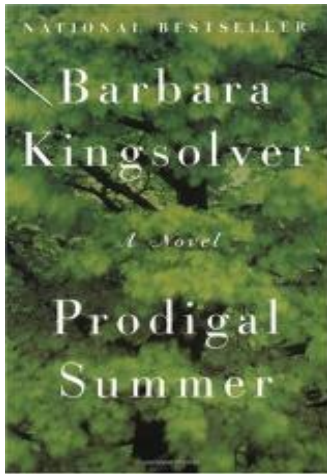


# Prodigal Summer: A Novel

by Barbara Kingsolver

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## About the Book

**Prodigal Summer** weaves together three stories of human love within a larger tapestry of lives inhabiting the forested mountains and struggling small farms of southern Appalachia. From her outpost in an isolated mountain cabin, Deanna Wolfe, a reclusive wildlife biologist, watches a den of coyotes that have recently migrated into the region. She is caught off-guard by a young hunter who invades her most private spaces and confounds her self-assured, solitary life. On a farm several miles down the mountain, Lusa Maluf Landowski, a bookish city girl turned farmer's wife, finds herself unexpectedly marooned in a strange place where she must declare or lose her attachment to the land that has become her own. And a few more miles down the road, a pair of elderly, feuding neighbors tend their respective farms and wrangle about God, pesticides, and the possibilities of a future neither of them expected.

Over the course of one humid summer, as the urge to procreate overtakes the countryside, these characters find their connections to one another and to the flora and fauna with whom they share a place. With the complexity that characterizes Barbara Kingsolver's finest work, *Prodigal Summer* embraces pure thematic originality and demonstrates a balance of narrative, drama, and ideas that render it an inspiring work of fiction.

## Discussion Guide

1. Why do you think this book is entitled **Prodigal Summer**? In what ways do all of the characters display "prodigal" characteristics? Who, or what, welcomes them home from their journeys?
2. Deanna is the self-appointed protector of coyotes and all predators. Is she disturbing nature's own ways of dealing with upsets? What about Garnett and his quest for a blight-free chestnut tree-is this "good" for nature?

3. How does the relationship between Deanna and Eddie Bondo change them both? Should Deanna have told Eddie about the pregnancy? Do you think he already knew and that was one of the reasons he left when he did?
4. When Nannie and Garnett hug, a huge barrier between them drops and they both gain a basic understanding of each other's humanness and vulnerability. Do you think a romantic relationship between them will ensue? How much does Garnett's unrecognized longing for love and human contact account for the shift in his perception of Nannie and the greater world around him? What else influences the shift in Garnett? Does Nannie change as well?
5. The three major story lines are named "Predators," "Moth Love," and "Old Chestnuts." Why, besides acknowledging her respect for coyotes, spiders and other predatory creatures, are Deanna's chapters named "Predators?" Does her love of predators make her the "natural" lover of Eddie Bondo? How does Lusa's life mirror the life cycle of her beloved moths? How does her love of insects lead to her emergence from her cocoon of grief (i.e. her relationship to Crystal)? How do Garnett and Nannie remind you of "old chestnuts?" Are they extinct? Are they the few lone trees left alive after a blight?

## Author Bio

Barbara Kingsolver was born in 1955 and grew up in rural Kentucky. She earned degrees in biology from DePauw University and the University of Arizona, and has worked as a freelance writer and author since 1985. At various times she has lived in England, France and the Canary Islands, and has worked in Europe, Africa, Asia, Mexico and South America. She spent two decades in Tucson, Arizona, before moving to southwestern Virginia where she currently resides.

Kingsolver was named one the most important writers of the 20th century by *Writers Digest*, and in 2023, she won a Pulitzer Prize for her novel *DEMON COPPERHEAD*. In 2000, she received the National Humanities Medal, our country's highest honor for service through the arts. Her books have been translated into more than 30 languages and have been adopted into the core curriculum in high schools and colleges throughout the nation.

Critical acclaim for her work includes multiple awards from the American Booksellers Association and the American Library Association, a James Beard award, two-time Oprah Book Club selection, and the National Book Award of South Africa, among others. She was awarded Britain's prestigious Women's Prize for Fiction (formerly the Orange Prize) for both *DEMON COPPERHEAD* and *THE LACUNA*, making Kingsolver the first author in the history of the prize to win it twice. In 2011, Kingsolver was awarded the Dayton Literary Peace Prize for the body of her work. She is a member of the American Academy of Arts and Letters.

She has two daughters, Camille and Lily. She and her husband, Steven Hopp, live on a farm in southern Appalachia where they raise an extensive vegetable garden and Icelandic sheep.

## Critical Praise

"Kingsolver is a gifted magician of words."

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