



# Also Dark

## By Angelique Palmer

A Study Guide

### Synopsis

In this collection of poems, Angelique Palmer cuts a path toward finding all the ways she names herself: with pride and with shame; with growth and with responsibility; with tantrum and humor; with understanding and a strong desire to understand the others who are just like her. This collection is about hope and despair; about a life well-lived, danced, and limped through; about light and how that isn't the opposite of Blackness, nor are all the many shades of gray. *Also Dark* is about wanting a love story so deeply, you write your own. It is a celebration of one woman's quirks and qualities: Dark Skin, Dark Humor, Dark Nights; about coming of age late in life; and how she fell in love with the at least seven solid voices in her head, including the one that tells her the beautiful truth—that is, sometimes, Also Dark.

### Reasons to include in the Classroom

*Also Dark* is a powerful collection of poetry that can appeal to many different academic settings.

Students will be able to gain knowledge of what it takes to craft a poem, and how the structural elements influence the meaning of each poem.

*Also Dark* is an amazing tool that can spark conversation among students about cultural topics that are relevant in our world today. With Angelique Palmer's attention to detail and form, *Also Dark* allows readers to dive deeper into the text, having to rely on their critical thinking skills to draw detailed conclusions.

### Author Bio

Angelique Palmer is a performance poet, a finalist in the 2015 Women of the World Poetry Slam, and a member of the 2017 Busboys and Poets/Beltway Poetry Slam Team. Author of *The Chambermaid's Style Guide*, she's a Florida State University Creative Writing graduate who calls northern Virginia home. Her work centers on Black Femme Narratives, Awkward Queerness, and Mental Health & Recovery. She makes her own ice cream.

### Study Questions

#### Content

1. In the opening poem "Passive Voice on a Tuesday," how does the title affect the perception of the poem? How does the voice in the poem compare to the title?
2. How does the phrase "I'm my mother's 3rd daughter," give context to the poem "All of the Above?"
3. How does the speaker in "All of the Above" both internalize her situation and fight back against it?
4. In the poem "Wither," list all the other images that connect with the "Rotten Teeth" image.
5. In "Wither," how does the speaker's voice differ in the third stanza compared to the rest of the poem? What does the tercet (three-line stanza) add or restrict from the poem?
6. In the poem "Neva Scared," what is it that the speaker is not scared of and why?
7. What does the line "I come from a long line of Aunties, we ain't neva scared," mean?
8. In the poem "God or a Lottery Ticket in a Black Woman's Purse," how are God and the lottery ticket compared?
9. Read the poem "Supernova." What is the situation the speaker is dealing with? How does this affect the speaker?
10. Re-read "Supernova," but only read the last words on each line. What is said? How does it relate to the meaning of the poem?

**Writing Prompt:** Write a poem similar to "Supernova," and have the words at the end of each line say something that corresponds with the poem's meaning.

## Content (cont'd)

11. Read “Several Reasons (in no particular order) Why One Should Not Order False Teeth from the Internet,” and then go back and Read “Wither.” What is the significance of the teeth and why is it a focal point?

12. In the poem “A Table Read,” what is the speaker longing for? Which brain is closest to the speaker’s true desire?

13. In the poem “Ways in Which the Bigger Than Me Teaches Me, A Tiny Human Thing, the Concept of Specificity,” it says, “Send me your best, and I will love them like/ like I loved myself.” Up until this point in the collection how has the speaker expressed love toward themselves?

**Writing Prompt:** Re-read the poem “A Table Read,” and write a poem where the speaker of the poem is having an internal dialogue. Make sure there are at least two distinct voices in your poem.

14. In “On Listening to Meshell Ndegeocello in the Workplace,” what is the speaker struggling with? What is the speaker’s relationship to loneliness?

15. What does it mean when the speaker says, “That you don’t regret in pattern?”

16. How does using the style of a recipe help the poem “A Recipe or Conjure?” What is the speaker attempting to cook or conjure?

17. Read “Tallahassee, 1998.” What is the “everything” that will burn in the lines “But will everything burn just so you can get a taste?”

**Writing Prompt:** In 500 words describe the speaker’s journey. What has changed since the beginning of the collection? How has their voice changed? How has their situation changed? Be sure to add specific examples to back up your statement.

## Digging Deeper

1. In the poem “When to Un,” what affect does adding “Un” to words give?

2. In “The Past, the Present and the Future Slam Dance,” how does the first stanza set up the structure of the entire poem? What is the speaker trying to get their audience to understand?

3. What do you believe each of the statements in the first stanza of “The Past, the Present and the Future Slam Dance” mean?

4. The last line of “The Past, the Present and the Future Slam Dance” says “Are you afraid yet?” Is time something to be afraid of?

## Digging Deeper (cont'd)

5. The sixth stanza of “On Becoming an Eclipse” says, “And then you realize that every single time you’ve said you, you meant I.” What changes about the poem after this stanza? What does this say about the speaker’s mindset?

6. What is an aubade? How does that affect the meaning of the title “An Aubade for Midnights Too?”

7. What is the speaker coming to terms with in “An Aubade for Midnights Too?”

8. After reading “And Maybe, Community,” what is the resolution for the speaker in this collection?

## Overall Thoughts

1. With this poetry collection, what kind of a picture does Angelique Palmer paint about being a Black woman in today’s world?

2. Using examples from the text, what does this collection say about how past relationships affect who we are today?

3. How can you use poetry to distill the thoughts in your mind you have yet to fully understand?

**Writing Prompt:** In *Also Dark*, Angelique Palmer presents a voice that is dynamic and changes as events of life unfold. Think about your own life and write 500 words that detail how your own voice has changed throughout your life. Think about what caused this change, and how it has manifested in your everyday life.

**Writing Prompt:** Write two poems about a past relationship which has had a significant impact on your life. Write one poem in the past tense and write the other poem in the present tense as if you were still in that relationship.

## Standards for the English Language

### Arts (compiled by NCTE and IRA)

1. Students read a wide range of print and non-print texts to build an understanding of texts, of themselves, and of the cultures of the United States and the world; to acquire new information; to respond to the needs and demands of society and the workplace; and for personal fulfillment. Among these texts are fiction and nonfiction, classic and contemporary works.

2. Students read a wide range of literature from many periods in many genres to build an understanding of the many dimensions (e.g., philosophical, ethical, aesthetic) of human experience.

## Standards for the English Language Arts (compiled by NCTE and IRA) (cont'd)

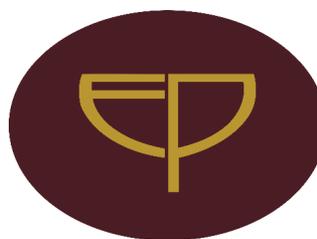
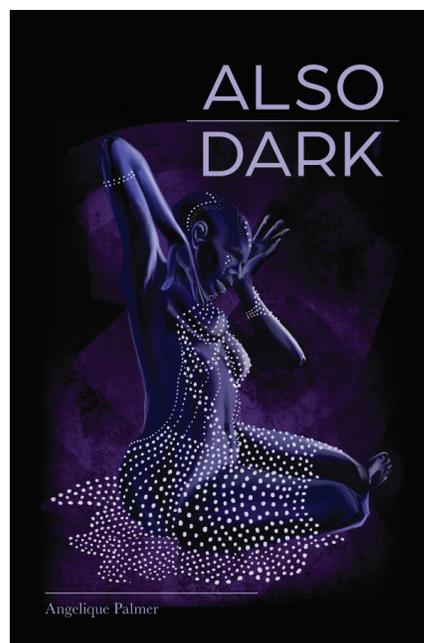
3. Students apply a wide range of strategies to comprehend, interpret, evaluate, and appreciate texts. They draw on their prior experience, their interactions with other readers and writers, their knowledge of word meaning and of other texts, their word identification strategies, and their understanding of textual features (e.g., sound-letter correspondence, sentence structure, context, graphics).

4. Students employ a wide range of strategies as they write and use different writing process elements appropriately to communicate with different audiences for a variety of purposes.

5. Students apply knowledge of language structure, language conventions (e.g., spelling and punctuation), media techniques, figurative language, and genre to create, critique, and discuss print and non-print texts.

6. Students develop an understanding of and respect for diversity in language use, patterns, and dialects across cultures, ethnic groups, geographic regions, and social roles.

7. Students participate as knowledgeable, reflective, creative, and critical members of a variety of literacy communities.



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