The Snow Child

by Eowyn Ivey



About the Book

Alaska, 1920: a brutal place to homestead, and especially tough for recent arrivals Jack and Mabel. Childless, they are drifting apart --- he breaking under the weight of the work of the farm; she crumbling from loneliness and despair. In a moment of levity during the season's first snowfall, they build a child out of snow. The next morning the snow child is gone --- but they glimpse a young, blonde-haired girl running through the trees.

This little girl, who calls herself Faina, seems to be a child of the woods. She hunts with a red fox at her side, skims lightly across the snow, and somehow survives alone in the Alaskan wilderness. As Jack and Mabel struggle to understand this child who could have stepped from the pages of a fairy tale, they come to love her as their own daughter. But in this beautiful, violent place things are rarely as they appear, and what they eventually learn about Faina will transform all of them.

Discussion Guide

1.) When Mabel first arrives in Alaska, it seems a bleak and lonely place to her. Does her sense of the land change over time? If so, how?

2.) Why are Jack and Mabel emotionally estranged from each other in the beginning of the novel, and how are they able to overcome that?

3.) How do Esther Benson and Mabel differ in temperament, and how does their friendship change Mabel?

4.) The first time Garrett sees Faina in person is when he spies her killing a wild swan. What is the significance of this scene?

5.) In what ways does Faina represent the Alaska wilderness?

6.) Jack and Mabel?s only child is stillborn. How does this affect Mabel?s relationship with Faina?

7.) When Jack is injured, Esther and Garret move to their farm to help them. How does this alter Jack and Mabel?s relationship?

8.) Much of Jack and Mabel?s sorrow comes from not having a family of their own, and yet they leave their extended family behind to move to Alaska. By the end of the novel, has their sense of family changed? Who would they consider a part of their family?

9.) Death comes in many forms in The Snow Child, including Mabel giving birth to a stillborn infant, Jack shooting a moose, Faina slaying a swan, the fox killing a wild bird, Jack and Mabel slaughtering their chickens, and Garrett shooting the fox. Why is this one of the themes of the book and what is the author trying to say about death?

10.) What do you believe happened to Faina in the end? Who was she?

Author Bio

Eowyn (pronounced Ado-win) Ivey was raised on a farm in Georgia and continues to live there with her husband and daughter. She worked for many years as a bookseller before becoming an independent fiction writer. Before publishing her debut novel, she was a columnist for a small Alaska weekly newspaper, *The Frontiersman*.

Her debut novel, THE SNOW CHILD, has sold more than a million copies worldwide and is a *New York Times* bestseller published in more than 25 languages. It was a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize, a UK National Book Award winner, an Indies

Eowyn?s essays and short fiction have appeared in *The New York Times Book Review, The Wall Street Journal* , London?s *Observer Magazine, Sunday Times Magazine, Sunday Express Magazine, Woman & Home Magazine* , the anthology COLD FLASHES, the North Pacific Rim literary journal *Cirque*, and *Alaska Magazine* , among other publications.

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