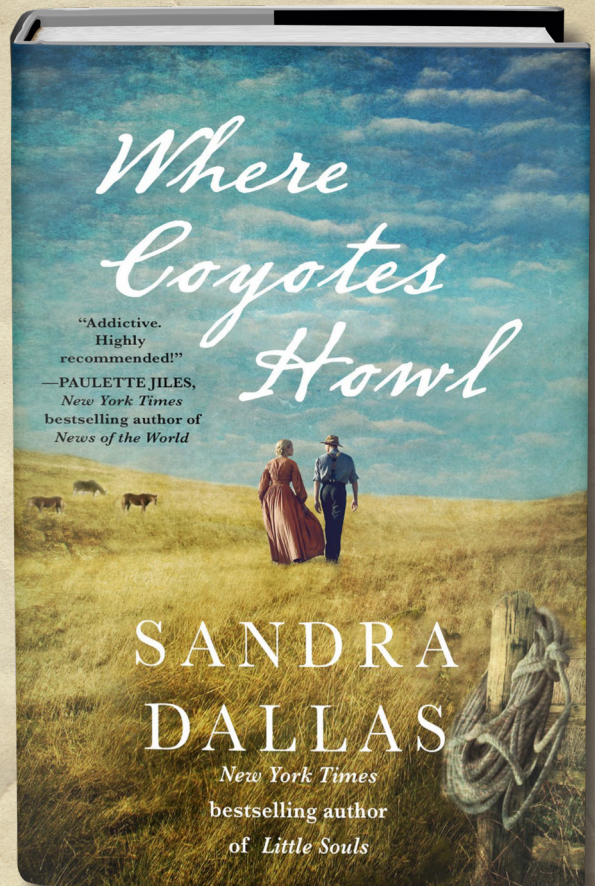


Where Coyotes Howl

Discussion Questions

1. Ellen knows nothing more about Montana than what she has read in Zane Grey books, yet she commits herself to teach for a year in Wallace. She is shocked to see Wallace, a desolate town on the High Plains, and even thinks about remaining on the train and continuing to California. What would make you pack up and move to a part of the country you've only read about in books? Would you have stayed when you saw how bleak the destination was? Could you have been a pioneer?
2. Ellen and Charlie fall in love at first sight. In fact, Charlie was smitten with Ellen's picture long before he met her. Do you believe love at first sight is possible?
3. Ruth McGinty is abused mentally and physically by her husband. Because she's barely educated and has no marketable skills, she has no option but to remain with him. What are abused women's options today? How much different are they from those of women who lived a hundred years ago?
4. Miss Ferguson stays on in Wyoming after she discovers her lover was married and she gives up her son to his father after the judge's Solomonic decision to send the boy to an orphanage. Was that a wise or foolish decision on her part? Why would she stay and face the scorn of her neighbors?



5. Julia Brownell's sisters agree to adopt all the Brownell children except for Lucy, who is mentally challenged. Do you blame the sisters for not taking Lucy in an era when mental illness was considered a stigma? Did Ellen do the right thing in letting the Gurleys adopt her? How was raising a child like Lucy different in the 1910s than it is today?
6. In one of the saddest stories in the book, Gladys and Morris Turnbull's two sons are killed when their house catches fire. Gladys isn't aware of the fire because she is outside smoking. Do you understand why Gladys left and why Morris blames Gladys for the boys' deaths? One of the most satisfying moments in *Where Coyotes Howl* is their reconciliation. How and why do you think that happened?
7. Hattie Young dreams of becoming a teacher. In fact, Ellen helps Hattie prepare for college, but Hattie decides to marry Pike instead. Why? Should she have waited?
8. Quilting plays a part in almost all of Sandra's books. What is it about quilting that gave Western women pleasure? What's behind today's revival of interest in quilting?
9. Which character did you like best in *Where Coyotes Howl*? Which did you like the least? Why?
10. This is Sandra's seventeenth adult novel. How do the story and the setting differ from her other books? What themes run through her books?
11. Discuss the ending. Would you have written a different one?

