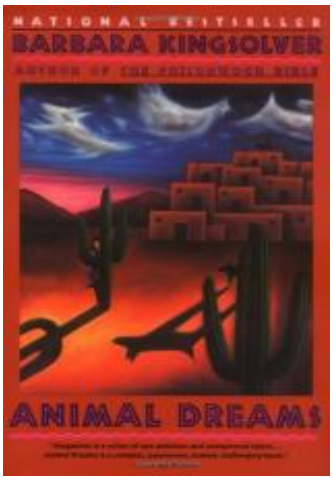
Animal Dreams

by Barbara Kingsolver



About the Book

If you want sweet dreams, you've got to live a sweet life."
- Loyd Peregrina in **Animal Dreams**

Cynical and self-absorbed, Codi Noline has been drifting in an aimless relationship and through a series of jobs when she packs up and returns home to the town of Grace, Arizona to care for her physician father, who has Alzheimers, and to teach high school science. Emotionally distant from her childhood and father, feeling herself to be an outsider and a failure, Codi sees nothing but differences between herself and her younger sister, Hallie, a political activist, and now, a volunteer worker in Nicaragua. Through her involvements with Loyd Peregrina (a handsome trainman of Pueblo, Navajo, and Apache descent), the local matriarchs of the "Stitch and Bitch Club," and her students, and through reading Hallie's letters from Nicaragua, Codi gradually lets go of her defensive isolation. Slowly, she recovers her connection to a sense of self and a community that has always been there, but she had forgotten. When her hometown is threatened with environmental catastrophe, she finds herself, like Hallie, taking responsibility for changing the world around her.

-1990 Edward Abbey Award for Ecofiction
-1991 PEN Center USA West Literary Award for Fiction
-1991 American Library Association Best Books of the Year
-1991 American Library Association Best Books for Young Adults

Kingsolver on Animal Dreams:

"**Animal Dreams** was the first novel I wrote on purpose, so it's more calculated thematically than **The Bean Trees**. The question I began with was this: why do some people engage with the world and its problems, while others turn their backs on it? And why is it that these two sorts of people often occur even in the same family? I'm very curious about this because I'm a human rights activist myself. So I invented two sisters with apparently opposite personalities, and then I

invested them with a family and began to work backwards to find the point in their shared history that would have pushed them into opposite directions."

Discussion Guide

1. Why are Hallie and Codi different? What happened that caused them to take such different life paths? How and why does Codi change? Why does she become more engaged with the world?

2. One theme of the novel is the relationship between humans and the natural world. What does the novel have to say about the difference between Native American and Anglo American culture in relation to nature? How do creation stories, such as the Pueblo creation legend and the Garden of Eden story, continue to influence culture and behavior?

3. How do you feel about Doc Homer? What kind of parent was he, and why? In what ways did his strange point of view serve as a vehicle for the novel's themes of memory, amnesia, and identity?

Author Bio

Barbara Kingsolver is the author of 10 bestselling works of fiction, including the novels UNSHELTERED, THE BEAN TREES and THE POISONWOOD BIBLE, as well as books of poetry, essays, creative nonfiction, and COYOTE'S WILD HOME, a children?s book co-authored with Lily Kingsolver. She also collaborated with family members on the influential ANIMAL, VEGETABLE, MIRACLE: A Year of Food Life.

Kingsolver?s work has been translated into more than 30 languages and has earned a devoted readership at home and abroad. She is a member of the American Academy of Arts and Letters, and has received numerous awards and honors including the 2023 Pulitzer Prize for Fiction for her novel, DEMON COPPERHEAD, the National Humanities Medal, and, most recently, the National Book Foundation's Medal for Distinguished Contribution to American Letters. She lives with her husband on a farm in southern Appalachia.

Critical Praise

"Environmental crisis in Grace, political crisis in Nicaragua, the interior crisis of Codi's inability to trust life -- Kingsolver adroitly plays plot against plot, theme against theme....**Animal Dreams** addresses heroism. Codi considers her sister a saint, a grand-scale heroine, and discredits herself. But she finally comes to see each of us as responsible for daily heroism, in our seemingly ordinary acts and choices. Just as, in **Animal Dreams**, ecology is no longer an abstract concept but a crisis outside our window, Kingsolver reveals that heroes are no longer beyond reach, unattainable. They are us."

Animal Dreams

by Barbara Kingsolver

Publication Date: June 21, 1991
Paperback: 352 pages
Publisher: Harper Perennial
ISBN-10: 0060921145
ISBN-13: 9780060921149