



NANCY: I consider this book a deep work of art, weaving past and present, around issues of shelter, the Earth, climate and the variety of approaches to life. The insecurity of work for teachers and professors provides a theme across generations, along with the relationship between science and religion. Naturalists and the bearers of truth are vilified, then and now, in this novel, in our times. Another great one by Barbara Kingsolver.



KATHARINE: I'm with Nancy. So many layers in this book. It shows the disdain for truth and some Americans' practice of shooting the messenger, a repeating theme in our country. I also focus on Tig and how our college students would relate to her. A good book to explore the debate between science and religion.



JANE: Hmm. I wasn't impressed with the entrepreneur in this story. He is the bad face of American capitalism. Kingsolver is obviously very critical of our economic system. I don't think it's all that bad!



PRISCILLA: Well, when you get into this science/religion debate, I side with God and the Bible. We didn't evolve from the apes. God created us. So I can understand what the head of the school was trying to say. Just because the science books talk about evolution, doesn't mean it actually happened.



MOLLY: Well, Jane, the reality is there are a lot of workers treated poorly in America. As an African-American, I see this very well. The rich get richer off the backs of the poor. Of course she exaggerates everything to make a point, but a lot of small towns were like this.



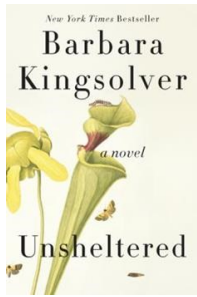
ABIGAIL: I loved the Mary Treat character and that's she's an actual historical person — so cool. What a woman! A naturalist, a scientist, conducting her own research and corresponding with other scientists, including Charles Darwin! I loved the image of her studying the grass in her own yard and what the neighbors assumed, so far from the truth.



SALLIE: I'm all about the story of Baby Aldus. His mom left the world, rather than raising him. His father, left him as well. They both were in the elite society of law and finance. So the father, Zeke, leaves the baby with his parents, but it's his sister who takes on the baby, Dusty, as they call him. She's the one that knows what a baby needs. A lot of society commentary in this story.



Discussion Guide



About the Book

Title: Unsheltered

Author: Barbara Kingsolver

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Questions for Discussion

1. What were your general impressions of this book?
2. Why did the author name this book “Unsheltered”? Who were the unsheltered and what does this mean in the context of the story?
3. The story switched back and forth between 19th century America and current times, involving the same little town. What were the parallels between the two times?
4. The natural world was another theme in this book. How did the various characters consider the natural world?
5. What were the love stories in this book and how were they resolved?
6. Part of what is happening in the modern era is that things like pensions and health insurance that people depend on are slipping away. How did this play out in the story? What similar stories do you know about?
7. Who were your favorite characters and why?
8. Read over the MAMs perspective on the book. With whom do you most agree and why?
9. In what ways, if any, will this book change your life or perspective?

Listen to Barbara Kingsolver on YouTube:

"Barbara Kingsolver discusses UNSHELTERED" (:56),

"Barbara Kingsolver on the narrative structure of UNSHELTERED" (1:00)

"Barbara Kingsolver on the historical characters in UNSHELTERED" (1:00)