

Book Club Discussion Guide



The Berry Pickers by Amanda Peters, Page 1 (March 2024)

The Berry Pickers

By Amanda Peters

About the author:

I am a woman, a daughter, a sister, an Auntie, a cat mom, a dog mom, a friend, a descendent of a revolutionary war sailor, of accused witches and Mi'kmaq ancestors. A Canadian, a traveler, a wine drinker, an admirer of stained glass, a listener of jazz and old country, a reader of books, and a teller of stories.

Associate Professor in the Department of English and Theatre at Acadia University in Wolfville, Nova Scotia.

Source: <https://amandapetersauthor.com/>

About this book:

A four-year-old girl goes missing from the blueberry fields of Maine, sparking a tragic mystery that will remain unsolved for nearly fifty years. A stunning debut by a vibrant new voice in fiction, *The Berry Pickers* is a riveting novel about the search for truth, the shadow of trauma and the persistence of love across time.

Source: <https://amandapetersauthor.com/the-berry-pickers>

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Discussion Questions:

1. Amanda Peters has said that the opening line, "The day Ruthie went missing, the blackflies seemed to be especially hungry," came to her, and the rest of the book followed. How did this line set the scene? What expectations did it give you for the story, and were those fulfilled?
2. When did you figure out the relationship between the two storylines, and how did it make you feel?
3. Have you ever discovered a family secret? How did it change your relationship with the people around you?
4. Did you prefer Joe's voice, Norma's or the combination? Were there other characters you wished could give their point of view?
5. After Ruthie goes missing, what do you think keeps the remaining family members bound together? What do you think pulls them apart?
6. How does Ruthie's disappearance echo tragedies and atrocities in the broader history of Indigenous peoples? Have you learned more since reading the book?
7. How does Norma's feeling of being stuck between worlds come out in the story? In what ways might other characters feel a sense of duality or out of placeness?
8. Why do you think art-making becomes so important in the story? Are there other themes that jump out at you about making a meaningful life after loss?

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9. In the end, why do you think Norma's mother did the very drastic thing she did?
10. You might say this story is ultimately about forgiveness. Are you able to find all the major characters redeemable in some way, or are there any you cannot forgive?
11. If you were going to write a novel based on stories of family history your parents told you, as Amanda Peters has here, where would it be set and what might it be about?

Source: <https://www.readinggroupguides.com/reviews/the-berry-pickers/guide>