ReadingGroupGuides
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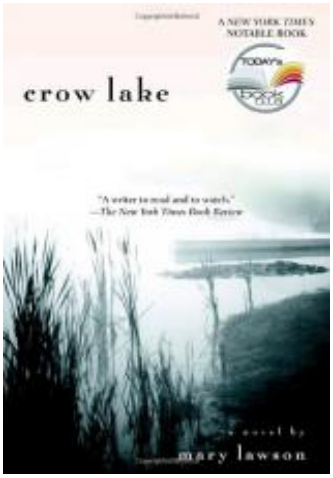
Crow Lake

by Mary Lawson



About the Book

Set against the wild terrain of northern Ontario, where heartbreak and hardship are mirrored in the landscape, this universal drama of love and misunderstanding recounts a family' tragic and moving past. Poignant, funny, and utterly unforgettable, **Crow Lake** is a deceptively simple masterpiece of literary fiction.

Orphaned young, Kate Morrison and her siblings were bound together by loss. None of them could have expected the tumultuous times ahead?least of all Kate' older brothers, Matt and Luke. Twenty years later, the sacrifices they made and the promises they broke would continue to reverberate through their lives and the quiet rural community of Crow Lake.

In a gorgeous, slow-burning story, Mary Lawson combines well-drawn characters, beautiful writing, and a powerful description of the land to tell the emotionally pitch-perfect story of personal struggles, familial bonds, and the power of forgiveness.

Discussion Guide

1. Kate says that "understatement was the rule in our house. Emotions, even positive ones, were kept firmly under control." How would you say that this "rule" affected each member of the Morrison family? How did it influence their relationships with each other and with people outside their family? What are some examples?

2. For the first few weeks following the death of her parents, Kate believes that she was "protected from the reality by disbelief." How did she carry this defense mechanism with her throughout her childhood and into adulthood? What are some examples?

3. How do you imagine things would have turned out if the children had been separated, as Aunt Annie had arranged? How do you think it would have benefited and/or impeded their growth as individuals and as a family?

4. Guilt is an ongoing theme throughout the book. How did this feeling affect the children' relationships and the choices they made immediately following the death of their parents? How did it affect their adult lives? Who would you say was most stricken with this feeling?

5. Why do you suppose Kate and Matt were bonded together so strongly? What about Bo and Luke?

6. When you think of a conventional family, stereotypical images come to mind. How does each of the four Morrison children fit in that image? Which child took on which traditional family role? What are some examples?

7. Given the chance to attend university, what choices do you think Matt would have made? Do you think he would have returned to Crow Lake? Why or why not?

8. Matt sees problems clearly and is realistic about solving them, whereas Luke is content to wait for things to work themselves out. Given the situation they were in, what were the advantages and disadvantages of each frame of thinking?

9. Great-grandmother Morrison' love of learning set the standard against which Kate judged everyone around her. Do you think Great-grandmother Morrison would have approved of Kate' disappointment in Matt? Why?

10. The Crow Lake community opened its arms wide to the Morrison children after their parents were killed. How does this generosity conflict with the community' collective reaction to Laurie Pye' disappearance? Why is this?

11. Miss Vernon' stories about the history of Crow Lake suggest that some patterns can never be broken. How is this true and/or false for the Pyes and Morrisons?

12. What do the ponds symbolize in this book? What do they represent to Kate and Matt especially?

13. Was Matt doomed to let Kate down in some way? Do you think it' possible for any young man to live up to such heroic expectations? Why?

14. What do you imagine happens between Kate and Daniel after the book ends?

15. Do you think Kate' resentment and distaste toward Marie will lessen as she rebuilds her relationship with Matt?

16. What could Kate learn from Matt to make herself a better teacher? Do you think she will enjoy teaching more when she returns from Simon' birthday party?

17. We are meant to assume that Luke and Miss Carrington develop a romantic relationship at the end of the book. Do you think they are compatible? Why or why not? What are some examples?

18. Kate and Mrs. Stanovich are complete opposites when it comes to dealing with tragedy and hardship. What do you think each woman could learn from the other?

19. Daniel believes that Kate is incapable of empathy. Do you agree or disagree? Why?

20. What do you think would have become of Luke had his parents not been killed?

21. As a consequence of the events of her childhood, Kate is a rather judgmental, withdrawn young woman. Nevertheless, Daniel falls in love with her. What do you think he sees in her, under her protective shell?

Author Bio

Mary Lawson was born and brought up in a small farming community in Ontario. She is the author of the national and international bestselling novels CROW LAKE, THE OTHER SIDE OF THE BRIDGE and ROAD ENDS. CROW LAKE was a *New York Times* bestseller and was chosen as a Book of the Year by *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post*, among others. THE OTHER SIDE OF THE BRIDGE was longlisted for the Man Booker Prize. She also is the author of the novels A TOWN CALLED SOLACE and SOLACE IN WINTER. Lawson lives in England but returns to Canada frequently.

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