



Demon Copperhead

Barbara Kingsolver

A big-hearted, modern retelling of David Copperfield set in the mountains of southern Appalachia, following a fierce, funny boy navigating hard luck with hope. It is sprawling and tender, the kind of book you want to talk about with friends and a warm mug.

Reading level: Moderate

Best for: Clubs who love long, character-driven novels and slow, soulful conversations

Discussion

WARM-UP

1. What was the weather, your snack, or your reading spot like when you really fell into this book? Where did it find you?
2. Demon's voice is so distinctive. Was there a line or turn of phrase that made you laugh out loud or stop and reread it?

DIGGING IN

1. The mountains and hollers feel like a character themselves. What place from your own life does the setting remind you of, and how did Kingsolver's descriptions make you feel about home?
2. So many adults drift in and out of Demon's life. Which of the kinder grown-ups did you find yourself rooting for hardest, and why did their warmth land for you?
3. This book sits with poverty, addiction, and foster care in tender ways. Were there moments that softened how you think about those struggles, or about the people living through them?
4. Friendship, art, and small comforts keep Demon afloat. What small comforts in your own life have carried you through a hard stretch?

GOING DEEP

1. Without giving anything away, was there a stretch of the story that genuinely hurt to read? How did you take care of yourself while staying with it?
2. When you closed the book, what feeling stayed with you the longest, and who or what did you want to call, hug, or thank afterward?

On the table

Slow-cooker chicken and dumplings

A pot of something soft and homey, the kind of supper that says you are welcome here, nodding to Appalachian kitchens

Skillet cornbread with honey butter

Warm from the oven and easy to pass around, a simple staple of the region Demon calls home

Apple stack cake or apple crisp

Old-fashioned mountain dessert flavor, cozy and a little indulgent for a long night of talking

To sip

Hot spiced apple cider (no alcohol)

Non-alcoholic, served from a pot on the stove with cinnamon sticks, hands-around-the-mug comfort

Sweet tea with lemon (no alcohol)

A nod to Southern porches and slow afternoons, easy to sip through a long discussion

Bourbon hot toddy

Honey, lemon, and a splash of Kentucky bourbon for a grown-up wind-down by the end of the night

Run of show

6:30 **Soft landing**

Cider on the stove, quilts on the couch, music low. Let people drift in and graze.

7:00 **Supper together**

Serve the chicken and dumplings and cornbread family-style at the table or on laps.

7:30 **Warm-ups**

Open with the two warm-up questions while folks finish their plates.

7:50 **Heart of the talk**

Move through the theme questions. Encourage stories and tangents, not hot takes.

8:30 **Dessert and deeper**

Bring out the apple dessert and toddies, then sit with the two deep questions.

9:00 **Soft close**

Fill out scorecards together, pass out bookmarks, and share what people are reading next.

HOST TIPS

- Have a basket of throw blankets and floor cushions so people can sink in and stay a while.
- Keep a pause-friendly tone. Silence is fine, and tender moments deserve a beat.
- Offer to-go containers for leftovers so the warmth of the night travels home.

Playlist

Warm, acoustic Appalachian folk and gentle Americana, like a fire crackling in the next room

01 Wagon Wheel - Old Crow Medicine Show

03 The Wood Song - Indigo Girls

05 Carolina in My Mind - James Taylor

07 Angel from Montgomery - Bonnie Raitt

02 Cold Rain and Snow - Tyler Childers

04 Wildflowers - Dolly Parton, Linda Ronstadt, Emmylou Harris

06 Country Roads - John Denver

08 If We Were Vampires - Jason Isbell and the 400 Unit

Trivia

1. Demon Copperhead is a modern retelling of which Charles Dickens novel? (David Copperfield)
2. In which US region is the novel set? (Southern Appalachia, specifically the mountains of Virginia)
3. In what year was Demon Copperhead first published? (2022)
4. Demon Copperhead won which major US fiction prize in 2023? (The Pulitzer Prize for Fiction)
5. It also shared the 2023 Women's Prize for Fiction with which other novel? (Trust by Hernan Diaz)
6. Barbara Kingsolver is also known for which earlier novel about a missionary family in the Congo? (The Poisonwood Bible)
7. What art form is central to how Demon expresses himself in the book? (Drawing and comics)
8. Kingsolver has long made her home in which US state, which informs much of her recent work? (Virginia (in Appalachia))

Rate the book

Warmth of voice

☆☆☆☆☆

Sense of place

☆☆☆☆☆

Characters you loved

☆☆☆☆☆

Comfort while reading

☆☆☆☆☆

Lingering feeling

☆☆☆☆☆

One word for how this book made me feel: _____

A scene I want to revisit on a cozy day: _____

Who I want to hand this book to next: _____

YOU'RE INVITED

Come sit a spell with Demon Copperhead

Bring your slippers and your softest opinions. We are talking Barbara Kingsolver's big, beautiful novel over chicken and dumplings, apple cider, and good long conversation.



Plan your own book club night

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