

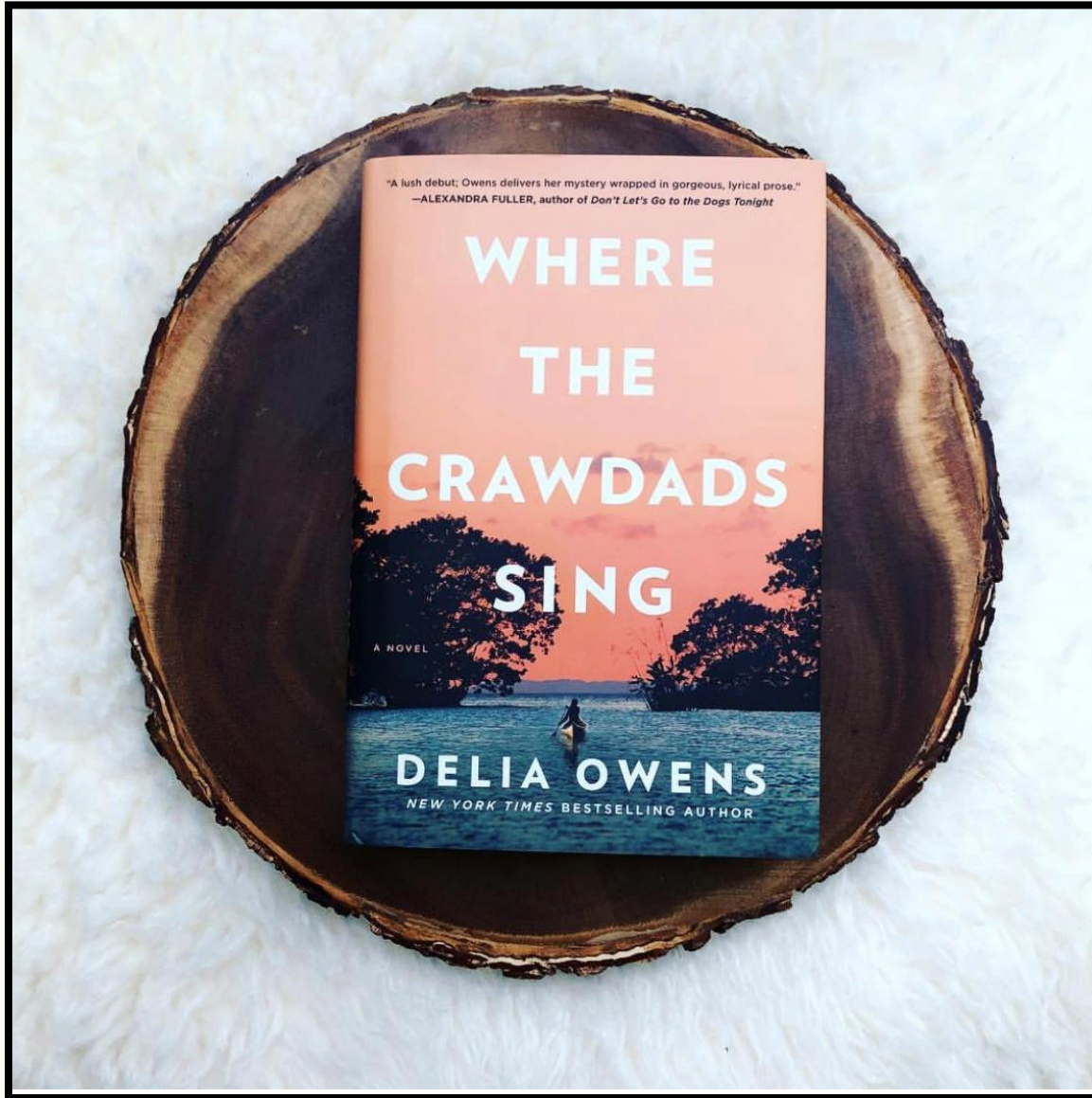
Where the Crawdads Sing

By

Delia Owens

“I wasn't aware that words could hold so much. I didn't know a sentence could be so full.”



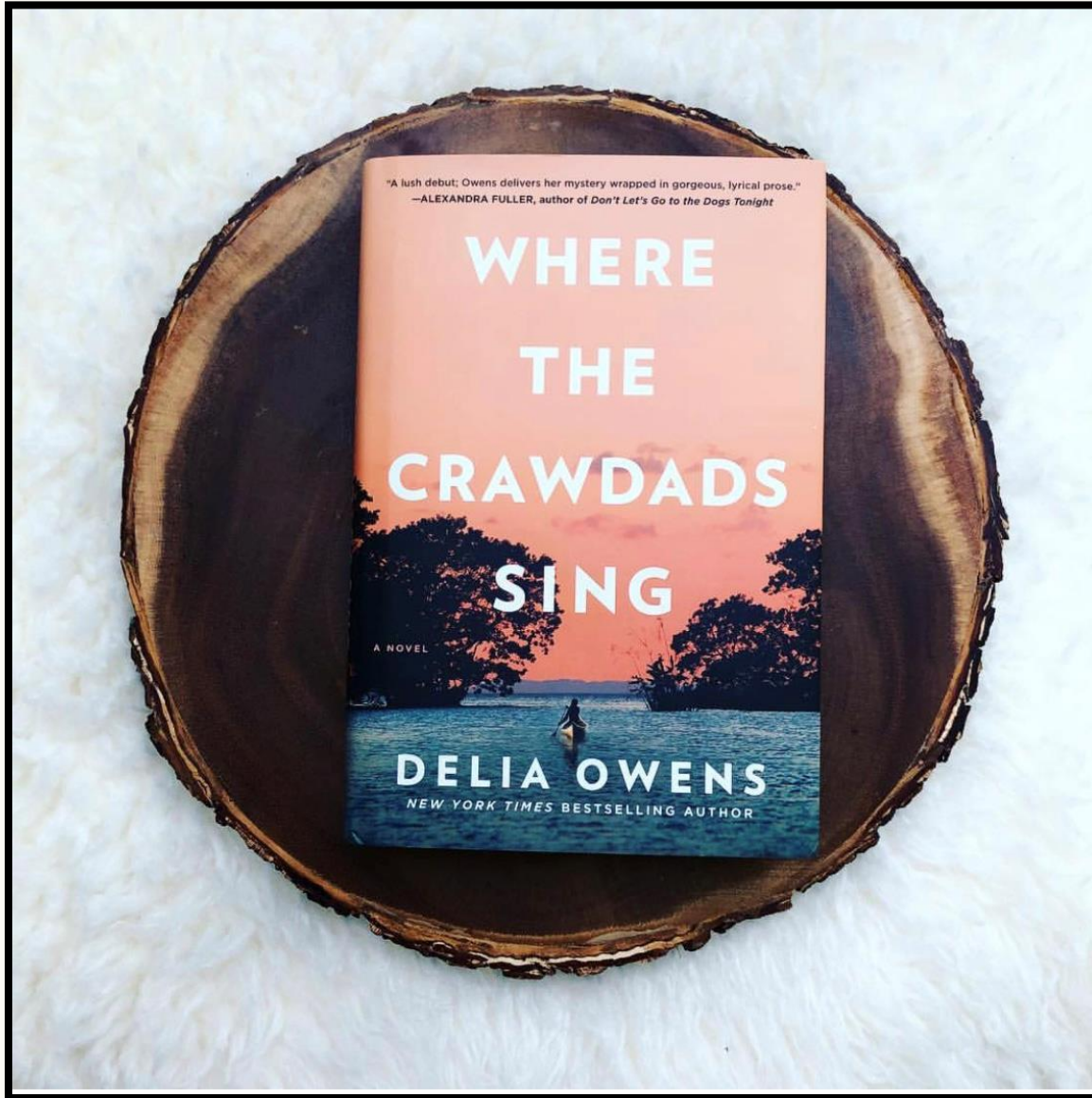


Review from ‘The Guardian’

In screen dramas, during a scene of violence in a living room, the camera will often slyly reveal that a David Attenborough wildlife documentary is playing unwatched in the corner. The naturalist’s whispered observations about the tactics of the “male” or “female” comment ironically or ominously on the human interactions.

That trope is spectacularly extended in *Where the Crawdads Sing*, the debut novel by Delia Owens, an American wildlife scientist. It lands in Britain boosted by the cherished trinity of New York Times bestsellerdom, a frenzied foreign sales fight, and a film in development by Reese Witherspoon.

The main storyline spans – in a date-jumbling, tension-building order – 1952 to 1970, following Kya Clark between the ages of six and 25 as she grows up alone in a shack in the swamplands of North Carolina after being abandoned by her family. She learns from the wildlife around her, gaining tricks of camouflage to evade truant officers and acquiring hunting skills to feed herself and catch mussels and fish to sell to shopkeepers in the town beyond the creek.



Review from “The Guardian”

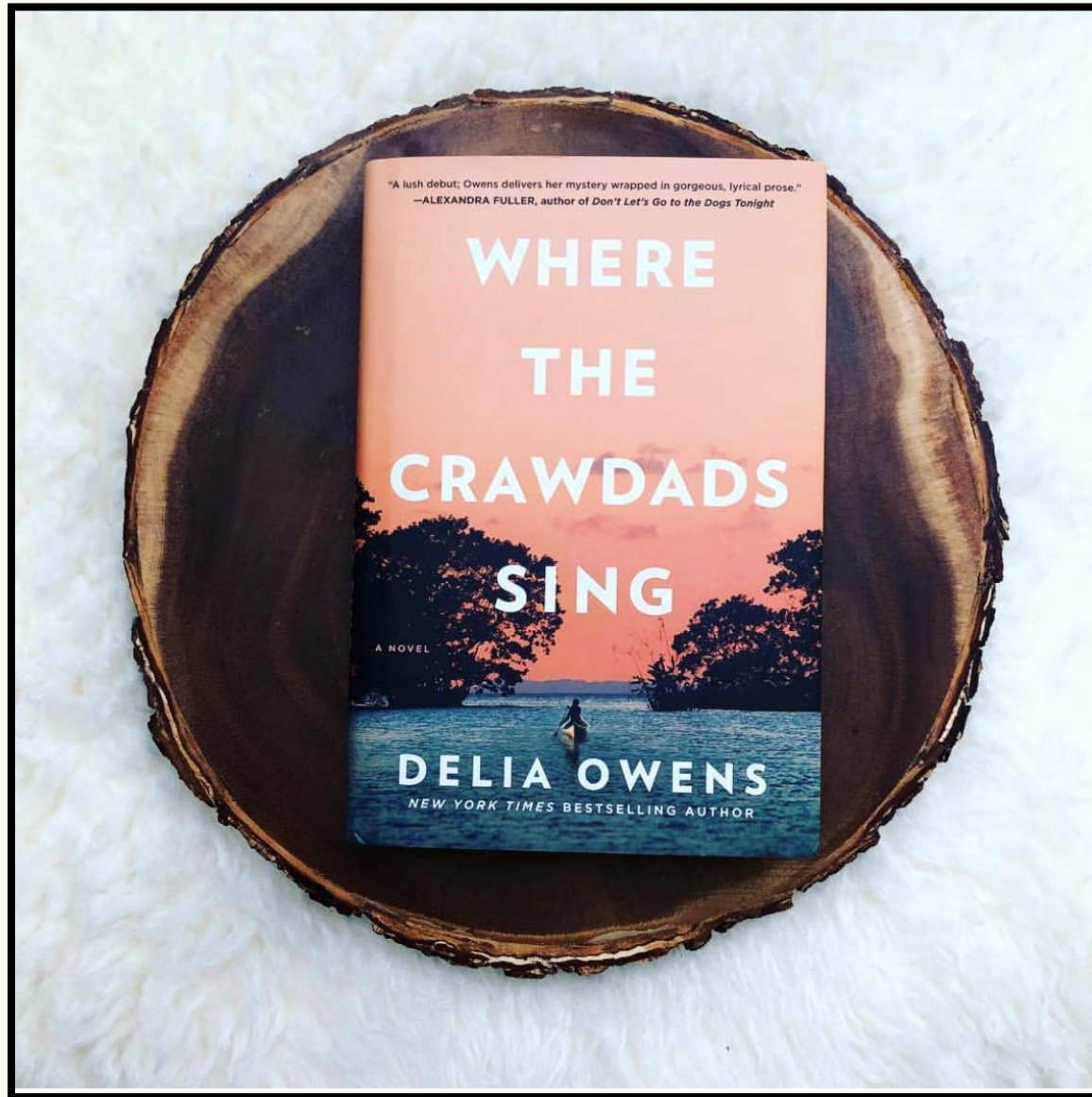
As a human who knows only nature, all Kya’s reference points come from her surroundings – and her creator’s day job. Her observation that mother animals and birds always return to their young leads her poignantly to believe that her childhood solitude will be temporary. When, as a teenager, she starts to attract attention from two townie boys, kind working-class Tate and arrogant posh boy Chase. She also, crucially, observes the dangers of predation in the wild.

Among the many modern phenomena of which isolated Kya has no inkling is the vast popularity of crime fiction. But Owens knows the tricks of the genre, beginning the novel with a prologue set in 1969 in which a young man has died suspiciously in the swamp. The rest of the book cuts between the investigation, in which bigoted witnesses incriminate the “swamp girl”, and flashbacks to Kya’s youth and young adulthood, as local suspicion grows that makes the white people dislike her almost as much as they do the residents of the area known, in the prejudiced term of the time, as Colored Town.

Review from “The Guardian”

Kya is a vivid and original character. At times, her survival in isolation comes close to superheroism, but Owens convincingly depicts the instincts and calculations that get Kya into and out of difficulties. Without too much sentimentality, there is a strong emotional line in her desire to have a “shred of family”. The potential sopiness of a coming-of-age romance is also offset by the possibility that Kya is a murderer, although Owens has studied the big beasts of crime fiction sufficiently to leave room for doubt and surprises.

Surprise bestsellers are often works that chime with the times. Though set in the 1950s and 60s, *Where the Crawdads Sing* is, in its treatment of racial and social division and the fragile complexities of nature, obviously relevant to contemporary politics and ecology. But these themes will reach a huge audience though the writer’s old-fashioned talents for compelling character, plotting and landscape description.



Historical Context and Setting

- Where the *Crawdads Sing* takes place in the marshlands of North Carolina;
- The area in which Kya is sparsely populated because the marsh is deemed uninhabitable.
- Furthermore, the stigma that Kya experiences because she lives in the marshlands comes from the fact that the region was largely inhabited by former slaves, indentured servants, criminals, and other people who had been ostracized by society.

*Where
the
Crawdads
Sing*



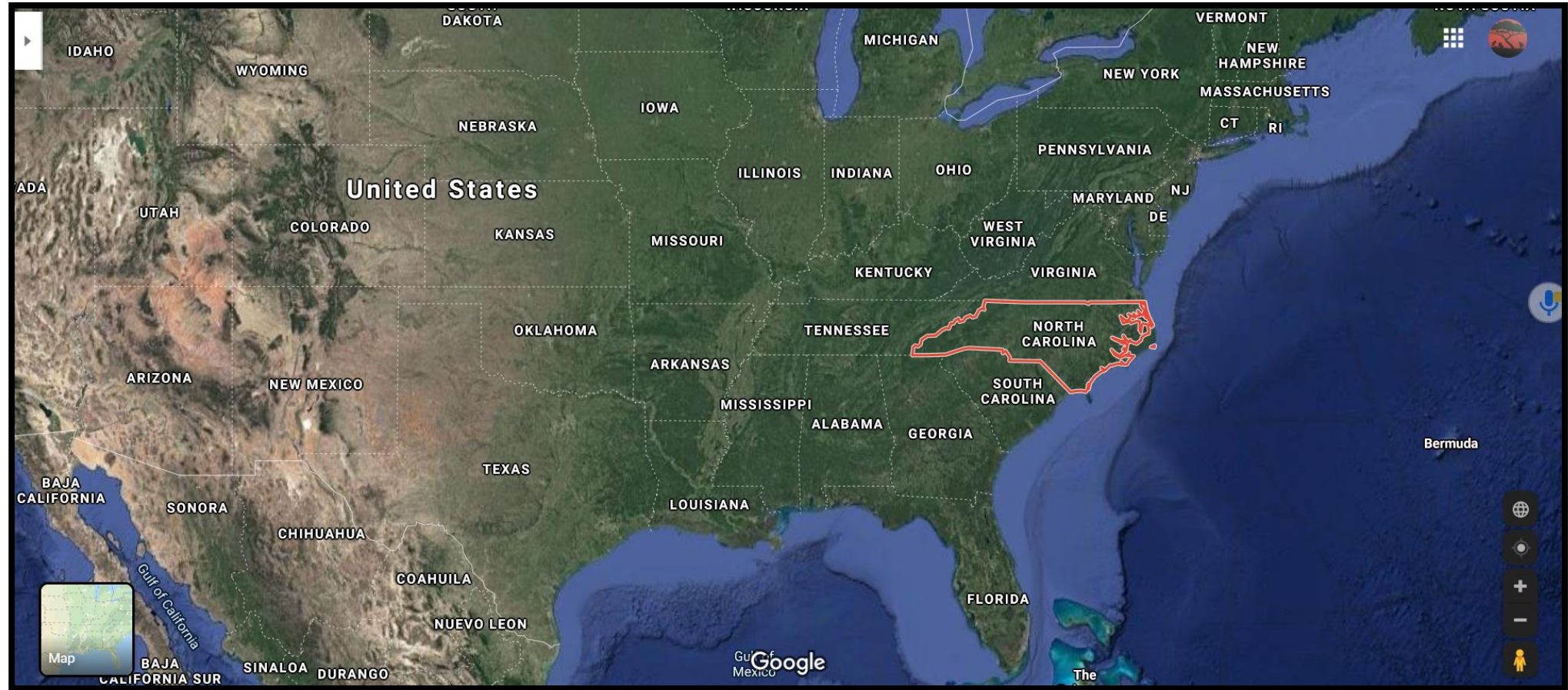
DELIA OWENS

G. P. PUTNAM'S SONS
NEW YORK

Marsh is not swamp. Marsh is a space of light, where grass grows in water, and water flows into the sky. Slow-moving creeks wander, carrying the orb of the sun with them to the sea, and long-legged birds lift with unexpected grace--as though not built to fly--against the roar of a thousand snow geese.

Then within the marsh, here and there, true swamp crawls into low-lying bogs, hidden in clammy forests. Swamp water is still and dark, having swallowed the light in its muddy throat. Even night crawlers are diurnal in this lair. There are sounds, of course, but compared to the marsh, the swamp is quiet because decomposition is cellular work. Life decays and reeks and returns to the rotted duff; a poignant wallow of death begetting life.

On the morning of October 30, 1969, the body of Chase Andrews lay in the swamp, which would have absorbed it silently, routinely. Hiding it for good. A swamp knows all about death, and doesn't necessarily define it as tragedy, certainly not a sin. But this morning two boys from the village rode their bikes out to the old fire tower and, from the third switchback, spotted his denim jacket.



The Marshlands


- The marshlands are symbolic of the isolation which Kya experiences from an early age as well as how she learns to be self-sufficient.
- It is therefore a place of pain and learning.
- She becomes 'one with nature' and often compares her circumstances with the behavior of the animals that she finds in the marsh.



This is a crawdad

Click here





“Just like whiskey, the marsh dwellers bootlegged their own laws-not like those burned onto stone tablets or inscribed on documents, but deeper ones, stamped in their genes. Ancient and natural, like those hatched from hawks and doves. When cornered, desperate or isolated, man reverts to those instinct that aim straight at survival. Quick and just. They will always be the trump card because they are passed on more frequently from one generation to the next than the gentler genes It is not a morality, but simple math. Among themselves doves fight as often as hawks.”



A great
interview with
70-year-old
Delia Owens



Kya (Catherine Clark)

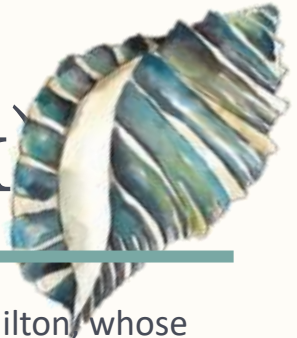


- The protagonist of *Where the Crawdads Sing*, Kya is a six-year-old girl at the outset of the novel. A curious and adventurous person, she lives in the North Carolina marshlands in a run-down shack.
- Unfortunately, Kya’s Ma and siblings run away because of Pa’s abusive ways, leaving her to navigate her father’s alcoholic rages. Effectively on her own, Kya teaches herself to cook, proving her powers of self-sufficiency.
- Around this time, she meets a young boy named Tate in the marsh and wishes they could be friends. However, she rarely interacts with other people, except for Jumpin’, who owns a nearby gas dock.
- When Pa fails to come home one day, Jumpin’ does what he can to help Kya, telling her he’ll buy mussels from her. In this manner, Kya sustains herself as she enters her adolescence, surviving on her own and avoiding school, where she knows the townspeople will mistreat her and call her the “Marsh Girl.”
- At one point, Tate begins leaving rare feathers for her, gradually coaxing her out of her private life to spend time with him. Kya demonstrates her thirst for knowledge when Tate teaches her to read, relishing the information she can learn about the marsh from reading about biology.

“She knew the years of isolation had altered her behavior until she was different from others, but it wasn't her fault she'd been alone. Most of what she knew, she'd learned from the wild. Nature had nurtured, tutored, and protected her when no one else would.”



Kya (Catherine Clark)



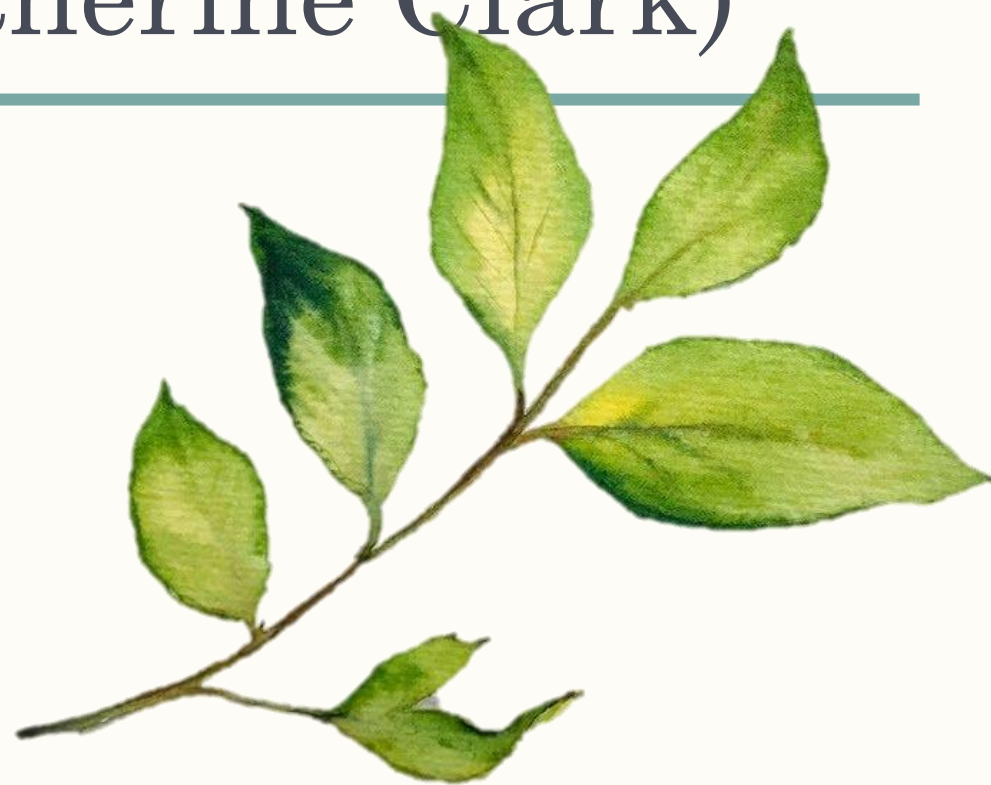
- She also develops a love of poetry, particularly the work of Amanda Hamilton, whose poems are printed in the local paper.
- Kya’s relationship with Tate becomes romantic, but he leaves for college one summer and, though he promises to return, fails to do so.
- Abandoned once more, Kya decides to never trust anyone again, but she soon starts seeing a local young man named Chase.
- Their relationship becomes serious, but Chase never integrates her into his life outside the marsh, and Kya learns one day that he’s engaged to another woman.
- A year or so after breaking things off, she encounters him once again, and he tries to rape her, though she manages to escape.
- Kya lures Chase to a nearby fire tower and tricks him into stepping through an open hatch. She is later found not guilty for this offense and lives the rest of her life with Tate in the marsh.
- It is only after Kya’s death that Tate discovers Chase’s shell necklace that was taken off of his dead body along with an Amanda Hamilton poem entitled “The Firefly.”

“Female fireflies draw in strange males with dishonest signals and eat them; mantis females devour their own mates. Female insects, Kya thought, know how to deal with their lovers.”



Kya (Catherine Clark)

Child to child
Eye to eye
We grew as one,
Sharing souls.
Wing by wing,
Leaf by leaf
You left this world,
You died before the child.
My friend, the Wild.



AH

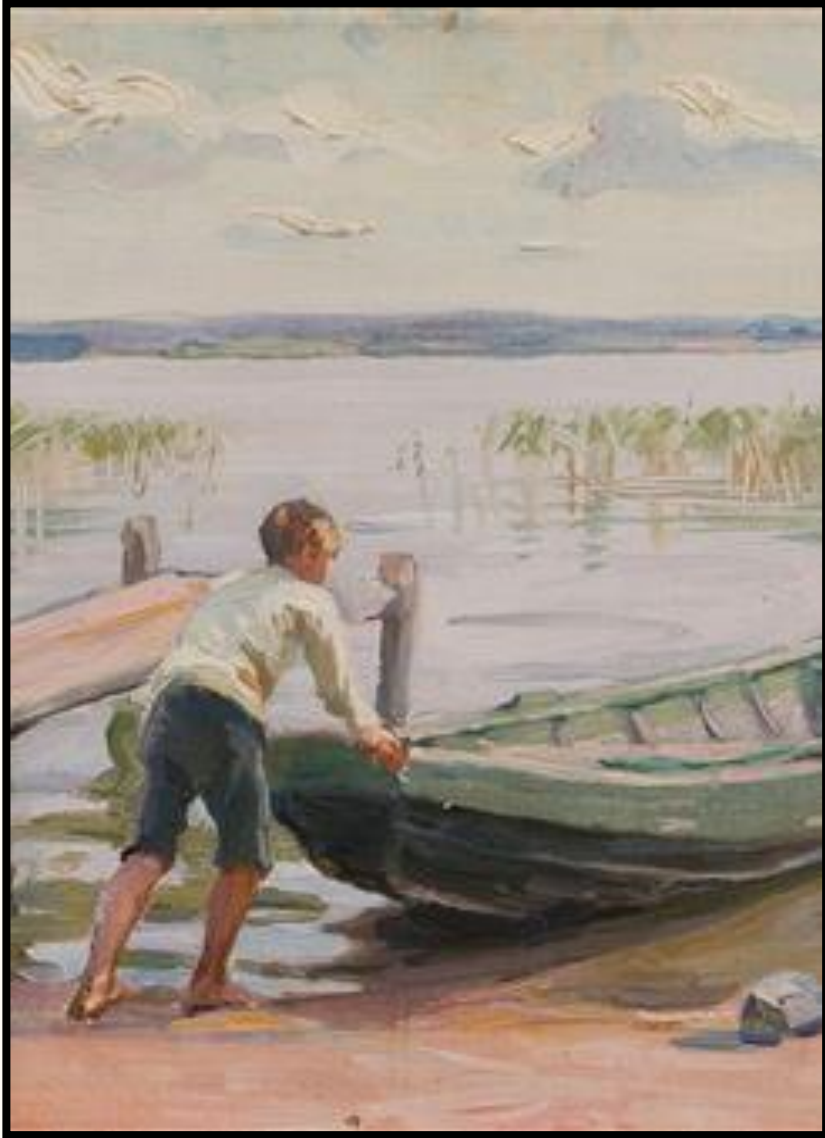


Tate



- Tate is from Barkley Cove, and is Kya’s primary romantic interest.
- As a boy, Tate fishes with Jodie and interacts with Kya, though Kya is too young to remember this. For this reason, she’s surprised to learn that Tate knows her name when she encounters him in the marsh after Ma, Jodie, and the rest of her siblings leave home.
- During this encounter, Tate helps Kya find her way home, an act of kindness that instils in her a wish to become his friend. Over the coming years, she sees him periodically in the marsh but keeps her distance.
- Because he admires her appreciation of nature, Tate finally makes deliberate contact with Kya when she’s 14, leaving rare feathers for her on a stump.

“His dad had told him many times that the definition of a real man is one who cries without shame, reads poetry with his heart, feels opera in his soul, and does what’s necessary to defend a woman.”

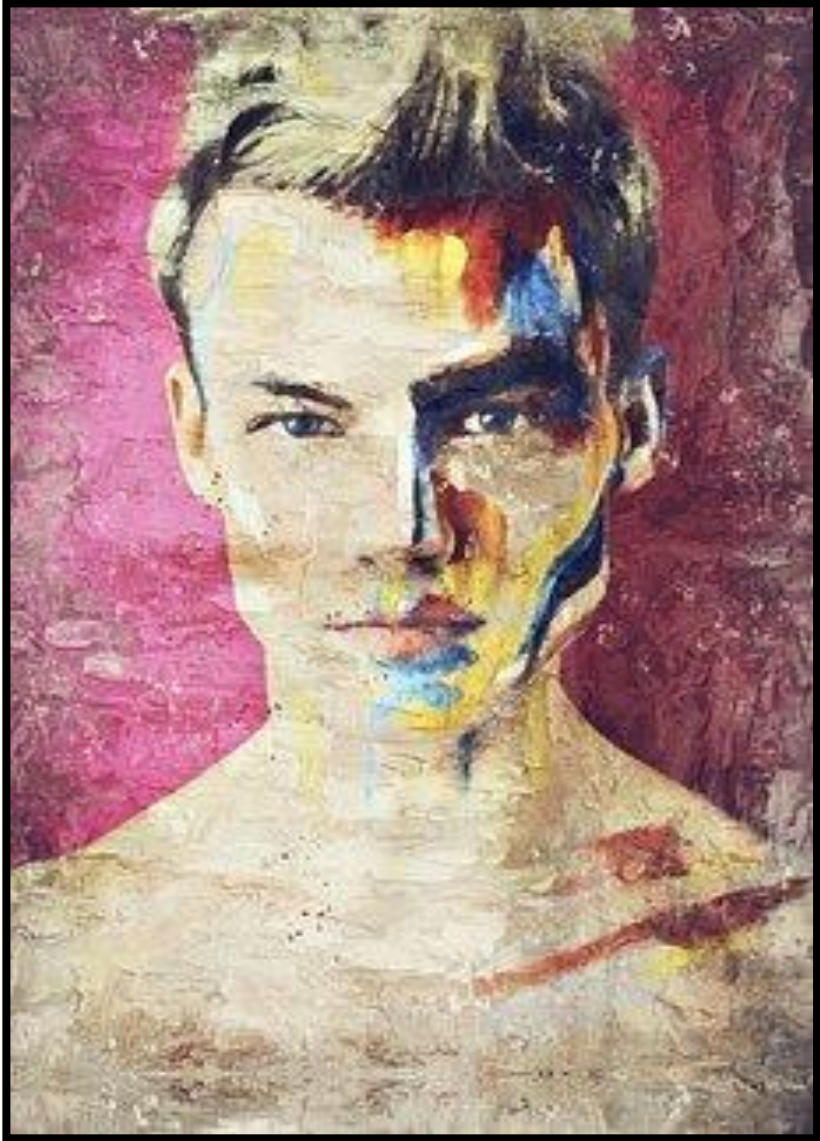


Tate



- A calm, polite young man, he encourages her not to run away and then offers to teach her to read.
- So begins their friendship, as Tate brings Kya books and spends time with her whenever he can.
- Soon their relationship becomes romantic, but Tate informs her that he's going to college and has accepted a job in a research lab over the summer, though he promises to visit on July 4th—a promise he fails to keep.
- When Tate finally does come to see Kya, he secretly watches her and is overwhelmed by the fact that she's unlike people in the outside world.
- Worried she'll never fit into the life he wants to build, he slips away. Tate later thinks this is the worst decision he's ever made, but he can't find a way to make it up to Kya, though he helps her publish her first book and later emotionally supports her when she's on trial for the murder of Chase Andrews, her former boyfriend.
- After the trial, she takes Tate back and they live together in the marsh for the rest of Kya's life.

“There are some who can live without wild things, and some who cannot.”

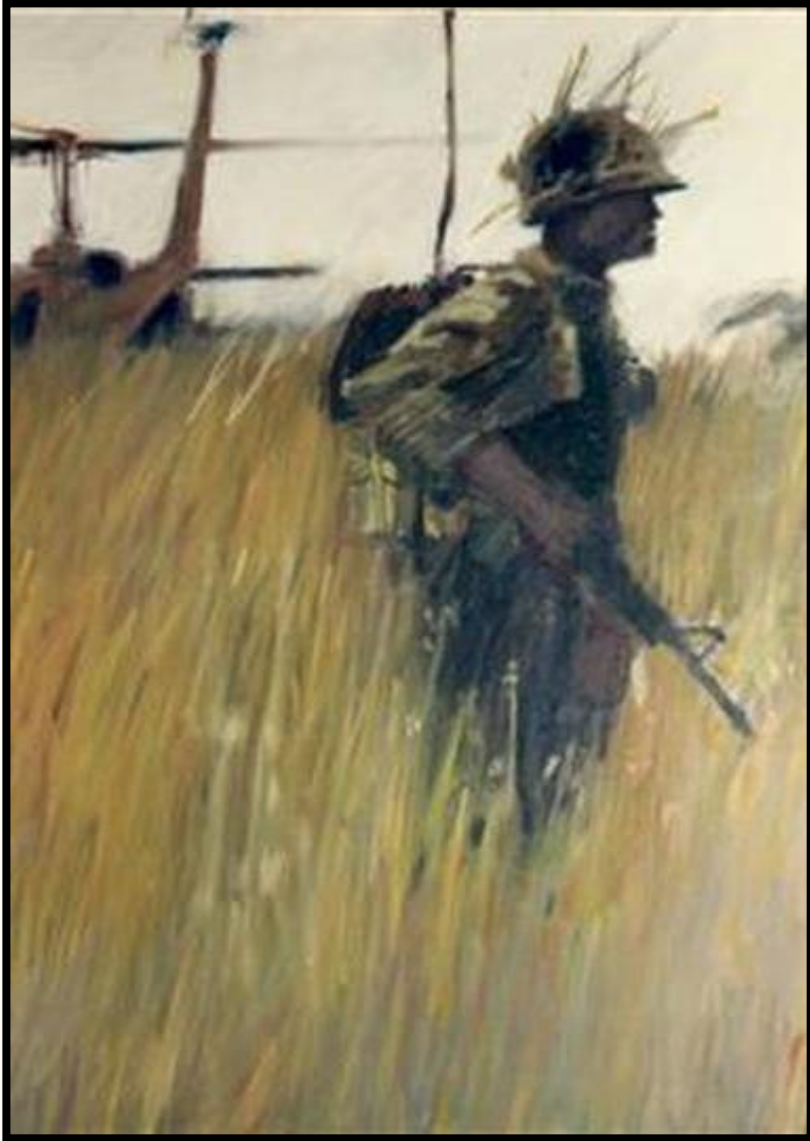


Chase Andrews



- Chase Andrews is a widely beloved young man who lives in Barkley Cove. Known in town as one of the best former quarterbacks the area has ever seen, Chase is confident and popular.
- When Chase sees Kya watching him and his friends one day, he goes out of his way to speak to her, eventually inviting her for a picnic the following weekend.
- This outing doesn't end well, since Chase quickly tries to have sex with Kya without bothering to discern whether or not she's interested.
- However, he later convinces her to give him a second chance, admitting that he's attracted to her "wild" ways but claiming that he just wants to spend time with her. Moving forward, he promises, he'll never pressure her to do anything she doesn't want. In the coming years, then, they develop a romantic relationship, and he even begins talking to her about getting married, though he never introduces her to his parents or tries to integrate her into his life outside the marsh.
- Soon enough, Kya discovers that Chase is engaged to be married to a young woman named Pearl, so Kya stops seeing him, though he finds her roughly a year later and tries to rape her. Luckily, Kya escapes, but she senses that he will come back for her.
- This is the story that ultimately drives the novel's plot, as readers learn in the first chapter that Chase has been murdered and are therefore invited to wonder if Kya was the killer as they follow the events that led up to his death.
- Since Kya was allegedly spotted near the crime scene on the night of the murder, and Chase's body was found missing the shell necklace that Kya had given to him, Chase's mother, Patti Love (among others in the community), believe that Kya is the culprit.

“Unworthy boys make a lot of noise”

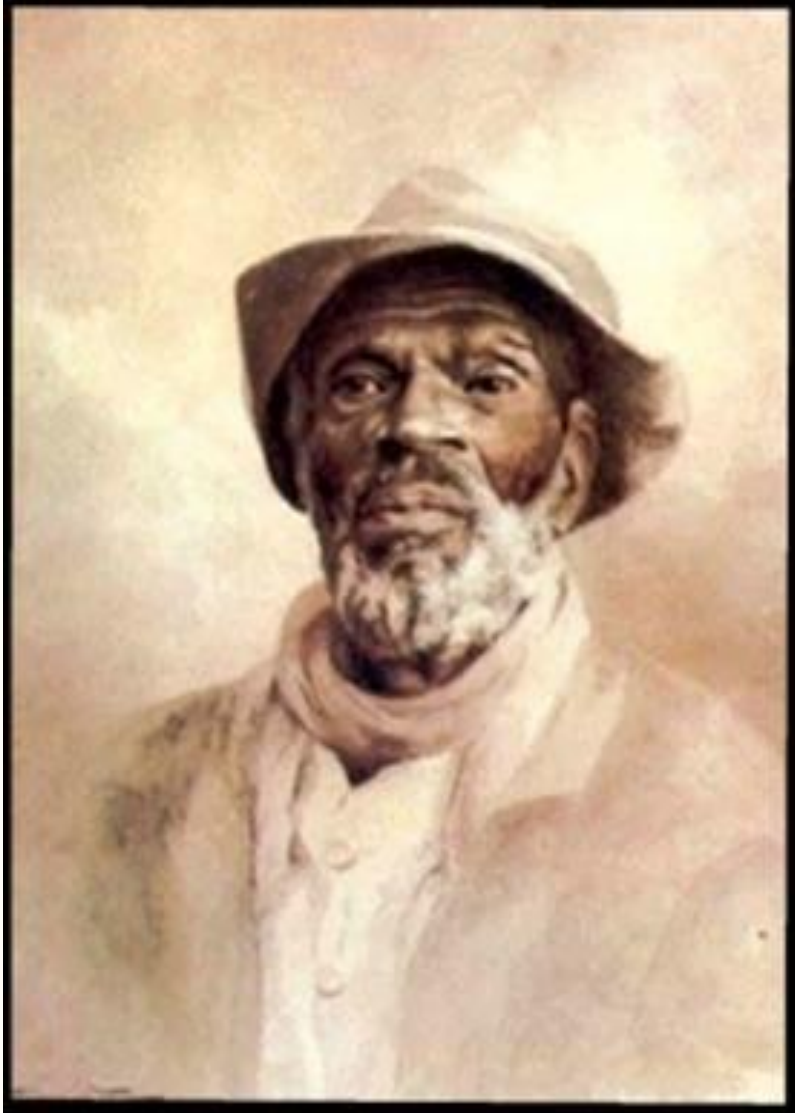


Jodie



- Jodie is Kya’s brother, and is the closest to her in age of all their siblings. When Ma leaves, he tries to make her feel better by insisting that she’ll return, pointing out that mothers never abandon their young.
- However, Kya reminds Jodie that they recently saw a female fox leave her cubs, but he says this was only because the fox was hurt and knew she wouldn’t survive if she stayed. Because Ma isn’t trying to save her own life, Jodie assures Kya, she will certainly come back.
- Unfortunately, though, Jodie is wrong to think that Ma isn’t leaving home as a means of survival, since her decision to escape Pa’s wrath is nothing but a means of self-preservation.
- In fact, Jodie himself secretly recognizes this, but he doesn’t say anything about his misgivings because he wants to soothe Kya—a sign that he’s an empathetic person who wants to do what he can to make his little sister feel better.
- But despite this determination, he decides after his siblings follow their mother’s footsteps that he, too, must leave home, thereby abandoning Kya.
- Towards the end of the novel, Jodie returns as an adult after having completed two military tours in Vietnam, and he apologizes for ever leaving Kya. He also tells her that he recently discovered that their mother died two years ago. For the rest of Jodie’s life, he lives near the marsh, visiting Kya often and supporting her whenever he can.

“Nature had nurtured, tutored, and protected her when no one else would.”



Jumpin’



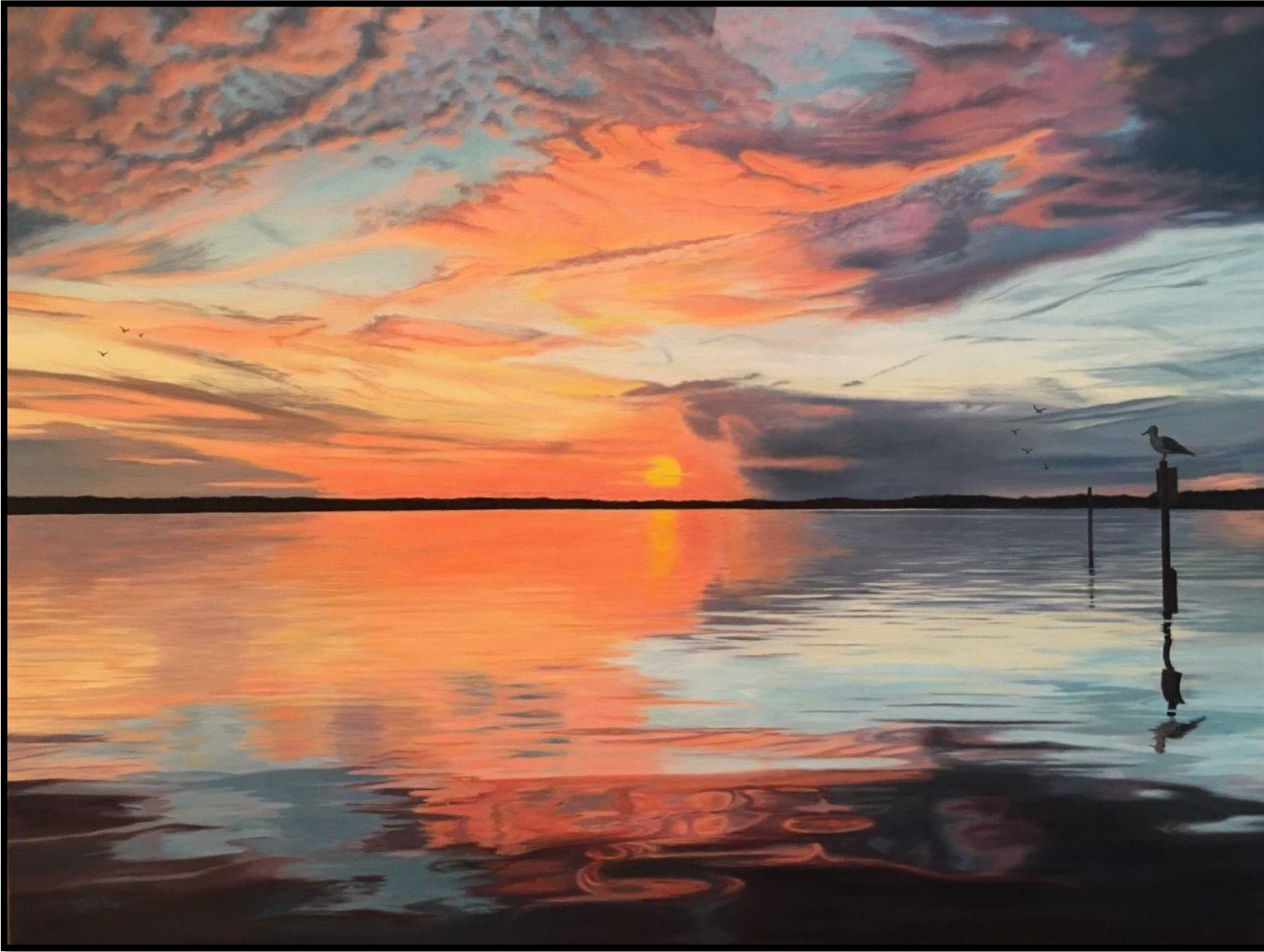
- Jumpin’ is a kindhearted man who owns a gas dock and bait shop that sits between Kya’s area of the marsh and Barkley Cove.
- Although Kya is white and Jumpin’ is black—and although they live in a racially segregated community—they become quite close, since Jumpin’ does what he can to help Kya survive when her entire family abandons her.
- When Kya tries to think of a way to make money, Jumpin’ agrees to buy sacks of mussels from her several times a week, though he warns her that other fishermen also bring him mussels, adding that he can only buy so many. Because of this, Kya catches fish and smokes them, hoping that Jumpin’ will sell those instead. And though these fish look disgusting, Jumpin’ agrees to take them, later bringing them to his wife, Mabel, who also feels sorry for Kya.
- They continue to show support for Kya, even when she’s on trial for Chase’s murder. Jumpin’ dies years after Kya is found not guilty, and Kya feels as if she has lost her true father.

“Lawd, we gotta do something 'bout that child. Ain’t nobody gonna buy them fish; I can cook ’em up in stew. Our church can come up wif some clothes, other things for her. We’ll tell ’er there’s some family that’ll trade jumpers for carpies. What size is she?”



Fading moon, follow
My footsteps
Through light unbroken
By land shadows,
And share my senses
That feel the cool
Shoulders of silence.
Only you know
How one side of a moment
Is stretched by loneliness
For miles
To the other edge,
And how much sky
Is in one breath
When time slides backward
From the sand.

Amanda Hamilton



Sunsets are never simple.
Twilight is refracted and reflected
But never true.
Eventide is a disguise
Covering tracks,
Covering lies.
We don't care
That dusk deceives.
We see brilliant colors,
And never learn
The sun has dropped
Beneath the earth
By the time we see the burn.
Sunsets are in disguise,
Covering truths, covering lies.

Amanda Hamilton



Broken Gull of Brandon Beach

Winged soul, you danced the skies,
And startled dawn with shrilling cries.
You followed sails and braved the sea,
Then caught the wind back to me.
You broke your wing; it dragged the land
And etched your mark upon the sand.
When feathers break, you cannot fly,
But who decides the time to die?
You disappeared, I know not where.
But your wing-marks still linger there.
A broken heart cannot fly,
But who decides the time to die?"

Amanda Hamilton



The Firefly

Luring him was as easy
As flashing valentines
But like a lady firefly
They hid a secret call to die.

A final touch,
Unfinished;
The last step, a trap.
Down, down he falls,
His eyes still holding mine
Until they see another world.

I saw them change.
First a question,
Then an answer,
Finally an end.

And love itself passing
To whatever it was before it began.

Amanda Hamilton

Part 1 – The Marsh





Part 1 Chapters

1. Ma (1952)
2. Jodie (1952)
3. Chase (1969)
4. School (1952)
5. Investigation (1969)
6. A Boat and a Boy (1952)
7. The Fishing Season (1952)
8. Negative Data (1969)
9. Jumpin' (1953)
10. Just Grass in the Wind (1969)
11. Croker Sacks Full (1956)
12. Pennies and Grits (1956)
13. Feathers (1960)
14. Red Fivers (1969)
15. The Game (1960)
16. Reading (1960)
17. Crossing the Threshold (1960)
18. White Canoe (1960)
19. Something to Go On (1969)
20. July 4 (1961)
21. Coop (1961)

Part 2 – The Swamp






Part 2 Chapters

22. Same Tide (1965)
23. The Shell (1965)
24. The Fire Tower (1965)
25. A Visit from Patti Love (1969)
26. The Boat Ashore (1965)
27. Out Hog Mountain Road (1966)
28. The Shrimper (1969)
29. Seaweed (1967)
30. The Rips (1967)
31. A Book (1968)
32. Alibi (1969)
33. The Scar (1968)
34. Search the Shack (1969)
35. The Compass (1969)
36. To Trap a Fox (1969)
37. Gray Sharks (1969)
38. Sunday Justice (1970)
39. Chase by Chance (1969)
40. Cypress Cove (1970)
41. A Small Herd (1969)
42. A Cell (1970)
43. A Microscope (1969)
44. Cell Mate 1970
45. Red Cap (1970)
46. King of the World (1969)
47. The Expert (1970)
48. A Trip (1969)
49. Disguises (1970)
50. The Journal (1970)
51. Waning Moon (1970)
52. Three Mountains Motel (1970)
53. Missing Link (1970)
54. Vice Versa (1970)
55. Grass Flowers (1970)
56. The Night Heron (1970)
57. The Firefly



“The great blue heron is the color of gray mist reflecting in blue water. And like mist, she can fade into the backdrop, all of her disappearing except the concentric circles of her lock-and-load eyes. She is a patient, solitary hunter, standing alone as long as it takes to snatch her prey. Or, eyeing her catch, she will stride forward one slow step at a time, like a predacious bridesmaid. And yet, on rare occasions she hunts on the wing, darting and diving sharply, swordlike beak in the lead.”



“Her collections matured, categorized methodically by order, genus, and species; by age according to bone wear; by size in millimetres of feathers; or by the fragile hues of greens. The science and art entwined in each other's strengths; the colours, the light, the species, the life; weaving a masterpiece of knowledge and beauty that filled every corner of her shack. Her world, She grew with them--the trunk of the vine--alone, but holding all the wonders together.”

earth colours

-  Raw sienna PB7 (Sennelier nature)
-  Burnt sienna PB7 (Sennelier nature)
-  Burnt sienna PB7 (Sennelier)
-  Raw umber PB7 (Sennelier nature)
-  Burnt umber PB7 (Sennelier nature)
-  Burnt umber PB7 (Sennelier)
-  Warm sepia PB7, PB7 (Sennelier)
-  Warm sepia PB7, PB7 (Sennelier)
-  Sepia PR101, PB6 (Art spectrum)
-  Sepia PR101, PB6 (Art spectrum)
-  Yellow ochre PY43 (W&N)
-  Indian red PR101 (W&N Cotman)

RED EARTH

Outback Australia is famous for its unique red earth. The area around Alice Springs in NT is even called the Red Centre. How can I mix this colour?

-  Indian red + Permanent Alizarin Crimson
-  Transparent Orange + Burnt Sienna
-  Transparent Yellow + Scarlet lake + Burnt Sienna

*Learn more about mixing colours Australian

These two colours are new to my palette but I love them both!



I've never painted rocks before and I found it difficult to capture the different facets



Which bird does this striped feather come from? It reminds me of a Pheasant coucal feather but it's not the right shape. to be that.

Some of the powder rubbed off, leaving a transparent. The powder is actually scales which are made of hairs. *Learn more about this - check with hair

Japan great...
LIVE, TRAVEL, ADVENTURE, BLESS, AND DON'T BE SHY. - JIM KERRAL

Upgrade from my previous habit of using the cap of my water bottle

7"x10" Canson Montval watercolor field book

Perch close together

Perch low within 1m of ground

White butterfly

adult

imm.

They out to catch large insects in flight... then swoops back on orange wings

LITTLE FEATHER

Click here

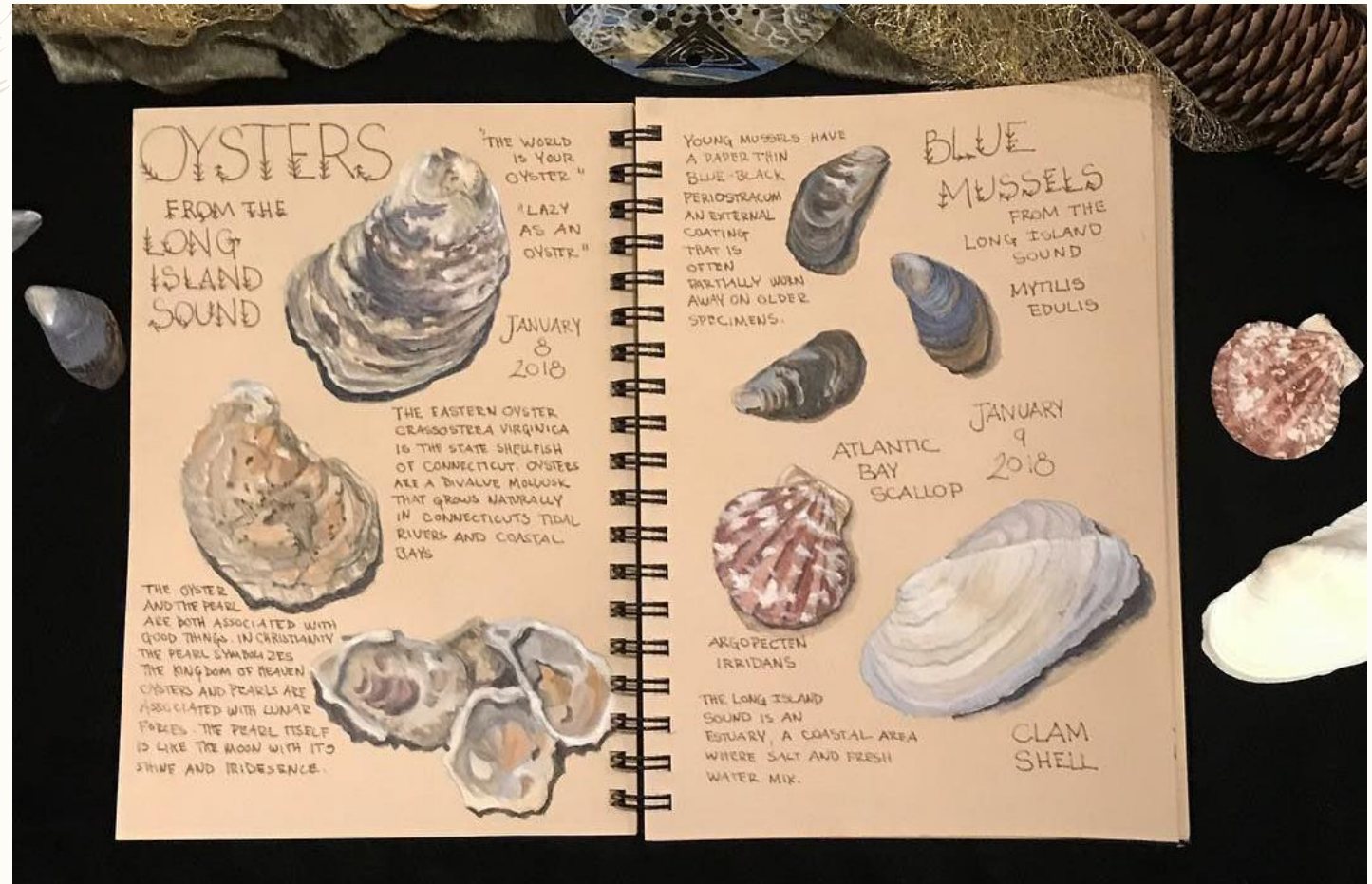



Optional Task: Nature Journal

IDEAS FOR YOUR NATURE JOURNAL

- If you are feeling stuck, here are a few other ideas to help get your juices flowing:
- Leaf or tree rubbings
- Measurements/charts – look for patterns
- Poetry
- Quotes
- Nature stamps (collect objects and paint them and press into your journal)
- Smear some juice from a berry or fruit you are drawing.
- Lists of birds, insects, leaves, or flowers you have observed
- Record sit spot seasons – sit in the same spot at least once during each season. Record how it is different
- Seeds (either from a plant you are observing or taken from a packet you plan to plant – record how it is growing)
- Record animal tracks – ask questions like: where are they going? Who do they belong to?
- Ask yourself: What does this remind me of? Why? Let yourself wonder and come up with answers on your own without the help of a field guide or your phone. Write them down and check later to see if you were close!


“She touched the pages and remembered each shell and the story of finding it, where it lay on the beach, the season, the sunrise. A family album.”





“Here, just a minute.” He touched a drop of marsh water onto the slide, covered it with another, and focused the eyepiece. He stood. “Have a look.” Kya leaned over gently, as if to kiss a baby. The microscope’s light reflected in her dark pupils, and she drew in a breath as a Mardi Gras of costumed players pirouetted and careened into view. Unimaginable headdresses adorned astonishing bodies so eager for more life, they frolicked as though caught in a circus tent, not a single bead of water. She put her hand on her heart. “I had no idea there were so many and so beautiful,” she said, still looking. He identified some odd species, then stepped back, watching her. She feels the pulse of life, he thought, because there are no layers between her and her planet.”





“She walked to the water’s edge. Chase would not let this go. Being isolated was one thing; living in fear, quite another. She imagined taking one step after the other into the churning sea, sinking into the stillness beneath the waves, strands of her hair suspending like black watercolor into the pale blue sea, her long fingers and arms drifting up toward the backlit blaze of the surface. Dreams of escape—even through death—always lift toward the light. The dangling, shiny prize of peace just out of grasp until finally her body descends to the bottom and settles in murky quiet. Safe. Who decides the time to die?”



Some Discussion Questions

1. The North Carolina marsh where Kya lives has long been a sanctuary for outsiders. How does this setting shape the novel? How does growing up in this isolation affect Kya? In what ways does her status as an “outsider” change how others see her?
2. Why does Kya choose not to go back to school? Do you think she makes the wrong decision? How does Kya’s lack of formal education shape her vision of the world? Would her character be different if she had gone to school?
3. After Jodie and Pa leave Kya alone, she becomes close to Jumpin’ and Mabel. Why are these two adults drawn to Kya? What do they teach her about the world? Do you agree with Jumpin’s decision to protect Kya from social services (p. 110) and to encourage her to live alone in the marsh? Why or why not?
4. Why do you think Kya’s mother leaves in the beginning? Do you agree with her decision?
5. Kya often watches the other young people from town — she even nicknames them “Tallskinnyblonde, Ponytailfreckleface, Shortblackhair, Alwayswearspearls, and roundchubbycheeks” (p. 80). What does Kya learn from observing these girls? Why do you think she keeps her watching secret? Do you agree with Kya’s secrecy?
6. How is womanhood explored throughout the novel? What does being a woman mean to Kya? How does she relate to the other women in Barkley Cove?



Some Discussion Questions

1. Discuss Kya's relationship with Tate. How does Tate's understanding of Kya change over time? Is Tate a good partner for Kya? Why or why not?
2. Tate's father tells him that poems are important because "they make ya feel something" (p. 48). What does poetry mean to Tate? What does it mean to Kya? How does poetry help Kya throughout the novel?
3. On page 142, Kya watches the fireflies near her shack, and notices that the females can change their flashes to signal different things. What does this realization mean to Kya? What does it teach her about relationships? How does this lesson influence Kya's decisions in the second half of the novel?
4. Discuss how Kya's observations of nature shape her vision of the world. Do you think these lessons adequately prepare her for life in Barkley Cove? Do you think human society follows the same rules as the natural world? Should it? Why or why not?
5. Is Chase a different kind of man than Tate? How are they different? Is one man better? Do you think that their differences are biological or learned? How does Kya see each man?
6. In the end of the novel, Kya thinks "Most of what she knew, she'd learned from the wild. Nature had nurtured, tutored, and protected her when no one else would. If consequences resulted from her behaving differently, then they too were functions of life's fundamental core" (p. 363). What does she mean? Do you agree with her philosophy? What do you think it means to be a good person? Do you think Kya is a good person? Why or why not?
7. Were you surprised by the verdict in the Chase's murder trial? What about by the ending of the novel? Do you agree with Tate's final decision? Why or why not?