

Where the Crawdads Sing Discussion Questions

by Delia Owens

Author Bio: (from Fantastic Fiction)

Delia Owens is the co-author of three internationally bestselling nonfiction books about her life as a wildlife scientist in Africa - *Cry of the Kalahari*, *The Eye of the Elephant*, and *Secrets of the Savanna*. She has won the John Burroughs Award for Nature Writing and has been published in *Nature*, *The African Journal of Ecology*, and *International Wildlife*, among many others.



She currently lives in Idaho, where she continues her support for the people and wildlife of Zambia. **Where the Crawdads Sing** is her first novel.

Characters:

- **Kya** – (Catherine Clark) – Lives in the marshes of North Carolina. Abusive father. Youngest of 5 children. (Jodie, her brother, is 7 years older and closest in age. Murph, older brother. Missy and Mandy, older sisters.) She is 6 years old, in 1952, when her mother leaves. Aged 19, in 1969, when Chase Andrews' body is found.
- **Chase Andrews** – Was the star quarterback in high school. Now works for his parents. Parents own the car dealership in Barkley Cove. Parents are Sam and Patti Love. Wife is Pearl. His body is found by fire tower in 1969 by two boys, Steve and Benji.
- **Mrs. Arial** – 2nd grade school teacher.
- **Pa (Jackson Clark)** – Born into money. Family lost it in the Depression. Took to gambling and drinking. Married Julianne Clark and had 5 children. Kya is the youngest. Abusive. Eventually leaves Kya and the Marsh shack.
- **Ma (Julienne Jacques Clark)** – Born into money. Married Jackson Clark and had 5 children. Kya is the youngest. Left the marsh shack (and her youngest 2 children) in 1952.
- **Mrs. Culpepper** – Truant officer.
- **Sherriff Ed Jackson** – Sheriff of Barkley Cove.
- **Jumpin' Jake** – Owner of the Gas & Bait. Kya sells fresh-caught seafood to him. Black. Helps Kya out with clothes and other things. Married to Mabel.
- **Mr. Milton** – Kya's lawyer. Comes out of retirement to defend Kya during the trial.
- **Dr. Vern Murphy** – Barkley Cove's only physician.
- **Joe Purdue** – Barkley Cove Deputy.
- **Tate Walker** – Fishing boy. Helps Kya learn to read and do math. Aspiring biologist. Father, Scupper, is a shrimper.

Discussion Questions:

1. Did you like the book? Why or why not?
2. How does the North Carolina marsh setting shape the story? In what ways does the setting seem like another character in the novel?
3. Author Delia Owens is a wildlife scientist in her professional life. How do her experiences in the wild seep into **Where the Crawdads Sing**?
4. Discuss the series of events that led to Kya living alone in the marsh. Who failed her, and who was there for her? Were there better choices that could have been made?
5. How did you feel about Kya's decision not to return to school? How different would her life have been if she had stayed in school?
6. What is Kya's relationship like with Jumpin' and Mabel? Why are they drawn to Kya - and what do they have to offer her?
7. Did the people of Barkley Cove owe anything to Kya? What does it mean for her to be an outsider, and how does it impact her life and choices?
8. What does Kya learn about relationships by watching fireflies? How did her interpretation of their behavior inform her choices later? What other things did she learn from nature?
9. Which characters had the biggest influence on Kya? On whose lives did she make the biggest impact?
10. How is poetry used in the book? What does poetry mean to Tate and to Kya?
11. Contrast Kya's relationships with Chase and Tate. What do each of them offer her, and what does she represent to them?
12. What does Kya learn by watching the girls in Barkley Cove? How is her idea of womanhood influenced by her observations and by her life in the marsh?
13. Do you see Kya as a victim? Why or why not? How did your opinion of her change over the course of the book?
14. How did you feel about the outcome of the trial?
15. Do you think Tate made the right decision in the end? Why?
16. Were you surprised by the reveal about how Chase Anderson actually died? Why or why not?
17. Did the ending of the book offer the closure you wanted? Were you surprised or disappointed by the way the book ended?
18. One of the reoccurring themes in the last few books we have discussed is the grey area between the law and each character's moral code. Does Kya have a moral code? If yes, how did she develop her moral code? Do you think Kya was right in the decisions she made by society's standards? By nature? By hers?

19. What did the title, **Where the Crowdads Sing**, mean to you before you read the book? After?
20. **Where the Crowdad's Sing** was made into a movie. Will you watch it? Why or why not?
21. **Where the Crowdad's Sing** is Delia Owen's first fiction novel. Will you read another novel by her, if she writes one?

References:

- Book Bub – <https://www.bookbub.com/blog/where-the-crawdads-sing-book-club-questions>
- Delia Owens – <https://www.deliaowens.com/>
- Fantastic Fiction – <https://www.fantasticfiction.com/o/delia-owens/>
- Novelist – <https://web-p-ebSCOhost-com.ezproxy.clevnet.org/novp/detail?vid=2&sid=b48a9bdb-aac9-4d4e-895c-b16f889c609f%40redis&bdata=JnNpdGU9bm92cC1saXZl#UI=10685203&db=neh>

Delia Owens' Books

Fiction:

- Where the Crowdad's Sing

Nonfiction:

- Cry of the Kalahari
- The Eye of the Elephant
- Secrets of the Savanna.

If you liked **Where the Crowdad's Sing**, try...

- [The Women of Pearl Island](#) – Polly Crosby
- [Beasts of Extraordinary Circumstance](#) – Ruth Emmie Lang
- [Where the Line Bleeds](#) – Jesmyn Ward
- [Between, Georgia](#) – Joshilyn Jackson
- [My Absolute Darling](#) – Gabriel Tallent