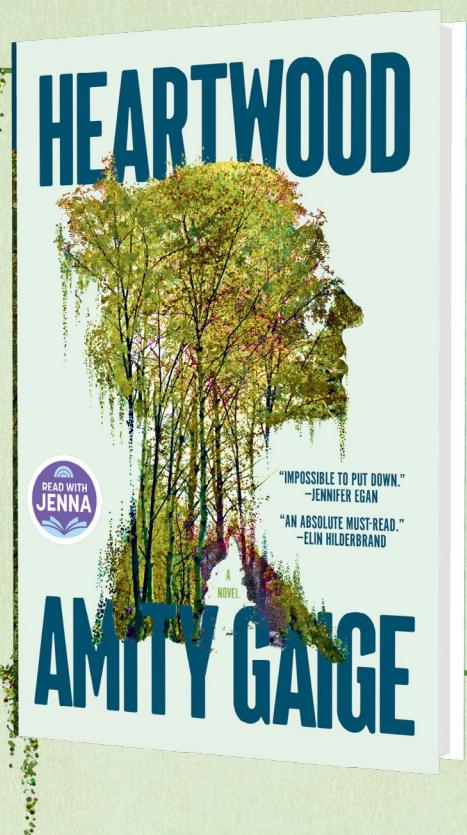


HEARTWOOD

AMITY GAIGE

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS



1. Each of the three main characters in *Heartwood* find solace in nature. Lena loves birdwatching and foraging. For Valerie, long-distance hiking makes her feel “whole.” Bev thinks of the backcountry as her “mother.” When was the last time you really felt connected to nature?
2. Talk about how you felt as Valerie described her lostness. What do you think you would feel or do if you became lost in the outdoors?
3. Valerie writes letters to her mother while she is lost in the woods. Who would you write to and what would you want them to know?
4. What do you think about the novel’s connection between lostness and being motherless?
5. For many readers, Santo is a surprising favorite character. What did you think about his role in the investigation and his friendships with Valerie and Cody the warden?
6. *Heartwood* is as much about being lost as it is about being found. What times in your life have you been “lost” emotionally, spiritually, or psychologically, and who rescued you?
7. *Heartwood* was written during the pandemic and Lena was inspired by how difficult quarantine was for older people. Did reading *Heartwood* remind you of that difficult time? And was there anything you turned to, like reading, internet-sleuthing or hiking, that helped you get through it?
8. Though there are true stories of people going missing while hiking, there is also a vibrant and supportive trail community. The book is in many ways a celebration of the American wilderness. Did reading *Heartwood* make you want to hike the Appalachian Trail?