

**Discussion Guide for  
Shelterwood by Lisa Wingate**

1. The beginning of each chapter of SHELTERWOOD starts with the inclusion of a historical quote. How did this influence your reading experience?
2. How does Ollie's perception of her stepfather shape her actions throughout the story? What specific events push her to flee with Nessa?
3. What personal challenges does Valerie face as a single mother and a park ranger? How do these challenges impact her investigation?
4. What did you learn about the treatment of Native American children during the early 1900s? How does Wingate incorporate historical facts into Ollie's story?
5. Which theme in SHELTERWOOD resonated the most deeply with you: the rights of women and children, family, or justice? Why?
6. How did the dual timelines and perspectives of Olive Augusta Radley in 1909 and Valerie Boren-Odell in 1990 shape the narrative? What similarities and differences do you notice in their journeys and the challenges they face?
7. How does the novel portray the relationship between the Choctaw community and the broader society in both time periods?
8. Discuss how the novel addresses the theme of justice through the characters of Ollie, Valerie, and Kate Barnard. What injustices do they confront?
9. How do the discoveries in Horsethief Trail National Park uncover past injustices, and what do they reveal about the community's history?
10. How do the events in 1909 and 1990 mirror each other? What parallels can you draw between Ollie's and Valerie's quests for truth?
11. Were you familiar with the historical events of Oklahoma and the Choctaw Nation prior to reading SHELTERWOOD? What new insights did you gain from the novel?

12. How does the historical context of female pioneers like Kate Barnard, who fought for children's rights, contribute to the overall themes and conflicts in the story?
13. How does the history of the land in Horsethief Trail National Park affect the characters in the present day? Have you discovered similar "secrets" in your own community?
14. Did you find one timeline more compelling or informative than the other? Why?
15. Which scene or moment in Ollie's journey was the most impactful for you? Why did it stand out?
16. What discovery in the 1990 timeline had the most significant effect on Valerie, and how did it change her perspective?
17. How does the mystery of the missing teenage hiker and the unearthed skeletons drive the plot forward? What were your theories as you read?
18. How did the intertwining mysteries of the past and present keep you engaged in the story?
19. Discuss the significance of Kate Barnard's character and her historical role. How does her story influence the novel's themes?
20. How do Ollie and Valerie embody strength and resilience in their respective eras? What challenges do they overcome?
21. How does Wingate's description of the Winding Stair Mountains contribute to the mood and tone of the novel? Can you visualize the setting?
22. How does the wilderness serve as both a refuge and a danger for Ollie and Nessa?
23. How did "Shelterwood" change your understanding of Oklahoma's history and the plight of Native American children?
24. Did the novel inspire you to learn more about any specific historical events or figures mentioned?

25. Were you satisfied with how the novel resolved the mysteries from both timelines? Why or why not?
26. What do you think the future holds for Valerie and her relationship with the Choctaw community?
27. How do Ollie's interactions with Nessa and the other "elf children" develop throughout the novel? What do these relationships reveal about her character?
28. How does Valerie build trust with the Choctaw Tribal Police, and why is this partnership crucial to solving the mysteries?
29. How do Olive and Valerie struggle between self-interest and the need to protect the vulnerable? Do you believe heroism exists in many forms, or is it limited to a select few?
30. How do race, identity, culture, gender, economic status, and discrimination play out in the story? How do these elements shed light on the historical period of the early 1900s?
31. How do the treasure hunters, outlaws, and rugged landscape of the Winding Stair Mountains contribute to the suspense and tension in SHELTERWOOD? Were there particular moments of danger or surprising twists that stood out to you?
32. The term "Shelterwood" refers to older trees protecting younger growth. How is this concept reflected in the characters' actions and relationships?
33. What role does the cave play in the novel? How does it symbolize both concealment and revelation?
34. How did the portrayal of the children's struggles and resilience affect you emotionally? Were there moments that were particularly moving or difficult to read?
35. How does Wingate balance the darker aspects of the story with moments of hope and perseverance?
36. How does the struggle for land ownership and wealth drive the actions of the characters? Discuss the impact of their choices on the broader community. What lessons can we learn from these stories of ordinary people?

37. How is Valerie's life affected by the move to Horsethief Trail National Park? How does she navigate the balance between career and family? Do all working parents face similar pressures, and has the idea of "having it all" changed over the years?
38. How does the inclusion of real historical figures like Kate Barnard add to the authenticity of the story?
39. What were your thoughts on the ending of SHELTERWOOD? Where do you think the characters will go from here? If you were to write their futures, what would their stories be?
40. Wingate is known for her meticulous research. Were there historical details that stood out to you as particularly well-integrated or surprising?