



The Carrion Birds

By Urban Waite
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Questions for Discussion

1. What do the two quotes that make up the epigraph tell you about the story that follows?
2. Three characters central to the story are Ray, Tom, and Dario. Describe each man and then compare and contrast him to the others. What is your opinion of each?
3. How would they describe themselves? What propels their actions?
4. Another important character is Edna Kelly, the town sheriff. What kind of woman is she? Is she a good sheriff? Describe her relationship to Tom. What draws her to him?
5. Ray's father, Gus, tells Tom, "Your cousin was never a good man. Never was going to be and never will be." Do you agree? Why do you think Gus feels this way about his son? Tom and Ray grew up together almost like brothers. Why did their lives take different turns? Does Ray use Tom or is he truly the only person Ray can turn to?
6. Though he is rarely present, Memo has a big influence on the story. What is his significance and what do we learn about his character from those involved with him?
7. Do you believe in fate? How much control do we have over our lives? How much are our choices framed by circumstances beyond our control? Can we ever have control, or is that an illusion we tell ourselves to keep going, day after day? What choices do the novel's characters make that shape their lives? What are the factors that influence those choices? What do these people want and what are they searching for? What do they all need?
8. Talk about Coronado, New Mexico. Why does the author choose this place for his setting? What kind of a town is it? How does it play a role in the lives of the people there? The town's mayor, Eli, doesn't want the feds involved in what's happening. Why not? Are his fears justified?
9. By the end of the novel, do you believe justice is served? Many of the characters take the law into their own hands. Does our legal system sometimes fail us—or are we failing the law? What do you think happens to those who survive?
10. How does Urban Waite create atmosphere and tension in the story? Select three or four adjectives to describe the novel and explain your selections.
11. Why did your book group choose *The Carrion Birds*? What does the title tell you about the story? What did you take away from reading the novel?