

Book Club Discussion Guide



Where the Falcon Flies by Adam Shoalts, Page 1 (March 2024)

Where the falcon flies: a 3,400 kilometre odyssey from my doorstep to the Arctic

By Adam Shoalts

About the author:

Declared one of the “greatest living explorers” by Canadian Geographic, and named “Canada’s Indiana Jones” by the Toronto Star, Adam Shoalts is a professional adventurer and the author of four national bestselling books.

His career has included mapping rivers, leading expeditions for the Royal Canadian Geographical Society and Mountain Equipment Co-op, archaeological digs, tracking endangered species, and completing a nearly 4,000 km solo journey across Canada’s Arctic. On his expeditions he sometimes goes months without seeing another person. In 2022, he canoed and hiked from southern Canada to the Arctic.

Shoalts grew up with a forest on his doorstep, where his father, a woodworker, taught him about trees. Together, they built birch bark canoes and anything else that could be crafted from the forest.

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Shoalts has written about edible mushrooms, deforestation, and watershed pollution in northern Canada. His writing career began with his “Reflections of a Naturalist” column on wild animals and conservation, which later led to his #1 national best-sellers *Alone Against the North* and *Beyond the Trees*, the award-winning story of his adventures.

Shoalts graduated from Brock University, where he was named top student in the Humanities, and then completed a Master’s degree and PhD at McMaster University, where his research combined an interest in nature, history, archaeology, and geography. He has done archaeology in four countries.

Shoalts’s work has been featured in media around the world, including the BBC, CNN, CTV, CBC, Reader’s Digest, the Washington Post, The Guardian and many others. In 2016, Shoalts was named a national champion of the Trans-Canada Trail and in 2018 Explorer-in-Residence of the Royal Canadian Geographical Society. In 2021, he was asked by the Writers’ Trust of Canada to serve as a judge for the Weston Prize, Canada’s largest nonfiction book award. In 2022 he was presented with the Louie Kamookak Medal, named for the famed Inuit oral historian, for his work “making Canada better known to Canadians and the world” by Chief Perry Bellegarde, former National Chief of Assembly of First Nations and President of the Royal Canadian Geographical Society.

Shoalts has a particular concern for preserving wild places and has been involved with many conservation organizations. In 2008, he received the Niagara Region’s environmental award for his work preserving local watersheds. When not on expeditions, Shoalts is a popular guest speaker.

Source: <https://adamshoalts.com/about/bio/>

About this book:

“Looking out his porch window one spring morning, Adam Shoalts spotted a peregrine falcon flying across the neighbouring fields near Lake Erie. Falcons migrate annually from

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southern Canada to remote arctic mountains. Grabbing his backpack and canoe, Shoalts resolved to follow the falcon’s route north on an astonishing 3,400-kilometre journey to the Arctic.

Along the way, he faces a huge variety of challenges and obstacles, including storms on the Great Lakes, finding campsites in the urban wilderness of Toronto and Montreal, avoiding busy commercial freighter traffic, gale force winds, massive hydro electric dams, bushwhacking without trails, dealing with hunger, multiple bear encounters, and navigating white-water rapids on icy northern rivers far from any help.”

Source: <https://adamshoalts.com/literature/>

Discussion Questions:

General nonfiction questions to get book club discussions off to a good start.)

1. If your book offers a cultural portrait—of life in another country or region of your own country, start with questions a, b, and c:

a. What observations are made in the book? Does the author examine economics and politics family traditions, the arts, religious beliefs, language or food?

b. Does the author criticize or admire the culture? Does he/she wish to preserve or change the way of life? Either way, what would be risked or gained?

c. What is different from your own culture? What do you find most surprising, intriguing or difficult to understand?

2. What is the central idea discussed in the book? What issues or ideas does the author explore? Are they personal, sociological, global, political, economic, spiritual, medical, or scientific?

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3. Do the issues affect your life? How so—directly, on a daily basis, or more generally? Now or sometime in the future?
4. What evidence does the author use to support the book's ideas? Is the evidence convincing...definitive or...speculative? Does the author depend on personal opinion, observation, and assessment? Or is the evidence factual—based on science, statistics, historical documents, or quotations from (credible) experts?
5. What kind of language does the author use? Is it objective and dispassionate? Or passionate and earnest? Is it biased, inflammatory, sarcastic? Does the language help or undercut the author's premise?
6. What are the implications for the future? Are there long- or short-term consequences to the issues raised in the book? Are they positive or negative...affirming or frightening?
7. What solutions does the author propose? Are the author's recommendations concrete, sensible, doable? Who would implement those solutions?
8. How controversial are the issues raised in the book? Who is aligned on which sides of the issues? Where do you fall in that line-up?
9. Talk about specific passages that struck you as significant—or interesting, profound, amusing, illuminating, disturbing, sad...? What was memorable?
10. What have you learned after reading this book? Has it broadened your perspective about a difficult issue—personal or societal? Has it introduced you to a culture in another country...or an ethnic or regional culture in your own country?

Source: LitLovers (<http://www.litlovers.com>)