

Noughts and Crosses

Malorie Blackman

About the book

Noughts and Crosses is set in an alternative society that is dominated by the segregation of two separate identities. The novel focuses on two friends whose friendship takes place across the boundaries of these identities. Sephy is a member of the privileged 'crosses', the dominant economic and social class within society. Callum belongs to the 'noughts', an underclass who were previously held as slaves by the 'crosses'. As they begin to move beyond the innocence of their childhood friendship and toward adolescence, Sephy and Callum find their relationship increasingly strained under the pressures of prejudice within their society.

By inverting the role of identity groups in history and the present, Malorie Blackman challenges us to look at the way we understand race relations today. Suitable for young people from the age of 14, *Noughts and Crosses* is a powerful novel that both grips readers and challenges them to consider their own views of society.

About the author

Malorie Blackman has written a number of award-winning novels for young people that explore social and ethical issues within society. *Noughts and Crosses* is the first novel in a series of four that explore the consequences of prejudice and racism.

Discussion Questions

Please note that some of these questions will act as spoilers for the book.

1. why do you think the author has chosen to name the groups 'noughts' and 'crosses', as in the popular pencil-and-paper game?
2. what effect does Lynette's suicide have on Callum?
3. how is Callum and Sephy's childhood friendship able to withstand the prejudices of their peers and families?

4. how far can parallels be drawn between the society of *Noughts and Crosses* and our own society?

You can use HMD resources to find out more about issues of contemporary racism within the UK <http://www.hmd.org.uk/resources/films/hmd09-the-hate-game>