

Further Reading

Desolation Mountain
William Kent Krueger (2018)
MYS KRUEGER

Cork and his son, Stephen, investigate a plane crash that has killed a senator, a case that is further complicated by the baffling disappearances of several first responders.

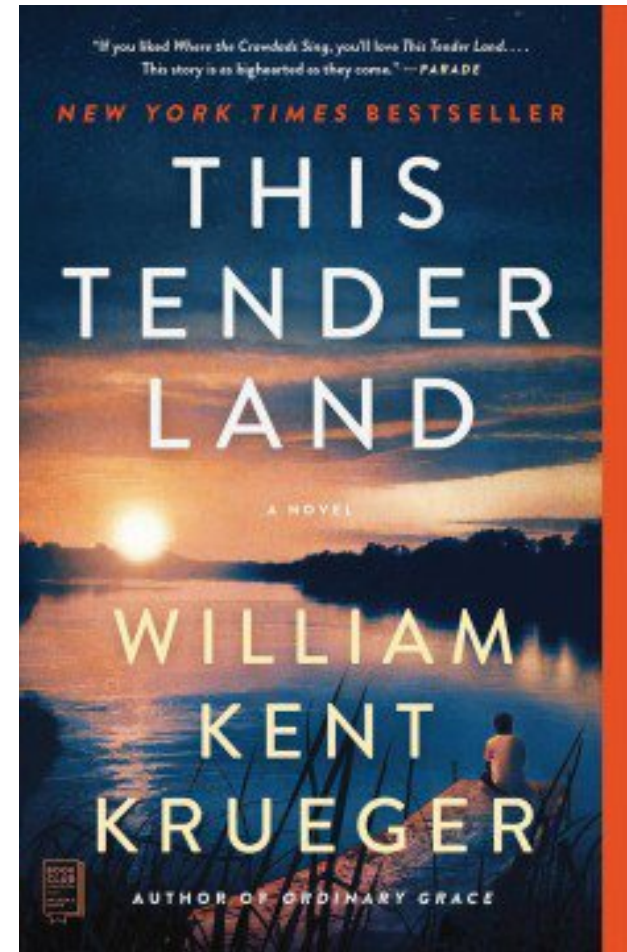
Sulfer Springs
William Kent Krueger (2017)
MYS KRUEGER

A search for a missing man in the Arizona desert puts Cork O'Connor and his new bride at the center of a violent power struggle along the Mexican border.

Windigo Island
William Kent Krueger (2014)
MYS KRUEGER

When the body of a year-missing Ojibwa girl washes up on a Lake Superior island, rekindling Native American superstitions about mythical monsters, Cork O'Connor struggles to obtain information from reluctant witnesses to a brutal sex-trafficking operation.

Book Discussion Guide



Discussion Questions

1. Although Odie and Albert find themselves in a boarding school for Native American children, most of the Native children don't actually speak in the story. The Native character whom readers get to know best is Mose, and he is mute and "speaks" only through sign language. Why do you think the author chose silence as a way of depicting the children at the school?
2. Trying to understand the nature of God is one of the many struggles for Odie during his experiences in the summer of 1932. Is Odie the only one struggling with this issue? What sense do you have concerning the way the other vagabonds feel about the nature of God? What about the people they meet on their travels? How does Odie's relationship with God change over the course of his journey?
3. When Odie and Albert attempt to buy boots, the clerk is skeptical that Albert and Odie would be able to afford the \$5 price tag. After Odie lies about getting the money from their father, a second clerk remarks, "If he got a job these days, he's one of the lucky ones." This is Odie and Albert's first experience of life outside of the Lincoln School. What sense of the current state of the world do you get from this encounter?
4. When Odie is working for Jack in his orchard, Jack explains his religious philosophy, saying, "God all penned up under a roof? I don't think so." Where does Jack think God is really to be found? What is it in Odie's experience that makes him disagree with Jack's outlook?
5. After having escaped Jack, the vagabonds encounter a Native American man named Forrest. He appears friendly and shares a meal with them, but he's also aware that there is a \$500 reward for their capture—a huge amount of money at the time. The children are unsure whether to trust him or not. What would you do in their situation?
6. Why does Odie trust Sister Eve so wholeheartedly, but not her partner, Sid? Do you think he's right to draw the conclusions he does about Sid from their interactions? How do some of Odie's misjudgments lead to disastrous consequences? In your opinion, is what happens to Albert in some way Odie's fault?
7. When the vagabonds encounter the skeleton of a Native American boy, Albert says there's nothing they can do, but Mose reacts very differently. Later, he wanders off from the group to learn about the Dakota Conflict of 1862, which resulted in the execution of thirty-eight Sioux and the deaths of hundreds more. How does knowledge of this history change how Mose perceives himself? What impact does hearing this story have on Odie? On you?
8. When Odie is on his own, riding the rails, trying to get to St. Louis, he comes face to face with danger and violence. Do you think he was foolish for striking out alone? How was this encounter different from the things he experienced at Lincoln School?
9. Odie is a born storyteller even at his young age. Throughout the book he tells Albert, Emmy, and Mose tales about an imp, a princess, and the vagabonds. What purpose do these stories serve in the novel?
10. Sister Eve says to Odie that the only prayer she knows will absolutely be answered is a prayer for forgiveness. What do you think she means by this? Who are the people whom Odie needs to forgive, and for what reasons?
11. Odie, Albert, Mose, and Emmy are all searching for peace and a place to call home. What do you think each character is looking for and what are their different definitions of home? In the end, do they all find what they are looking for, and if so how?

Courtesy of williamkentkrueger.com