

***Where the Crawdads Sing* by Delia Owens**

Author:

Delia Owens is the coauthor of three internationally bestselling nonfiction books about her life as a wildlife scientist in Africa. She holds a BS in Zoology from the University of Georgia and a PhD in Animal Behavior from the University of California at Davis. She has won the John Burroughs Award for Nature Writing and has been published in *Nature*, *The African Journal of Ecology*, and *International Wildlife*, among many others. She lives in the mountains of North Carolina. *Where the Crawdads Sing* is her first novel. (from the publisher)

Summary:

For years, rumors of the “Marsh Girl” have haunted Barkley Cove, a quiet town on the North Carolina coast. So in late 1969, when handsome Chase Andrews is found dead, the locals immediately suspect Kya Clark, the so-called Marsh Girl. But Kya is not what they say. Sensitive and intelligent, she has survived for years alone in the marsh that she calls home, finding friends in the gulls and lessons in the sand. Then the time comes when she yearns to be touched and loved. When two young men from town become intrigued by her wild beauty, Kya opens herself to a new life—until the unthinkable happens.

Perfect for fans of Barbara Kingsolver and Karen Russell, *Where the Crawdads Sing* is at once an exquisite ode to the natural world, a heartbreaking coming-of-age story, and a surprising tale of possible murder. Owens reminds us that we are forever shaped by the children we once were, and that we are all subject to the beautiful and violent secrets that nature keeps.

(from the publisher)

Discussion Questions:

1. The North Carolina marsh where Kya lives has long been a sanctuary for outsiders. How does this setting shape the novel? How does growing up in this isolation affect Kya? In what ways does her status as an "outsider" change how others see her?
2. Why does Kya choose not to go back to school? Do you think she makes the wrong decision? How does Kya's lack of formal education shape her vision of the world? Would her character be different if she had gone to school?
3. After Jodie and Pa leave Kya alone, she becomes close to Jumpin' and Mabel. Why are these two adults drawn to Kya? What do they teach her about the world? Do you agree with Jumpin's decision to protect Kya from social services (p. 110) and to encourage her to live alone in the marsh? Why or why not?
4. Why do you think Kya's mother leaves in the beginning? Do you agree with her decision?
5. Kya often watches the other young people from town—she even nicknames them "Tallskinnyblonde, Ponytailfreckleface, Shortblackhair, Alwayswearspearls, and Roundchubbycheeks" (p. 80). What does Kya learn from observing these girls? Why do you think she keeps her watching secret? Do you agree

with Kya's secrecy?

6. How is womanhood explored throughout the novel? What does being a woman mean to Kya? How does she relate to the other women in Barkley Cove?

7. Discuss Kya's relationship with Tate. How does Tate's understanding of Kya change over time? Is Tate a good partner for Kya? Why or why not?

8. Tate's father tells him that poems are important because "they make ya feel something" (p. 48). What does poetry mean to Tate? What does it mean to Kya? How does poetry help Kya throughout the novel?

9. On page 142, Kya watches the fireflies near her shack, and notices that the females can change their flashes to signal different things. What does this realization mean to Kya? What does it teach her about relationships? How does this lesson influence Kya's decisions in the second half of the novel?

10. Discuss how Kya's observations of nature shape her vision of the world. Do you think these lessons adequately prepare her for life in Barkley Cove? Do you think human society follows the same rules as the natural world? Should it? Why or why not?

11. Is Chase a different kind of man than Tate? How are they different? Is one man better? Do you think that their differences are biological or learned? How does Kya see each man?

12. By the end of the novel, Kya has come to realize...

Most of what she knew, she'd learned from the wild. Nature had nurtured, tutored, and protected her when no one else would. If consequences resulted from her behaving differently, then they too were functions of life's fundamental core (p. 363).

What does she mean? Do you agree with her philosophy? What do you think it means to be a good person? Do you think Kya is a good person? Why or why not?

13. Were you surprised by the verdict in the Chase's murder trial? What about by the ending of the novel? Do you agree with Tate's final decision? Why or why not?

(Questions issued by the publisher and accessed on litlovers.com on 9/5/19.)