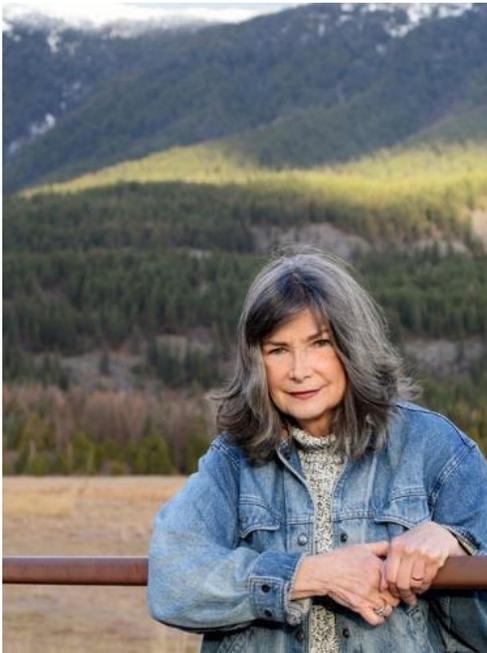


AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY



Delia Owens is the co-author of three internationally bestselling nonfiction books about her life as a wildlife scientist in Africa including *Cry of the Kalahari*.

She has won the John Burroughs Award for Nature Writing and has been published in *Nature*, *The African Journal of Ecology*, and many others.

She currently lives in North Carolina. *Where the Crawdads Sing* is her first novel.

- Author's website

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. For most of the novel, the chapters alternate between Kya's upbringing and the murder mystery. What did you think about the balance between the two?
2. There's so many vivid descriptions of life in the marsh. What are some of the descriptions that stuck out to you the most?
3. We know that Kya is the one left behind. For much of the novel, we don't know why Kya's mother left and never returned. Why did you think she left at first? What did you think about Jodie's revelation about their mom? What did it reveal about the differences between Kya and her mom? Were you surprised when Jodie came back?
4. How would Kya's life have been different if she would have stayed in school?

5. Let's talk about the ways in which Jumpin' and Mabel become surrogate parents. How did they help her survive? Why do you think they didn't turn her in to social services, knowing that she lived alone as a child?
6. Why do you think Tate was always drawn to Kya? What did he see in her that others didn't?
7. When Tate went to college and came back, he couldn't see a life with Kya. Let's talk about why he thought this and the actions behind his decision.
8. How did observing nature impact Kya's viewpoint of relationships?
9. What do you make of Chase's interest in Kya? Was she a conquest or so you think she was something more to him at first? Tate and Chase are very different type of guys. What did you think Kya saw in them?
10. Did you think all along Kya killed Chase? Or did you believe it was someone else?
11. Once Kya was arrested, did you think she was going to be convicted? Were you surprised at the outcome?
12. Kya is judged throughout her entire life: as a child, she's the dirty, uneducated marsh girl and then as an adult, she's the odd and wild thing in the marsh. Instead of trying to help her as child, the locals turned their backs on her and left her alone. How did this impact the later trial case? What role did guilt play in it?
13. Do you believe Tate was the right person for her? Why or why not?
14. Let's talk about the ending. Were you surprised she never told the truth to Tate? Why do you think she did kill Chase? Did that change your opinion of Kya?
15. Do you think Kya was a victim of circumstances? How did loneliness impact her decision making?
16. What did you think about the use of poetry? Were you surprised when Kya was a secret poet?
17. Let's talk about the title, what does Where the Crawdads Sing represent in the context of this story?

- <https://www.litlovers.com/reading-guides/fiction/11329-where-crawdads-sing-owens?start=3>

BOOK REVIEWS

Booklist

Owens' (*Secrets of the Savanna*, 2006) first novel is a leisurely, lyrical tale of a young woman growing up in isolation in the 1950s and 60s, in a marsh on the North Carolina coast. Kya is abandoned by her troubled mother when she is only six. Soon after, her four, much-older siblings leave, as does her alcoholic father a couple of years later. As Kya matures and teaches herself to be a naturalist, she is torn between two slightly older boys: kind, observant Tate and rascally, attractive Chase. Chase dies falling from a fire tower in his twenties, and the investigation of his possible murder, which alternates with the story of Kya's coming-of-age, provides much of the novel's suspense. Because the characters are painted in broad, unambiguous strokes, this is not so much a naturalistic novel as a mythic one, with

its appeal rising from Kya's deep connection to the place where she makes her home, and to all of its creatures. --Margaret Quamme (Reviewed 7/1/2018) (Booklist, vol 114, number 21, p22).

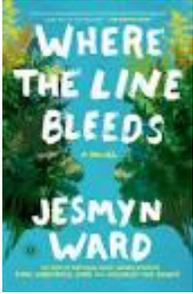
Publisher's Weekly

In Owens's evocative debut, Kya Clark is a young woman growing up practically on her own in the wild marshes outside Barkley Cove, a small coastal community in North Carolina. In 1969, local lothario Chase Andrews is found dead, and Kya, now 23 and known as the "Marsh Girl," is suspected of his murder. As the local sheriff and his deputy gather evidence against her, the narrative flashes back to 1952 to tell Kya's story. Abandoned at a young age by her mother, she is left in the care of her hard-drinking father. Unable to fit in at school, Kya grows up ignorant until a shrimper's son, Tate Walker, befriends her and teaches her how to read. After Tate goes off to college, Kya meets Chase, with whom she begins a tempestuous relationship. The novel culminates in a long trial, with Kya's fate hanging in the balance. Kya makes for an unforgettable heroine. Owens memorably depicts the small-town drama and courtroom theatrics, but perhaps best of all is her vivid portrayal of the singular North Carolina setting. (Aug.) --Staff (Reviewed 06/18/2018) (Publishers Weekly, vol 265, issue 25, p).

Kirkus Reviews

A wild child's isolated, dirt-poor upbringing in a Southern coastal wilderness fails to shield her from heartbreak or an accusation of murder. "The Marsh Girl," "swamp trash"—Catherine "Kya" Clark is a figure of mystery and prejudice in the remote North Carolina coastal community of Barkley Cove in the 1950s and '60s. Abandoned by a mother no longer able to endure her drunken husband's beatings and then by her four siblings, Kya grows up in the careless, sometimes-savage company of her father, who eventually disappears, too. Alone, virtually or actually, from age 6, Kya learns both to be self-sufficient and to find solace and company in her fertile natural surroundings. Owens (*Secrets of the Savanna*, 2006, etc.), the accomplished co-author of several nonfiction books on wildlife, is at her best reflecting Kya's fascination with the birds, insects, dappled light, and shifting tides of the marshes. The girl's collections of shells and feathers, her communion with the gulls, her exploration of the wetlands are evoked in lyrical phrasing which only occasionally tips into excess. But as the child turns teenager and is befriended by local boy Tate Walker, who teaches her to read, the novel settles into a less magical, more predictable pattern. Interspersed with Kya's coming-of-age is the 1969 murder investigation arising from the discovery of a man's body in the marsh. The victim is Chase Andrews, "star quarterback and town hot shot," who was once Kya's lover. In the eyes of a pair of semicomical local police officers, Kya will eventually become the chief suspect and must stand trial. By now the novel's weaknesses have become apparent: the monochromatic characterization (good boy Tate, bad boy Chase) and implausibilities (Kya evolves into a polymath—a published writer, artist, and poet), yet the closing twist is perhaps its most memorable oddity. Despite some distractions, there's an irresistible charm to Owens' first foray into nature-infused romantic fiction. (Kirkus Reviews, June 1, 2018).

READALIKES



***Where the Line Bleeds* by Jesmyn Ward**

A tale set on the post-Katrina Gulf Coast finds the bond between twins Joshua and Christophe strained by the latter's decision to sell drugs, a situation that is further complicated by the returns of the mother who had abandoned them and predatory addict father.



***The Scent Keeper* by Erica Bauermeister**

A young woman raised on a remote island with a father who identifies the scents of the natural world makes illuminating discoveries about her identity and a mysterious cache of fragrances.



***Let's No One Get Hurt* by Jon Pineda**

A teenage girl squatting in an abandoned boathouse with her disgraced college professor father in the swamps of the American South begins an unbalanced relationship with the rich, bratty son of a developer who has bought the property.