

Prodigal Summer: A Novel

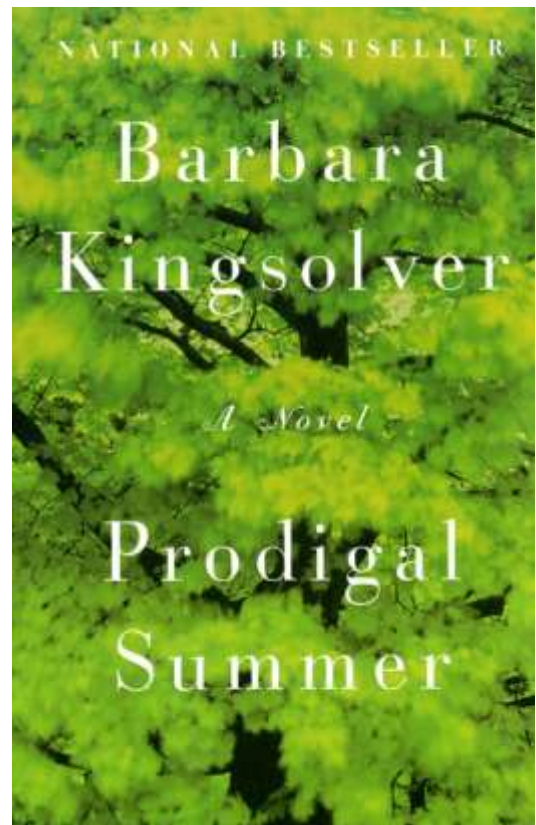
Harper Perennial

By Barbara Kingsolver
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Introduction

Barbara Kingsolver's fifth novel is a hymn to wildness that celebrates the prodigal spirit of human nature, and of nature itself. It weaves together three stories of human love within a larger tapestry of lives amid the mountains and farms of southern Appalachia.

Over the course of one humid summer, this novel's intriguing protagonists face disparate predicaments but find connections to one another and to the flora and fauna with which they necessarily share a place.



Questions for Discussion

1. Why do you think this book is entitled *Prodigal Summer*?
2. Deanna is the self-appointed protector of coyotes and all predators. Is she disturbing nature's own ways of dealing with upsets? What about Garnett and his quest for a blight-free chestnut tree -- is this "good" for nature?
3. How does the relationship between Deanna and Eddie Bondo change them both? Should Deanna have told Eddie about the pregnancy? Do you think he already knew and that was one of the reasons he left when he did?
4. When Nannie and Garnett hug, a huge barrier between them drops and they both gain a basic understanding of each other's humanness and vulnerability. Do you think a romantic relationship between them will ensue? How much does Garnett's unrecognized longing for love and human contact account for the shift in his perception of Nannie and the greater world around him? What else influences the shift in Garnett? Does Nannie change as well?

5. The three major story lines are named "Predators," "Moth Love," and "Old Chestnuts." Why, besides acknowledging her respect for coyotes, spiders and other predatory creatures, are Deanna's chapters named "Predators?" Does her love of predators make her the "natural" lover of Eddie Bondo? How does Lusa's life mirror the life cycle of her beloved moths? How does her love of insects lead to her emergence from her cocoon of grief (i.e. her relationship to Crystal)? How do Garnett and Nannie remind you of "old chestnuts?" Are they extinct? Are they the few lone trees left alive after a blight?