



BOOK
CLUB KIT

THE MARSH KING'S DAUGHTER

KAREN DIONNE

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why hasn't Helena told Stephen about her past? Is she wrong to have kept it from him? Has she endangered her family by keeping it a secret?
2. Is Helena a good wife?
3. Why do you think the author sets Helena's story alongside the fable of The Marsh King's Daughter? In what ways are these two stories similar? How does the fable shape your understanding of Helena's character?
4. Does Jacob love Helena? Does he deserve her love? If The Hunter's appearance hadn't revealed Jacob's dark side, would Helena ever have broken with her father?
5. In the end, Helena thinks, "I am no longer my father's shadow" (p. 302). What does she mean by this? How has her idea of her father changed?
6. Was Helena's mother wrong for not saving her? Does Helena do enough to help her mother? How does Helena's relationship with her mother change over time? Is Helena a good daughter?
7. While it's clear Helena loves her two daughters, is she a good mother? In what ways does her own upbringing affect the way she raises Mari and Iris?
8. Is Helena better for being part of society? Is she truly healthier at the story's end? Will she ever be okay?
9. Does Helena see her responsibilities within her own family differently at the end of the novel?
10. What does Helena mean at the end when she says "our story" (p. 291)? How has her life changed during the course of the novel?
11. How does Helena's relationship with nature shape her view of the world, and does this relationship change once she leaves the cabin? How do the beliefs of the Ojibwa people shape her values? In what ways do these values suit her in the world she discovers outside the marsh, and in what ways do they hinder her?
12. How does place inform this story? What would the story lose if the setting were changed? Might another setting suit the book, even if it were to change it?
13. Why are we fascinated by stories about survivors of abduction like Helena, whether in fiction or nonfiction?

Helena's Blueberry Jam Butter Cookies

Ingredients

- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup butter, softened
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup white sugar
- 2 egg yolks
- $1\frac{3}{4}$ cups all-purpose flour
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup blueberry jam



Directions

- Preheat the oven to 375 degrees F.
- In a medium bowl, cream together the butter, white sugar, and egg yolks. Mix in the flour a little bit at a time, until a soft dough forms.
- Roll the dough into 1-inch balls. If the dough is too soft, refrigerate for 15 to 20 minutes.
- Place the balls 2 inches apart onto ungreased cookie sheets. Use your finger or an instrument of similar size to make a well in the center of each cookie.
- Fill each hole with $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon blueberry jam.
- Bake for 8 to 10 minutes, until golden-brown on the bottom. Remove from cookie sheets to cool on wire racks.

HELENA'S GUIDE TO THE UPPER PENINSULA



1 • TAHQUAMENON RIVER

The river near the cabin where Helena fished as a child. The Ojibwa call it "river where the whitefish are found."

2 • TAHQUAMENON FALLS

The waterfall where Helena sees another family for the first time.

3 • GREAT MANISTIQUE SWAMP

The area Jacob escapes to after he kills the guards.

4 • FOX RIVER

Where Helena's father is heading to get to Canada.

5 • MARQUETTE

Marquette Branch Prison and Luce County courthouse.

6 • MACKINAC BRIDGE

Connects the Upper and Lower Peninsulas.