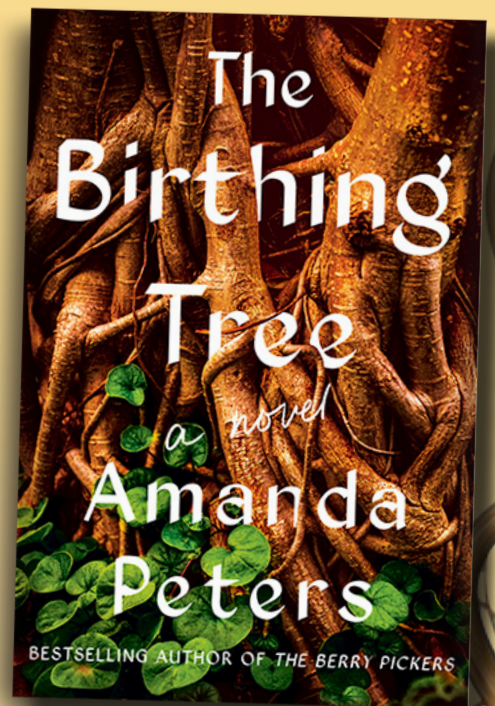


The Birthing Tree

Official Discussion Guide

1. What preconceptions did you bring to the story of childbirth traditions across cultures? Did the book challenge your expectations or beliefs?
2. Have you read Amanda Peters's debut novel *The Berry Pickers*? If so, do the two books seem to share the same perspective and worldview? How has Peters evolved as a storyteller? Which book did you enjoy the most and why?
3. Before she returns to Kiju's house, it's clear that Aliet has been gone a long time. What do you make of her choice to live in the city up until Kiju's death?
4. How did you like the dual timeline structure of the book? How did the perspective of Aliet as a child inform your perspective of her as an adult?
5. While most of the novel features Aliet's perspective, there are interludes in italics interspersed. How did this shift in perspective impact your reading experience? From whose perspective do you think these are written?
6. Miriam and Kiju are/were both midwives. How do their practices differ from one another? What do you think of Miriam's pursuit of traditional Mi'kmaw birthing practices?
7. The setting of the Western hospital appears frequently. What purpose does this serve? How is it characterized compared to the tree?
8. Multiple characters in the novel tell Aliet that she doesn't "look" Indigenous. How does her experience with racism differ from John and Kenneth in the novel? Have you ever been told that you don't "look" how people expect you to compared to others from your culture or background? How did that affect your sense of identity?
9. Aliet is surrounded by women, from her grandmother as a child and young woman, to Sally and Susan when she returns home and reconnects with her roots. How does that friendship change throughout her journey, as she gets more comfortable with opening up? How do female friendships and familial bonds guide your own journey?
10. How did Aliet's relationship with John influence her feelings about herself and her community when she was growing up? Do you think he has an impact on her choices as an adult and at the end of the book?



11. How did you feel about Kenneth's apology as an adult? Have you ever felt that an apology came too late, or that you didn't want to accept it?

12. Aliet says that the birthing tree is a sacred site because it holds the stories of her Mi'kmaq people. Do you have a personal item or place that holds your family stories?

About the Author:

Amanda Peters is a writer of Mi'kmaq and settler ancestry. Her debut novel, *The Berry Pickers*, was the winner of the Andrew Carnegie Medal for Excellence in Fiction and the 2023 Barnes & Noble Discover Prize, and was a finalist for the Atwood Gibson Writers' Trust Fiction Prize and the Amazon First Novel Award. Peters is a graduate of the master of fine arts program at the Institute of American Indian Arts in Santa Fe, New Mexico, and has a certificate in creative writing from the University of Toronto. She lives and writes in the Annapolis Valley Nova Scotia where she is an Associate Professor in English and Theatre at Acadia University.



Praise for The Birthing Tree:

"[A] grounded, glimmering, earthy yet mystical novel . . . *The Birthing Tree* will enchant readers with its resplendent portrait of heritage, tradition, and home."
—*Literary Hub*

"Peters draws on her Mi'kmaq heritage for this nuanced depiction of the tribe and its threatened traditions. . . The alternating storylines gradually converge, and the narrative builds to a satisfying resolution. It's a tender story of self-discovery and the power of generations of women."
—*Publishers Weekly*

"Peters punctuates the chapters of Aliet's narrative with brief italicized comments on her journey; by the end, their source is clear, and roots the novel even more firmly in traditional culture. Without being directly addressed, the matriarchal feminism of that culture comes through loud and clear. A quietly compelling portrait of a young woman finding her truth."
—*Kirkus Reviews*