

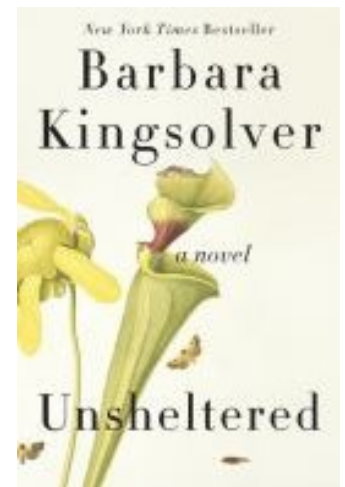


Unsheltered: A Novel

Barbara Kingsolver

Discussion Questions

1. What do the living spaces in their various conditions throughout the novel suggest about the people living in them? Figuratively speaking, which foundations turn out to be solid, or precarious?
2. Mary Treat tells Thatcher that to be unsheltered is to live in daylight. What does she mean? What kinds of shelter do these characters crave, in their different centuries? How might sheltered lives—or the craving for them—become a hindrance?
3. Which of the many challenges confronting Willa are hers alone to bear, and why? What do you see as the foundation of her successful relationship with Iano? How has marriage changed, or not changed, since the time of Rose and Thatcher?
4. In what ways, if any, do you find Nick's bigotry and anger comprehensible? What accounts for Tig's patience with him, despite their differences? How do the family's conflicts relate to the polarization of present times? What's suggested by Willa's and Nick's argument taking place on the Walt Whitman Bridge?
5. How do the characters in two centuries variously understand and connect with the natural world? When Willa's phone causes "thousands of birds [to burst] from their tree skyward like a house going up in smoke," what does this potent image suggest? What about the ants that seem to inhabit the neighbourhood outside the boundaries of time?
6. In shifting between chapters, what changes did you notice in the characters' language, or the narrative tone? In what ways did you find the two separate narratives connected?





Unsheltered: A Novel

Barbara Kingsolver

7. In shifting between chapters, what changes did you notice in the characters' language, or the narrative tone? In what ways did you find the two separate narratives connected?
8. As they shift from parent-child to a more adult relationship, what does Willa learn from her daughter? How might "the secret of happiness" be "low expectations?" How does this relate to the lost-and-found quote about happiness from Willa Cather's *My Àntonia*?
9. Thatcher settles finally on seeing Mary Treat as "a giant redwood: oldest and youngest of all living things, the tree that stood past one eon into the next." Do you agree?

About the Author

Barbara Kingsolver's books of fiction, poetry and creative nonfiction are widely translated and have won numerous literary awards. She is the founder of the PEN/Bellwether Prize, and in 2000 was awarded the National Humanities Medal, the country's highest honour for service through the arts. Prior to her writing career she studied and worked as a biologist. She lives with her husband on a farm in southern Appalachia

This book is available for download as an eBook. For more information, please visit lpl.overdrive.com or call 519-661-4600.

Source: https://www.bookbrowse.com/reading_guides/detail/index.cfm/book_number/3823/unsheltered