


A LOST HERITAGE REDISCOVERED, BY THE  
FIRST GREAT FEMALE HORROR WRITER OF COLOR.



OF  
ONE  
BLOOD

PAULINE HOPKINS

INTRODUCTION BY TIPTREE/OTHERWISE AWARD-WINNING AUTHOR NISI SHAWL

THE HORROR WRITERS ASSOCIATION *presents*  
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## SUGGESTED DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR CLASSROOM USE

1. *Of One Blood: or, The Hidden Self* crosses several genres of fiction, including fantasy, adventure, horror, romance, and mystery. Do you think it's important for a story to be defined clearly within one category of literature, or is it less important and that a book should be whatever the reader chooses to define it as? How would you describe this book to a friend?
2. This novel was originally published in a serialized format, meaning it was broken up and published over the course of several months, much like an episodic television show. What are some benefits of serializing a work rather than publishing it all at once as is traditionally done for a novel?
3. Author Pauline Hopkins was a firm believer in teaching people through reading. Her writing explored concepts of equality, race and gender relations, history, and social change, even while penning fiction that was filled with adventure, intrigue, and romance. Do you think it's important to deliver learning opportunities or socially-conscious messages in fiction stories? Can you think of other examples

of fiction that, besides being enjoyable for the story alone, also teach lessons of morality, safety, history, or of hope for change?

4. The term “Renaissance” refers to rediscovery or renewed interest in a field of study, such as a cultural, political, intellectual, or artistic revival. The era of the Harlem Renaissance, spanning the 1920s, saw great advancement in American literature, academics, music, and more. How does the subject matter of this novel, *Of One Blood: or, The Hidden Self*, fit into that?
5. A character arc is transformation of the character through thought, experience, and/or external factors, and is one of the most compelling methods to create investment in who a character is and what becomes of them. Author Pauline Hopkins was greatly skilled in creating rich and varied arcs for many of the characters in this book, giving them unexpected changes, for better or for worse. What do you think were some of the more notable transformations in characters over the course of their arc?
6. The ghost (or vision) of Dianthe appears both to Reuel and to Aubrey, though for different reasons. How would their actions or character arcs have been altered if she had not appeared to them, or if her supernatural interactions had been disbelieved by them? Do you think Reuel and Aubrey’s reactions were plausible? How would you have reacted in those situations?
7. There are many exciting scenes within this book. What were your favorites, or what scenes resonated strongest with you? How did you feel as you read them?

8. The first half of the book is set in refined Boston, Massachusetts, while the second half takes place in seemingly dangerous—yet ultimately utopian—regions of Africa. Besides the regional contrasts, the pacing of the novel also changes, as do the characters' choices. For example, while in Boston, Reuel Briggs sees himself as White, while in Ethiopia, he learns to embrace his African heritage. What other contrasts can you find between sections of the book set in America against those set in Africa?
9. The ending of the book sees tragedy mourned, wrongdoers punished, and amends made. After it all, Reuel returns to the hidden city of Telassar to become ruler and teacher. Is this ending satisfactory to you? Why or why not?
10. What do you think of Reuel's outlook toward money? At the beginning of the novel, he laments that he is nearly impoverished, yet he's accepting of it while studying medicine and finding enjoyment and value in other aspects of life. Then he falls in love with Dianthe, and suddenly he cannot bear the idea of her having to live in poverty as he has done. So great is this concern, that he decides to leave her for two years in order to find the wealth he thinks is suitable for her standing. Do you agree with his decision in those circumstances? Although it's done for the altruistic benefit of his love, he ultimately must leave behind his new bride to obtain it. Would you have taken the same risk to improve the quality of life for someone you love? Otherwise, what would you have done differently?
11. There are instances of prophetic ghosts, visions of the past, magical sight, mysticism, and mesmerism throughout this book. How do these supernatural occurrences tend to



guide the characters? Have you ever experienced a supernatural occurrence? How did it change you?

12. Issues and roles of Black and White race are explored in this book in ways that transgressed socially-accepted normalcies of the era, such as reversal of stereotypes, the effects of race as a social construct, and authenticating multi-racial identity, particularly through Reuel Briggs, a mixed heritage Black man, whose skin is so light that he can pass for a White man. Do you think those were important issues to discuss at the time of this book's publication? How are these issues still important today?
13. What other messages or themes from this book from over one hundred years ago are still relevant in today's society?
14. Jim Titus and Charlie Vance discover an immense treasure, described as, "*a jumbled heap of gems—some large, some small, but together in value beyond all dreams of wealth.*" What is the greatest treasure you could imagine finding? Do you think all people seek the same sorts of treasure? Can you think of anything you would consider a treasure that other people would not?
15. The closing line of this book relates to God, and states: *He will prove His words, "Of one blood have I made all races of men."* What does this mean to you?