

Book Club Questions for The Vaster Wilds by Lauren Groff

1. How does *The Vaster Wilds* engage with and challenge traditional American survival narratives, considering classics like *Robinson Crusoe* and contemporary media like "Naked and Afraid"? In what ways does Groff's novel dispel common myths about survival?
2. The female protagonist encounters Indigenous people with a radically different way of life than the colonial settlers. What does her experience reveal about the contrast between European and Indigenous perspectives on land, culture, and survival? How does she confront and overcome the prejudices of her time?
3. The protagonist faces extreme conditions and numerous challenges in the wilderness. How does her ingenuity and resourcefulness impact her survival? What survival techniques did you find most impressive or surprising?
4. Nature plays a significant role in the story, almost becoming a character in itself. How does the author depict the natural world? In what ways does nature act as both an adversary and a source of solace for the protagonist?
5. Several elements in the novel, such as the girl's names and her encounters with different animals, seem symbolic. What do these symbols represent, and how do they enhance the deeper themes of the story?
6. Explore the protagonist's intimate relationship with spirituality and God, detached from formal religious influence. How does her connection with nature shape her faith? What insights can we draw from her spiritual journey outside the confines of organized religion?
7. Groff vividly portrays the protagonist's physical and mental struggles in the wilderness. How does the novel capture sensations like hunger, cold, fatigue, and fear? How do these challenges shape her mental state, leading to new beliefs and philosophies?
8. *The Vaster Wilds* delves into themes of power and ownership concerning both the land and people. In what ways does the novel examine the dynamics of power in the context of colonialism? How are characters disempowered within this system, and how do they resist?
9. Groff's rich and rhythmic language enhances the reader's understanding of the protagonist's extraordinary experiences. How does the descriptive language contribute to our immersion in the girl's journey? How does it emphasize the uniqueness of her encounters?
10. The protagonist's journey in *The Vaster Wilds* is one of survival and self-discovery. How does her character evolve throughout the story? What pivotal moments shape her into the person she becomes by the end of the novel?

11. The novel is set in the early 17th century during the Jamestown settlement. How accurately do you think the book portrays the historical context of that time? In what ways does it immerse the reader in the challenges faced by early settlers?
12. The protagonist spends much of her life in isolation. How does the book explore the theme of loneliness? How does her solitude affect her mental and emotional state? Are there moments of connection or understanding that counterbalance her loneliness?
13. The protagonist's memories of loved ones sustain her during her trials. Discuss the different types of love she feels for characters like Bess and the glassblower. What do these visions represent, and how do they influence her resilience?
14. Explore the tension between freedom and history, as well as freedom and identity, in *The Vaster Wilds*. How does the absence of a past create a sense of freedom for the protagonist? In what ways do historical constraints shape her identity and choices?
15. Gender plays a significant role in the protagonist's life, subjecting her to specific roles and expectations. How does her gender conscript her into particular forms of service in both England and the colonial settlement? How does the wilderness provide relief from these gendered burdens?
16. The protagonist endures immense hardships yet maintains a sense of hope. Discuss the role of hope in the novel and consider the ending. Do you interpret the conclusion as hopeful, given all she has faced?
17. *The Vaster Wilds* suggests multiple interpretations of its title. What significance does the title hold, and how does its meaning evolve throughout the story? How does it encapsulate the novel's themes and the protagonist's journey?
18. Reflect on how *The Vaster Wilds* affects your own relationship with nature. To what extent do you view it as historical fiction, and how does it engage with contemporary environmental issues? In what ways did the book influence your perspective on our relationship with the environment?
19. Without giving away spoilers, how did you interpret the ending of the story? Did it provide closure, or did it leave certain aspects open to interpretation? What do you think the author intended with the conclusion?
20. Some readers found the book transformative, while others found it challenging. How do you think this novel might affect different readers? What kind of reader do you think would appreciate or resonate with this story the most?