

READERS' GUIDE

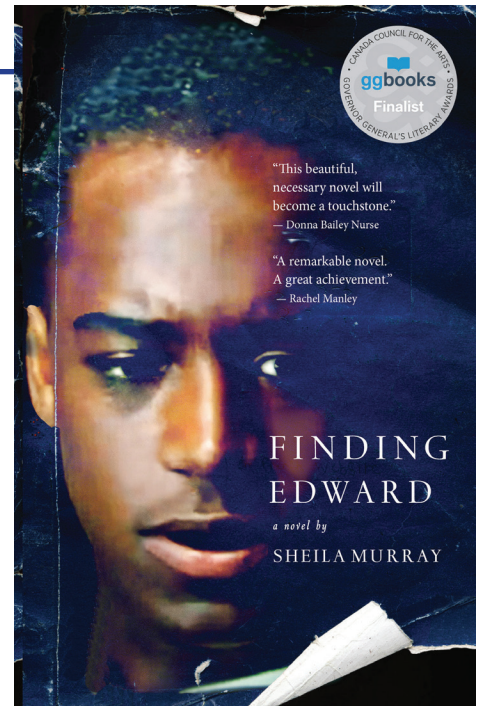
Finding Edward by Sheila Murray

INTRODUCING *Finding Edward*

Cyril Rowntree migrates to Toronto from Jamaica in 2012. Managing a precarious balance of work and university, he begins to navigate his way through the implications of being racialized in his challenging new land.

A chance encounter with a panhandler named Patricia leads Cyril to a suitcase full of photographs and letters dating back to the early 1920s. Cyril is drawn into the letters and their story of a white mother's struggle with the need to give up her mixed-race baby, Edward. Abandoned by his own white father as a small child, Cyril's keen intuition triggers a strong connection and he begins to look for the rest of Edward's story.

As he searches, Cyril unearths fragments of Edward's itinerant life as he crisscrossed the country. Along the way, he discovers hidden pieces of Canada's Black history and gains the confidence to take on his new world.



IMPORTANT THEMES

Black achievement and contributions to Canada — As Cyril looks for Edward and uncovers more facts about his life, he learns about many contributions to Canada and achievements made by Black Canadians in the past, and he attends the annual Black Community Achievement Awards with Penelope.

Anti-Black racism (current and historic) — Cyril is warned by Uncle Junior many times not to run after dark and to just stay in, but one night he ignores the warning and is harassed by police officers. When he brings this up to his friends, many of them have had similar experiences.

Family — Both Cyril and Edward were abandoned by their biological fathers – and in Edward's case, his mother too – and that has left its mark on each of them in unique ways.

Identity — Nelson says to Cyril, “This is how you know yourself ... Through history and language — this is theirs, but take what you need, make it your own” (p 136). Cyril's search for Edward and the journey through his life gives Cyril the opportunity to know himself and who he wants to be in this new land.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. The author chose to write this book alternating between the different perspectives of Edward and Cyril. What are the pros and cons of this approach, and how effective do you find it as a reader?
2. Family is a huge theme in this novel. Discuss what the author does with this theme in both Cyril's and Edward's stories, both similarities and differences.
3. Why was fascism erupting in Canada in Edward's day, and what is its legacy in today's world?
4. Nelson used to ask Cyril two questions: "What are you going to give the world?" and "What makes your heart sing?" (p. 287). How would you answer those questions yourself? Why?
5. The author has intentionally set the novel in 2012. Why do you think she felt this was necessary?
6. In your opinion, does tying books to real events and issues make them better than books that are set in unrealistic places or times?
7. Think about your favourite parts of the novel. What made these parts so memorable to you?
8. As a reader, do you value characterization, plot, or descriptive elements the most? Is it possible to have a good book without all three?
9. Cyril finds that he is "racialized" in Toronto. What does that mean?



ABOUT SHEILA

Sheila Murray's debut novel, *Finding Edward*, was shortlisted for the 2022 Governor General's Literary Awards. Her short fiction has been published in many literary journals including *Descant*, *The Dalhousie Review*, and *The New Quarterly*. Murray is a social justice advocate, and currently leads a grassroots, volunteer-driven initiative that engages urban residents in adapting to local climate change impacts. She was born and raised in England, and now lives in Hamilton, Ontario.