

**ILLINOIS WESLEYAN UNIVERSITY 2022 SUMMER READING PROGRAM**  
**WHERE THE CRAWDADS SING REFLECTION & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

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To guide your reading of *Where the Crawdads Sing* by Delia Owens, the following questions\* have been compiled for you to reflect upon. You will be encouraged to share your reflections in the small group discussions you will have with your Gateway classmates and University community members (faculty, staff, alumni, and student leaders) during Turning Titan: New Student Orientation 2022.

\*These questions have been copied and adapted from the following:

1. <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5aadc6402714e55458f1f5b6/t/60612161e56ecc3debaffde0/1616978430570/WhereCrawdadsSing-BookClub-PB.pdf>
  2. [https://images.randomhouse.com/promo\\_image/9780735219106\\_8084.pdf](https://images.randomhouse.com/promo_image/9780735219106_8084.pdf)
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1. The Illinois Wesleyan annual theme for the 2022-2023 academic year is "The Power of Place." Identify specific ways in which the book addresses the theme "The Power of Place."
2. The North Carolina marsh where Kya lives has long been a sanctuary for outsiders. How does this setting shape the novel? How does growing up in this isolation affect Kya? In what ways does her status as an "outsider" change how others see her?
3. Why does Kya choose not to go back to school? Do you think she makes the wrong decision? If so, why? How does Kya's lack of formal education shape her vision of the world? Would her character be different if she had gone to school?
4. Discuss how Kya's observations of nature shape her vision of the world. Do you think these lessons adequately prepare her for life in Barkley Cove? Do you think human society follows the same rules as the natural world? Should it? Why or why not?
5. In the end of the novel, Kya thinks "Most of what she knew, she'd learned from the wild. Nature had nurtured, tutored, and protected her when no one else would. If consequences resulted from her behaving differently, then they too were functions of life's fundamental core" (p. 363). What does she mean? Do you agree with her philosophy?
6. How does/can isolation impact or change a person?
7. How might this novel's themes and ideas apply to a current social issue?
8. The novel's prologue opens with, "Marsh is not swamp. Marsh is a space of light . . ." Why does the author choose to begin the novel this way? Why does she say "marsh" rather than "the marsh?"
9. After Jodie leaves, "the marsh snuggled in closer with a low fog, and (Kya) slept" (14). How does the author deepen her characterization of the marsh in this scene? What is the marsh becoming to Kya?
10. As six year old Kya pretends to be an eagle, "her fingers became long feathers, splayed against the sky, gathering the wind beneath her. Then suddenly she was jerked back to Earth by Pa hollering" (54). Why might Kya dream of being a bird? How does this scene continue to develop her relationship with nature?

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11. When Kya and Pa enjoy a rare restaurant dinner in town, Kya is called “dirty,” “filthy,” and “plumb nasty.” She and her father are referred to as “them people” and are blamed for the stomach flu going around (66). What is the author’s purpose here in regards to both characterization and plot? In what way might this scene serve as foreshadowing?
12. The first sentence Kya reads in the almanac Tate brings is “There are some who can live without wild things, and some who cannot” (103). How does Tate’s selection of nature texts impact Kya’s feelings toward education?
13. Tate tells Kya they should escape social services by hiding “way out there where the crawdads sing . . . far in the bush where critters are wild” (111). In what ways is Kya one of those critters? In what ways is she more civilized than the townspeople?
14. Tate tells Kya, “the words in poems do more than say things” (114). In what ways has learning to read connected Kya to her family and to her past?
15. Kya’s lawyer says, “We called her the Marsh Girl; now scientific institutions recognize her as the Marsh Expert. . . . It is time, at last, for us to be fair to the Marsh Girl” (341). How does Tom Milton use irony to make his point? Discuss the meaning and impact of his final use of the label, “Marsh Girl.”
16. The author writes of Kya, “Most of what she knew, she learned from the wild. . . . If consequences resulted from her behaving differently, then they too were functions of life’s fundamental core” (363). To what degree is this true in the novel? Discuss how Kya has simply lived up to expectations. In what ways has she lived beyond them?