



# Remarkably Bright Creatures

Shelby Van Pelt

A tender, gently magical novel about a widowed aquarium cleaner and a remarkably observant giant Pacific octopus whose lives quietly become entwined. It is the literary equivalent of a hug.

**Reading level:** Easy

**Best for:** Clubs that love character-driven, feel-good stories with a touch of whimsy and a lot of heart

## Discussion

### WARM-UP

1. When you picked up this book, what did you make yourself to read alongside it? A cup of tea, a blanket, a window seat?
2. Tova has her cleaning routines, and Marcellus has his nightly wanderings. What is a small, quiet ritual in your own life that brings you comfort?

### DIGGING IN

1. Sowell Bay feels like a place where everyone notices each other. How did the setting make you feel, and does it remind you of anywhere you have lived or visited?
2. Marcellus is brilliant, prickly, and unexpectedly tender. What did spending time in his head do for your mood while reading?
3. Tova keeps so much grief tucked away neatly. Was there a moment in the book that gently caught you off guard emotionally?
4. The story is full of small kindnesses between near-strangers. Did the book make you think differently about the everyday people in your own orbit?

### GOING DEEP

1. Loneliness shows up in different forms here, the freshly alone, the drifting, the long-grieving. Which character's loneliness stayed with you the most, and why do you think it landed?
2. Without giving anything away, how did the book leave you feeling as you closed it, and did any part of your own life feel a little softer afterward?

## On the table

### 🍲 **Slow-simmered clam chowder with oyster crackers**

A Pacific Northwest classic that nods to Sowell Bay and tastes like a hug in a bowl

### 🍯 **Warm sourdough with salted butter and honey**

Simple, nurturing, and easy to tear and share around the couch

### 🍰 **Mini apple crumbles with vanilla ice cream**

The kind of homey dessert Tova might serve, comforting and a little indulgent

## To sip

### ☕ **Honey chamomile tea (no alcohol)**

Gentle, soothing, and perfect for a quiet evening of conversation

### 🍷 **Spiced hot apple cider (no alcohol)**

Warms cold hands and matches the seaside-autumn mood of the book

### 🍷 **Mulled white wine with pear and ginger**

A cozy, low-key twist on mulled wine for the grown-ups

## Run of show

### **7:00**      **Soft landing**

Greet guests with slippers-welcome, hand out warm mugs, and let people settle into couches

### **7:15**      **Warm-up chatter**

Open with the two warm-up questions while everyone grabs chowder and bread

### **7:40**      **Heart of the conversation**

Move into the theme questions, keep it loose and let tangents breathe

### **8:15**      **Dessert and deeper dive**

Serve apple crumbles and gently shift into the two deep questions

### **8:45**      **Trivia and bookmarks**

Play a low-key trivia round, hand out bookmarks, fill in scorecards together

### **9:10**      **Linger and pick the next read**

Top up tea, let people stay as long as they like, suggest next month's book

## HOST TIPS

- Keep lighting low and lamp-based, with throws on every seat, the cozier it looks, the more openly people will share
- Print questions on cards so quieter guests can pick one rather than waiting to be called on
- Have a 'no need to finish' rule, gentle spoiler etiquette will keep the mood warm for everyone

## Playlist

*Hushed, hopeful folk and gentle piano, like rain on a quiet window*

01 Re: Stacks - Bon Iver

03 The Night We Met - Lord Huron

05 First Day of My Life - Bright Eyes

07 To Build a Home - The Cinematic Orchestra

02 Saturn - Sleeping at Last

04 Holocene - Bon Iver

06 Landslide - Fleetwood Mac

08 Helplessness Blues - Fleet Foxes

# Trivia

1. Who is the author of Remarkably Bright Creatures? (Shelby Van Pelt)
2. In what year was the novel first published? (2022)
3. What species of octopus is Marcellus? (A giant Pacific octopus)
4. In what U.S. region is the fictional town of Sowell Bay located? (The Pacific Northwest (Puget Sound area, Washington State))
5. What is Tova's job at the aquarium? (Nighttime cleaning/janitorial work)
6. Roughly how many arms does a giant Pacific octopus have, and how many hearts? (Eight arms and three hearts)
7. Was Remarkably Bright Creatures Shelby Van Pelt's debut novel? (Yes, it was her debut)
8. The novel is told from multiple points of view, including one very unusual narrator. What kind of creature is he? (An octopus)

## Rate the book

Coziness ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆

Heart ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆

Charm of Marcellus ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆

Comfort Reread Potential ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆

Made-Me-Feel-Something ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆

One word for how this book made me feel: \_\_\_\_\_

The scene I want to wrap in a blanket: \_\_\_\_\_

Who I would hand this book to next: \_\_\_\_\_

YOU'RE INVITED

## Mugs, blankets, and one very clever octopus

Come curl up for a cozy night of chowder, cider, and gentle conversation about Remarkably Bright Creatures. Wear your softest sweater.



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