

IN THE GREAT QUIET

book club questions

1. *In the Great Quiet* explores themes of ancestry and belonging. What is Minnie's relationship to her heritage and her role as a woman in her family? Did the narrative encourage you to reflect on your own ancestry? What do you wonder about the women of your own heritage? Have you heard stories of your ancestors? How do you think they endured, and what do you suppose they felt and thought?
2. The narrative illuminates the fleeting, transmutable nature of memory and time. How did Minnie's memories influence the plot? Memories are shown to haunt, morph, and alter. What do you think about the idea that memories are indefinite? Have you experienced memories haunting or changing?
3. What was your reaction to reading the earth as a narrator? Did you enjoy this pinch of magic in an otherwise grounded historical world? How would you have imagined earth's voice differently? Share your thoughts about the prose of *In the Great Quiet*. Feel free to read some of your favorite passages or lines.
4. Minnie lived in an age when women had little autonomy. She raced off into the Wild West in search of a place of her own. What is she seeking? What are her deepest desires? How do these yearnings intersect with notions of feminism? Have you felt similar desires in your own life? What might *In the Great Quiet* be suggesting about how women are portrayed in history? In what ways is this story feminist revisionist history?
5. Let's talk about Stot. What did you think about him as a romantic lead? Did you like the way Stot loved Minnie?
6. The elemental longing for friendship, community, and belonging is a fundamental thread of *In the Great Quiet*. Why do you think Minnie experiences such agony when her relationship with her sister shatters? How have relationships with women, with sisters or grandmothers or friends, influenced your life? Have you had friendships similar to Minnie and Olive, where you commit to working through the "tricky bits"?
7. *In the Great Quiet* explores characters grappling with their humanity and struggling with the "dark parts" of themselves. How are integrity, honor, and corruption portrayed? Have you had moments where you struggled to hold on to your honor and integrity?

Do you believe people can or should change? When friends struggle, when do you choose to walk beside them—and when do you walk away?

8. Are you similar to Minnie? How so? Would you have raced off into the Wild West alone? Why or why not?
9. In ways, *In the Great Quiet* is a love letter to the earth. What is climate fiction, and would you place this novel alongside other ecofiction? How do the structure, world-building, and nature descriptions explore the earth as a character and humanity's treatment of the earth?
10. Alone on the prairie, Minnie grapples with her sanity. How do her perceptions of time, memory, and folklore influence her thoughts? What is the function of the novel's themes about fantasies, storytelling, insanity, and reality? Have you experienced moments where you felt like your grip on reality had weakened or fractured?
11. How do you understand the title of *In the Great Quiet*? The narrative explores the interplay of isolation and community. How do you understand the title of *In the Great Quiet*? The narrative explores the interplay of isolation and community. Share how you imagine the phrase "in the great quiet." Does your life feel quiet or loud? In friendships, do you feel more comfortable in quiet moments or those of noise?
12. *In the Great Quiet* illuminates the religious culture of the 1890s, exploring how Minnie grapples with spirituality and personal honor. Did you relate to Minnie's fumbling to understand the cosmos, or are you more like her parents, assured in what they know about eternity and the world? How would you describe Minnie's understanding of realms beyond the visual world?
13. Aliases, distortions, and creating one's own identity are themes in *In the Great Quiet*. How do Minnie's questions about story versus truth relate to today? Can you see a parallel between the aliases of the 1890s and the trends on social media today? Are you concerned with authenticity and how you actively know and then share your "true self" with others?
14. Minnie encounters many different friendships: Magnolia and Lark, Olive and Niabi and Stot, her brothers and her parents. Share how these characters are distinct from one another. In what ways does each character impact Minnie's life, and what does she learn from her various relationships? How do the idyllic friendships of her youth impact the relationships she builds as an adult? Although Minnie races into the wilder ness determined to build a life alone, she's always searching for home. Do you find it fundamental to human nature to always be searching for home?