

GDPL Book Club Discussion Questions

Finding the Mother Tree by Suzanne Simard

Feel free to make up your own questions. Have them feel like fun, and not homework. 😊

- 1) Impression: what (if anything) in this book “struck” you - impressed you or annoyed you? Why? Read us a quote that stayed with you.
- 2) Writing style, structure, and quality: Simard’s book is an unusual weaving of her personal memoir with detailed scientific discoveries. How did that affect your reading experience? Did the memoir or science draw you in more? Did the language strike you as insightful, lyrical, descriptive - does each word “earn its keep”?
- 3) Setting: All her life, Simard has lived in and studied the BC Interior and Coast Mountains forests – *our* local forests. Does that affect your experience of the book? Would you feel differently if her forests were on another continent?
- 4) Characters: In the memoir, Simard is the main character, interwoven with her family, ancestors, and colleagues. Does she seem different in writing than in video or audio? Did her characters feel “real” and “fleshed out” enough? Is the forest itself a character in this book? Did you learn anything from any of the characters’ lives?
- 5) Plot: Several times, dramatic events occur simultaneously in Simard’s private and professional lives. Coincidence, fate, or condensing events for effect? How was the pacing: fast/slow/just right? How was it if you listened on audiobook?
- 6) Audience: Who is Simard trying to reach, with this book? Do you think she succeeds? How did you find her references to Indigenous knowledge of BC Forests?
- 7) Theme: What do you think of Simard’s discoveries that trees communicate through fungus, and “mother trees” help younger trees? Are they “controversial” because they highlight cooperation over competition in nature? Do you agree with Simard that, metaphorically, we can learn from trees? How does diversity challenge and enrich us?
- 8) Film adaptation: Amy Adams and Jake Gyllenhaal have bought the adaptive film rights. Could you imagine this nonfiction book as a dramatic movie? Would you cast Adams to star, or someone else? Can you think of similar film adaptations? For example, if you’ve seen “Adaptation” or read “The Orchid Thief,” or the book or movie of “Wild,” do you think an adaptation of this book would be similar? Why or why not?
- 9) Personal relatability Does this book remind you of anything, or relate to anything, in your own life?