control, influence, or shut down the individual should what they are working on become detrimental to the city and the governing body.

Algae

Algae is collected at the lowest levels of Palmares Tres in the Verde, the green subtropical base level of the city. Algae is collected into large vats where it is converted into hydrogen to power the city. As a result, much of the Verde smells horrendous, and its people are the poorest of the poor.

Mods

Nanotechnological modifications, or mods, are enhancements and alterings made to the human body which give the individual new abilities. Mods are mostly frowned upon by the Queen and her government because they change the nature of a person's humanity. For example, Ueda-sama's mods have allowed him to live to over 300 years of age, while Enki's mods have allowed him to tap into the mechanical consciousness of the city.

Memory chip

A memory chip hidden in an old door in Salvador is dug up by Enki when he and June flee Palmares Tres. The memory chip contains one of two digital copies of the now-

destroyed library of Salvador. Among the files in the library is an audio confessional by the first queen ever, Odette, who says the killings of kings was the idea of her husband, and that they were not meant to last more than two cycles.

Settings

Palmares Tres

Palmares Tres is a magnificent, massive, pyramid-shaped city composed of steel and glass with ten levels, or tiers, numbered from one to ten located on the coastline of Brazil. Palmares Tres is so named for the synthesis of Candomble, Catholicism, and the history of the first city of Palmares. It is ruled by a Queen selected by an elected King in ritualistic sacrifice, and by a mostly-female Parliament popularly elected. Palmares Tres serves as home to June and is the primary setting for the novel.

The City of Palmares Tres is a dystopian society where the government is all-powerful, men are second-class citizens, and the lower classes of people who live on the lower tiers of the city (especially tier one) are largely ignored and forced to live in deplorable conditions. The lowest level of the city is referred to as “The Stink” or “The Verde” for the smell of its green algae as it is converted into hydrogen to power the city. The uppermost level of the city is tier one, where the Queen and the most powerful politicians live.

The Verde

The Verde is the lowest level, or tier one, of the City of Palmares Tres. It is where energy is produced for the city by way of the conversion of algae into hydrogen. The Verde is the polite name for the level which is demeaningly referred to as “the Stink” by elites due to the smell from the algae collection vats. The people of the Verde number in the tens of thousands, and are the poorest of the poor in the city. They are treated as second-class citizens and are forced to live in deplorable conditions. Enki has grown up as a member of the Verde class, and he spends his one year as king in the attempt to bring attention and relief to the plight of his fellow Verdeans.

The Spider Web

The Spider Web is a massive, underground level of the City of Palmares Tres, full of tunnels and storage silos where the massive maintenance spider-bots are kept. The tunnels and underground facilities are visited only by government officials for maintenance, and by gangs and courageous individuals who participate in fight clubs. June and Enki meet in the Spider Web to plot art, and so Enki can participate in the fight clubs.

Tier Ten

Tier Ten is the uppermost level of the City of Palmares Tres. It is where the Queen and the most high-level politicians and functionaries of the city live and work. Tier Ten is

known for its wealth, splendor, and luxury. June visits Tier Ten a number of times through the novel, especially when she becomes friends with Enki. It is the height of power, prestige, and privilege possible in the City, and ultimately becomes June's home when she becomes Queen.

Salvador

Salvador is a mostly-destroyed city several months' journey by foot to the south of Palmares Tres. It is the home city of Enki and his mother, and is beset by gang violence. It is the city from which Enki and his mother flee years before, and ultimately the city to which Enki returns with June years later after fleeing Palmares Tres. There, Enki recovers the memory chip containing a digital copy of the now-destroyed library of Salvador which is given to June.

Themes and Motifs

Dystopianism

Dystopianism is an important theme in the novel “The Summer Prince” by Alaya Dawn Johnson. Dystopianism involves a government, organization, association, or company that exercises tremendous or total power and influence in the lives of everyday people, often denying their human and legal rights in the name of the greater good. Those in power will do whatever it takes to retain power, and will do whatever is necessary to secure their own ends. On the surface, those with power have the stated goal of helping the people, but in reality, they are more likely to harm people than help them.

Four hundred years before the novel begins, a nuclear war devastates the planet. Humanity scrapes by, and survives mostly in cities. Among them is the metropolis of Palmares Tres, which has sustained itself on precise order and absolute rule by government under the auspice of security and stability. The rights of the citizen are subordinate to the government. Whatever the government rules at the end of the day goes. Much of this is centered around the five-year tradition of electing and killing a King so that the King may choose a Queen to rule for four years. June considers the practice barbaric, but most people seem to love it without realizing how it devalues human life. The point, June contends, is for people to live and live well, not to die.

Among the things the Queen and the government do not trust are forms of super-advanced technology, such as the consciousness stream of Tokyo 10. It is worried that people will come to value technology over actual humanity and daily life. As such, much technology is outlawed in the city. Knowing that people are innovative – especially young people – the government holds true to the Queen’s Award contest, where supposedly the ten brightest and most talented teens of the city are given a chance to win money to begin their lives. The Queen’s Award, however, has nothing to do with talent, but everything to do with politics. The finalists are each responsible for doing something the government is not totally in support of – such as June’s politically-motivated art. The Queen wants to keep her enemies close, and wants to be aware of the things those individuals are working on and how they might help or harm the city. She can then exploit or destroy as needed. This gives the Queen important measures of control.

The Queen and the government will go to any length to maintain power and control. This includes the real reason behind the violence surrounding the division on technology. It is learned that Auntie Maria was working with the technophiles not to help them, but to create a situation in which government action and gathering of more power was deemed necessary to prevent further violence. As a result, the government has gathered much more power, all under the auspice of doing things for the greater good. Two innocent people have died as a result of the power play made by the government. Additionally, the truth behind the king killing rituals have been covered up for centuries in order for women to maintain power, as June learns. June reveals to the public that

the king killing was not meant to last more than two cycles, and that Queen Odette opposed the idea in the first place, with the idea stemming from her husband king.

Matriarchy

Matriarchy is an important theme in the novel “The Summer Prince” by Alaya Dawn Johnson. Matriarchy is a system of government, society, or power in which females rule. In the novel, every aspect of life in the city of Palmares Tres – from the government down to the family – is nearly completely run by women.

The matriarchal control in the City of Palmares Tres has its roots in blaming men for the nuclear war four centuries before, and rested on the proposition that men will never freely give up power. June does not agree with these propositions, and finds their extensions – the ritualistic killing of democratically-elected Kings so the King may make the choice of ruling Queen – to be barbaric. While the King has some small amounts of power, the King is more a figurehead and second to the Queen who has real authority and final say. Likewise, the chief governing body of the city, Parliament, is composed mainly of women. Very few men hold power, largely due to the bigoted sentiments held against them by the majority of people, including other men.

Men are seen as second-class citizens and people, both in public and at home. This is reflected in June’s own mother cheating on her father before his death, and her ignoring his final plea that June’s love of art be supported. Likewise, June’s current parents consist of her mother and her mother’s wife, Auntie Yaha. Enki is not raised by a man, but by his mother. Likewise, Gil’s own father is absent from the picture as Gil has been raised by his mother. The vast majority of contestants for the Queen’s Award are teen girls, with the three top contenders – June, Bebel, and Lucia – all being female.

As June later learns, it was never the intention of the original King and Queen to make men second-class citizens, or to harbor gender-bigoted sentiments about them. Indeed, the first sacrifice of a king came from the king’s own decision. The first Queen, Odette, did not want the sacrificial killings to last more than two cycles because she too believed in equality between men and women, not that one should die or live at the expense of the other. June releases this information to the public, but how the matriarchal-dominated society will handle this is left unclear at the end of the novel.

Politics

Politics is an important theme in the novel “The Summer Prince” by Alaya Dawn Johnson. Politics – essentially the art of running a government of any given place, and of making, supporting, or opposing policies and issues – factor crucially into the plot of the novel. Politics in the novel are influenced by history, culture, and dystopianism in general. June largely dislikes politics, but knows that they matter in a place like Palmares Tres.

Politics in Palmares Tres are largely determined by women, for men are seen as power-hungry and relegated to second-class citizens. All political aspects of the city revolve around matriarchal control, and the sacrificial killing of Kings to the benefit of choosing a Queen to rule. As such, very few men are ever elected to political office, and even then, have little say in things. June finds the entire system barbaric, and makes politically-motivated art that she hopes will peacefully transform society.

However, the peaceful transition that June and Enki hope for leads to division and violence. Two camps emerge in the political debate about openness, freedom, and technology. There are the technophiles, who kidnap Ueda-sama as a hostage to force the government to open up and allow advanced technology into the City; and there are the isolationists, who favor things as they currently are though they admit there may be room for some technological improvement. June herself takes a middle road in politics, believing the city should catch up technologically, but does not need hyper-advanced technology like the city of Tokyo 10. The political division leads to turmoil, violence, and the government seizing more power.

As June learns, everything that goes on in the city is somehow politically motivated. This includes the relegation of men, the rule of women at home and in public, and even includes seemingly innocent things, such as the Queen's Award. Even this is politically-charged, as June learns from the Queen herself. The winner of the contest will be determined not by talent or skill, but by the politics of the situation. To keep June quiet about the truth behind the violence at the technology protest, she is offered the award but ultimately refuses it.

Art

Art is an important theme in the novel "The Summer Prince" by Alaya Dawn Johnson. Art – including everything from painting to performance and expression – plays a central role not only in June's life, but in the efforts of June and Enki to effect social change in the city of Palmares Tres. Art for them is not merely a question of beauty, but change and transformation.

June is an incredible artist. She longs to make a living as an artist. Her deceased father roundly supported June's efforts to be an artist, while her mother staunchly opposes any such attempt out of fear it will leave her daughter penniless. Only late in the novel does June's mother express her failure at having supported June's artistic talents. June herself works in many mediums, from fine painting –such as the mural on the algae vat in the Verde – to holographic representation – the political statement about the sacrificing of the king. June hopes that she will become a famous artist, and that her art will change the world.

Enki himself appreciates and loves art. His introduction to June is based on their mutual love and creation of art. Enki uses his position as King to draw attention to the plight of the lower classes by exposing them to the public through sack clothing and televised addresses. Enki is less concerned about the gender inequality in the city as he is about

the broader scope of class inequality in the city. Nevertheless, Enki agrees with June that gender inequality is wrong, though he has no qualms himself about what must be done to him at the end of the year.

June endeavors to do her best to win the Queen's Award so that she may begin her life as an artist when Enki is gone and she is on her own. She becomes artistic partners with Enki, doing everything from fouling the air of Parliament at City Hall to lighting up the islands of the bay. However, when June learns she will win the Queen's Award based on politics rather than substance, she decides to flee the City of Palmares Tres instead.

Bigotry

Bigotry is an important theme in the novel "The Summer Prince" by Alaya Dawn Johnson. Bigotry involves feelings, statements, and actions against an individual or group of people based on things such as race, gender, age, and so on. In the novel, bigotry is a cause and product of the City of Palmares Tres, its customs, social order, and government.

Four hundred years before the beginning of the novel, a nuclear war devastated much of the world. Humanity barely managed to survive. The cities and communities that have formed since then are often a result of the aftermath of that war. Palmares Tres is no different. The vast majority of the citizens of Palmares Tres blame the past nuclear war on men, and in the present hold that no man can be truly trusted with power. They believe women are immune from the temptations of power, and so the parliamentary government is composed predominantly of women. The true ruling figure of the city is indeed a queen rather than a king. June does not buy into the bigotry common among the citizens of Palmares Tres.

As June later learns through the digital library of Salvador, the original king sacrifice was the decision of the king, not the queen, and certainly not of women in general. The first queen, Odette, did not blame men for what had happened to the world, and believed that men and women were meant to be equal. Indeed, she opposed the plan of the king to be sacrificed, but ultimately agreed for the sake of ensuring both rulers and commoners had to sacrifice for a new world. However, Odette did not intend the ritual to last more than two cycles. June releases this information to the public, but their reaction is unknown at the end of the novel. As the reader learns, ambition and love of power clearly exists among the women as well. Oreste disputes June's claim to the throne, for she does not want to give up power herself.

In addition to the bigotry against men, there is also bigotry directed at people of the lower class of workers in the Verde. They are considered nothing more than peasants to be appeased with promises of a better future, but to which no better future is ever delivered or enabled to be made. The poor are treated with contempt and a passing concern. For example, Queen Oreste only ever ventures into the Verde at the insistence of Enki. She does not wish to be among the poor, but has no problem requiring them to

work in algae conversion. It is believed that June, as Queen, will bring about the possibility for social change and advancement.

Styles

Point of View

Alaya Dawn Johnson tells her novel “The Summer Prince” from the first-person limited-omniscient point of view of main character and principal protagonist, June Costa. Small sections of the novel are also devoted to the first-person perspectives of other characters, including Enki and Gil. Because the story largely centers around June, the story is told from her perspective. This gives the reader unique and intimate insight into June’s thoughts and feelings, allowing them to experience things the way that she experiences them. The limited-omniscient aspect of the narrative is reflective of the fact that no one person can know everything at once, especially as events are unfolding. This adds a level of suspense and believability to the plot, as the reader only learns about, and experiences things at the rate at which June does.

Language and Meaning

Alaya Dawn Johnson tells her novel “The Summer Prince” in language that is educated and straightforward. This is done for at least two reasons. First, in the post-nuclear war world, when survival was critical, people could only ever be straightforward and to-the-point with one another. That straightforward language carried over into Palmares Tres in the day and age of the novel. Likewise, the straightforward language used in the novel is reflective of not only June’s age, but the target audience of the novel –young adults. Secondly, the educated aspect of the language stems from the fact that June is a member of the upper classes, and has received a stellar education. June uses words like “loquacious” instead of “talkative” and “nonchalance” instead of “careless” or “casual”. This allows the reader to relate to June, and also adds to the believability that her character is well-educated.

Structure

Alaya Dawn Johnson divides her novel “The Summer Prince” into four chapters. Each chapter is given a season for a title, beginning with Spring, proceeding to Summer, then Fall, then concluding with Winter. Each chapter recounts the events of that season within a single year from Enki’s spring election through his winter death. Likewise, the seasons of growth, life, downfall, and death reflect the stages of human life and Enki’s final year alive as king. While Winter comes in as the shortest chapter in the novel, Fall comes in as the longest chapter as events move rapidly toward the climax in Winter.



Quotes

When I was eight, my papai took me to the park to watch a king die.

-- June (Summer)

Importance: One of June's earliest memories is being taken by her father to see the reigning king die. It is a citywide event which more closely resembles a sad carnival rather than a funeral. The deaths of Summer Kings are considered a sacrificial necessity for the city, to maintain order peace. Such a fate will ultimately come to Enki, and the consequences will be June's.

The third thing you should know about Enki is that he wants to die.

-- June (Spring)

Importance: No one who doesn't want to die ever wants to be a Summer King, because there is no other possible outcome. The Summer King must always die. Because Enki wants to be a summer king, June can only surmise that he only wants to be killed.

So I take my lover, my king, and I put him on a pedestal and I cut him down. A man, like the ones who ruined the world.

-- June (Spring)

Importance: Here, June imagines she is the first Queen and Founder of Palmares Tres, Odette. Disgusted and horrified by the nuclear war and all subsequent devastation, Odette founded Palmares Tres to begin the world anew. Such a world would rely on the power of women, and would ritualistically kill men because men were blamed for the destruction of the world before.

And if my heart races at the thought of seeing him again, well, I'm awake with a pulse.

-- June (Spring)

Importance: June and Gil attend the king's first public address at City Hall. Though Enki has been seeing Gil, and several other men, June still can't help but have a crush on Enki. She has agreed to attend the address so that she may see Enki. It demonstrates that June still has feelings for Enki, even if Enki doesn't know she exists yet.

Enki is an artist – just like me.

-- June (Spring)

Importance: When Enki appears onstage with thirty young workers from the lowest tier of the city, June is stunned. She is not stunned by the appearance, but stunned that Enki is also an artist. He is making an artistic, political statement about poverty and freedom.

Strange, isn't it?
-- Lucia (Summer)

Importance: At the Queen's Award finalist dinner, June meets a girl named Enki who is a nanobot code programmer. Both girls find it strange that the Aunties have selected young people who are doing things they are not entirely comfortable with as finalists. Why they have been selected is a mystery.

Something is collapsing in the city.
-- Enki (Summer)

Importance: Here, Enki reveals that his nanotechnological modifications to his body give him certain superhuman powers, such as being able to sense the pulse of the robotic power of the city. He predicts the destruction of one of the spiders, and the deaths of hundreds. He and June warn Queen Oreste and the Aunties that such a thing will soon happen. Numerous lives are saved because of Enki's mods, even though such mods are illegal.

Everything is changing so fast I can't make out any pattern. I only see what I most fear: that my city is dying, that it's somehow my fault, that there's nothing anyone can do to stop it.
-- June (Fall)

Importance: As the technophiles rise up in the city, they begin to harm innocent bystanders and take Ueda hostage. They demand more technology and trade agreements to get that technology. June is terrified that the social changes and art she and Enki have pushed for have led to actual revolution. It was never her intentions to bring about change by violence, but only by peace.

I believe there are many futures. The one that I, and all of us here today, must work toward is one where Palmares Tres remains the jewel on the bay. Where we retain our strength and our core and our humanity as we meet our destiny.
-- Queen Oreste (Fall)

Importance: Queen Oreste speaks at the funeral of two dead, innocent bystanders caught up in the violence brought about by the technophiles. Oreste values humanity over technology, and declares that the only future worth living for is one in which humanity is retained. She does not condemn technology in general, but specifically prizes humanity over machinery. Even June finds herself in agreement here with the Queen.

Kings are men and they can't be trusted to give up power once they have it.
-- Mamae (Fall)

Importance: Here, June's mother – as well as all other citizens – know one of the reasons behind king-killing. In a blatantly bigoted and sexist belief, all men are assumed to be power-hungry and untrustworthy in power. As a result, almost one year of power is



considered almost too much for kings. June doesn't quite agree, and she considers the system barbaric, but she knows of no other way.

I'm glad we ran away. I'm glad, no matter what happens, because those eyes don't deserve to die the way the Aunties would have it.

-- June (Winter paragraph 244)

Importance: As June and Enki travel south, June falls more and more deeply in love with Enki. Among the things she loves about him is his love for life. She could not imagine him dying a king when he is so happy to be alive and himself. She is so happy she doesn't even care what might come next so long as Enki is safe.

I don't want to be Queen any more than she wants me to, but Enki is dead, and Enki has chosen.

-- June (Winter)

Importance: As the novel comes to a close, Enki makes his surprise choice for Queen. He chooses June. Oreste is stunned and angry, but has no choice but to step down. June, who doesn't want to be Queen, has no choice but to accept. However, June hopes to change things by revealing that Queen Odette never intended the executions of kings to last.