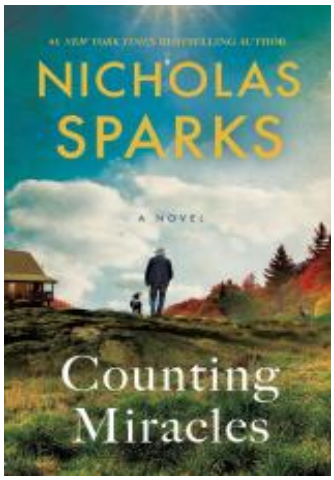
Counting Miracles

by Nicholas Sparks



About the Book

From the acclaimed author of THE LONGEST RIDE and THE NOTEBOOK comes an emotional, powerful novel about wondering if we can change --- or even make our peace with --- the path we?ve taken.

Tanner Hughes was raised by his grandparents, following in his grandfather?s military footsteps to become an Army Ranger. His whole life has been spent abroad, and he is the proverbial rolling stone: happiest when off on his next adventure, zero desire to settle down. But when his grandmother passes away, her last words to him are *find where you belong*. She also drops a bombshell, telling him the name of the father he never knew --- and where to find him.

Tanner is due at his next posting soon, but his curiosity is piqued, and he sets out for Asheboro, North Carolina, to ask around. He?s been in town less than 24 hours when he meets Kaitlyn Cooper, a doctor and single mom. They both feel an immediate connection; Tanner knows Kaitlyn has a story to tell, and he wants to hear it. To Kaitlyn, Tanner is mysterious, exciting --- and possibly leaving in just a few weeks.

Meanwhile, nearby, 83-year-old Jasper lives alone in a cabin bordering a national forest. With only his old dog, Arlo, for company, he lives quietly, haunted by a tragic accident that took place decades before. When he hears rumors that a white deer has been spotted in the forest --- a creature of legend that inspired his father and grandfather --- he becomes obsessed with protecting the deer from poachers.

As these characters? fates orbit closer together, none of them is expecting a miracle...but that may be exactly what is about to alter their futures forever.

Discussion Guide

1. Why do you think Tanner avoids settling down and prefers life on the road? Have there been times in your life where

you?ve felt a similar restlessness? How did you handle it?

2. When Tanner meets Kaitlyn for the first time, he feels strongly that she has a story to tell --- and that he needs to hear it. What do you think sparks this feeling for him? Have you ever met someone you instantly needed to know more about? Discuss what drew you to them --- and what you learned.

3. What does the white deer come to symbolize for Jasper? In what ways does his obsession with protecting the deer help him? In what ways does it hurt him?

4. Discuss the ways in which respect for nature and the land are central to the book, especially to Jasper.

5. The theme of community and finding where one belongs are central to this novel. What does belonging mean to each of the main characters?

6. The devastating tragedies Jasper has endured in his life have caused him to identify with the Biblical character of Job. Do you have experience in your life with people for whom bad things always seem to happen?

7. COUNTING MIRACLES explores themes about justice, punishment and fairness. Do you think it?s fair that Jasper has suffered so much? Is it fair that the Littleton boys don?t seem to face consequences for their actions?

8. What storylines or action in the book would you categorize as miracles? What, in your own life, do you consider a miracle?

9. Several characters in the book think that they?ve closed the book on love and the possibility of new relationships (Tanner, Kaitlyn, Jasper). Discuss what happens to change their outlook --- both internally and in the story. Have you ever found yourself in a similar situation? What surprised you or inspired you in your journey?

10. Jasper and Audrey seem to embody the idea that it?s better to have loved and lost than to never have loved at all. Do you agree with the saying? Why or why not?

11. What did you think of the ending of the novel? Where do you imagine the characters will be in five years?

Author Bio

Nicholas Sparks is the author of 23 books, all of which have been *New York Times* bestsellers. His books have been published across more than 50 languages with over 150 million copies sold worldwide, and 11 have been adapted into films. He is also the founder of the Nicholas Sparks Foundation, a nonprofit committed to improving cultural and international understanding through global education experiences. He lives in North Carolina.

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