

Songs of the Sun by W. Scott | Reading Guide

General questions:

1. *Songs of the Sun* is written in free verse, meaning the words intentionally do not rhyme or follow any established poetic meter, style, rhythm, or forms. What do you think of free verse poetry? Do you find it easier to read and understand or more difficult? Why? (Or maybe you like it as much as more traditional poetry! Feel free to chime in and share that opinion, too!)
2. Poetry is simultaneously deeply personal and individual while also being universal and communal. In what ways do the poems in *Songs of the Sun* reflect this: uniting both the individual and collective experiences? Can you find specific examples from some of the poems?
3. Reading poetry, as with reading other types of literature, invites the reader to experience the book as both a window and a mirror. In what ways did you see yourself in the poems in *Songs of the Sun* (using the book as a mirror)? In what ways did you see deeper into an experience different from your own (using the book as a window)?
4. Which poem is your favorite from this collection? (For the leader: Consider having the teens share favorite poems aloud. If they do not have a whole poem that resonated with them, ask them to share just a phrase or two that has stuck with them.)
5. Let's talk about some specific poems. Have someone read aloud "sunburn interlude" (page 27). Discuss the idea of being injured by the absence of something. Try to give examples, using movies or books to encourage discussion if personal examples are too difficult:

*it's ironic,
if you think about it.*

*how one can grow
and not know of a parent's love.*

*and still find themselves
injured by an unknown thing*

6. How would you interpret the poem “gap”? (page 81)

*i've always been good at
Extending my arms to strangers*

(but never to myself)

Why do you think W. Scott used the word “strangers” instead of “others”? What do you think he means by “extending my arms”? Is “been good” a reference to being skilled at this behavior, or is it a comment on morality (or both)? Notice how there is a literal gap in the poem, between the stanzas. What do you think W. Scott is saying about the difference between being “good at extending [his] arms to strangers” and “(but never to myself)”?

7. The final section, “sunrise,” features a poem called “phoenix song.” (page 109) Compare the visual imagery of a phoenix (which rises from the ashes of a fire) and a sunrise (which rises from the dark of night) in connection with the words in this poem. Give specific examples from the poem. Can you think of any other visuals or words that would go along with both a phoenix and a sunset?
8. What experiences have you had with poetry before reading *Songs of the Sun*? Did you read *Muses from the Moon* before reading *Songs of the Sun*? Think back to early childhood...to rhyming picture books, to nursery rhymes, to song lyrics, and then on to more traditional poetry, either classic or modern, that you studied in school or may have read for pleasure. How has reading W. Scott’s poetry broadened your experience with the literary form? And—if you read this book as a followup to *Muses from the Moon*—how do you feel about it as a continuation of the first collection? (For the leader: Consider giving teens five minutes to journal about their experiences with poetry before formally beginning the discussion.)

Thematic questions:

(For the leader: if these are too personal to discuss out loud, feel free to use these questions as journal writing prompts.)

1. The author uses imagery of different elements of sunlight for the four sections of this poetry collection: sunburn, sunset, sunspot, and sunrise. How did this structure help you to see the way elements in the natural world are reflected in our individual lives?
2. What is the main theme of each section of *Songs of the Sun*? How might this format help you as you think through different relationships? Give specific examples. (For the leader: consider discussing the universality of parent/child relationships, romantic relationships, spiritual relationships, and relationship with oneself.)
3. What themes did you see recurring throughout *Songs of the Sun*? (Some thematic suggestions if readers need help are brokenness, co-dependancy, forgiveness vs. reconciliation, self-discovery, relationship with God, mental and spiritual growth.)
4. Can you give an example of (or write in your journal about) a poem whose theme resonated with you?



Songs of the Sun by W. Scott is a collection of free verse poetry for teens, published by Owl's Nest Publishers. *Songs of the Sun* is a follow-up to *Muses from the Moon*.

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