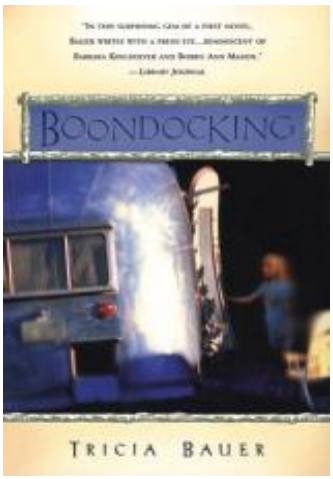
Boondocking

by Tricia Bauer



About the Book

Boondocking is a family?s journey into parts unknown. In the RV world, ?boondocking? means setting up camp in an uncharted area?letting go of your plan and making your way on resourcefulness, wits, and emotional resolve. Which is exactly what Sylvia and Clinton Vaeth do to cope with the tragedy of losing their only daughter at the hands of her husband. The Vaeths give up the comforts of suburban retirement and criss-cross the United States with their baby granddaughter, Rita, in tow. They start a new life along America?s backroads, at once assuaging their own grief, as well as trying to protect Rita from knowing the truth about her father. But no matter how far they travel, his presence is never that far behind. Through the peaks and valleys of the American landscape, this family must come to terms with itself, and its own redemption. Through evocative yet accessible prose, Tricia Bauer?s debut novel will surprise with its fresh insight.

Discussion Guide

1. In the subculture of the RV world, ?boondocking? means parking for the night or longer in non-designated camping areas without hookups for necessities such as electricity and water. How does this metaphor relate to Sylvia and Clayton?s new way of life?

2. On page 33, Sylvia thinks that the middle class ?valued things that could vanish with carelessness.? Discuss some of the values that are particular to the working class. Why do you think that middle class lives are less celebrated in fiction than those of wealthy or poverty-stricken characters?

3. Does Melvin elicit your sympathy at any point in the book? If so, why?

4. Discuss the growing practice of grandparents raising their grandchildren and how this affects all members of a family. Why do grandparents often form a special bond with their grandchildren that parents can?t?

5. How would Rita?s character be different if she?d gone into hiding instead of taking to the road with her grandparents? What kind of life do you suppose she will have ten years from the close of the book?

6. The author chooses to tell this story from three different points of view. Why do you think she has each character focus on the specific time frame? For instance, why is Sylvia the one to start the book? How do you feel about the final section accommodating all their points of view?

7. What is the novel saying about the evolution of the American family? Is home strictly a concept or does it require some kind of physical grounding?

Author Bio

Tricia Bauer was born and grew up in Baltimore. She began writing as a young girl and later studied poetry before turning to fiction writing. Tricia has written for newspapers and magazines and held editorial and marketing jobs with different children?s book publishers. Her stories have appeared in literary journals and anthologies throughout the U.S., and her nonfiction travel features have been published in The New York Times and International Herald Tribune. Her first book, Working Women and Other Stories, was published in 1995 to critical acclaim. Boondocking was first published in hardcover in 1997, and was selected for the Discover Great New Writers program. Hollywood & Hardwood, her second novel, was published in spring 1999. Tricia now lives in Connecticut with her husband, playwright Bill Bozzone.

Critical Praise

" Bauer writes easily and well, and is adept at showing the essential poetry in simplicity. "

Boondocking
by Tricia Bauer

Publication Date: March 15, 1999
Paperback: 240 pages
Publisher: St. Martin's Griffin
ISBN-10: 0312198396
ISBN-13: 9780312198398