

## **BOOK SYNOPSIS – FROM KIRKUS REVIEW**

Born and raised in Baines Creek, high in the thin air of the Appalachian Mountains, Sadie Blue has been beaten by her husband, Roy Tupkin, for the last time.

She's been married only 15 days, but that's long enough to realize that Roy is not the charmer she thought he was and that she and her unborn baby deserve far better. While Sadie carefully considers how to free herself from Roy, a new teacher, recruited by Preacher Eli Perkins, arrives in town.

Having been dismissed from her previous post at a posh girls' boarding school in North Carolina, Kate Shaw is drawn to the isolation and beauty of Baines Creek. Her presence is sorely needed given the small community's staggering impoverishment, despite a thriving moonshine trade. At over 6 feet tall, with cropped graying hair, 51-year-old Kate is not at all what Baines Creek expected, but within days she's gathered a cohort of students who thrive under her nurturing care. She befriends Sadie, who yearns to learn to read; Eli, who finds himself drawn to Kate's intellect despite her agnosticism; and Birdie, a woman whose understanding of nature protects Kate from local ne'er-do-wells.

Unfortunately, none of the people in Sadie's life can stop Roy from battering her, and one day he goes too far, endangering her baby. Meanwhile, Darlene, a young dancer from the local strip club, has gone missing and she seems to have ties to Roy and Sadie. Each chapter in this fast paced novel is told through the eyes of a different character and each perspective adds new pieces to the puzzle of Roy's dark soul, Sadie's bittersweet hope, and Darlene's mysterious disappearance.

## **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

The novel explores life in 1970 Appalachia. What does the novel tell you about that time that you expected? What is surprising?

What are Sadie Blue's key moments of growth? Who are her supporters? How do they help her learn to help herself?

Gladys and Marris are best friends. How does their friendship work and how do they need each other?

Roy Tupkin and Billy Barnhill are repellent and Gladys Hicks and Prudence Perkins are hard to love. Do you find any reason to empathize with these characters? What are the pivotal moments in their pasts that shaped them? How do you think you would have fared if born into their situations?

Kate Shaw expects to be the teacher in Baines Creek, but what does she learn in the bargain?

What insights do Birdie's BOOKS OF TRUTHS give you into life in Appalachia and the gifts Birdie possesses?

What role does young Tattler Swann play in the story?

Preacher Eli never quite believes he is good enough for his job. How does his insecurity make you feel about him?

A number of murders are committed in Baines Creek. Are any of them justified?