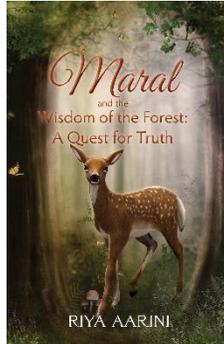


Book Club Guide

Maral and the Wisdom of the Forest: A Quest for Truth

By Riya Aarini



About the Book

Maral, a fawn left alone in the thickets of the forest, befriends a white-bearded gnome named Bilge. An unlikely friendship blossoms, and Bilge becomes an audience to Maral's poignant sadness about the fleeting nature of happiness. Determined to show her a way toward fulfillment, Bilge takes Maral on a contemplative walk through the forest.

As they wander to the edges of the forest and back, Bilge points out the special wisdom revealed by natural life. Hidden within the giant two-thousand-year-old redwood trees are symbols of fortitude and patience. Tiny violets emerging from the rich soil display a tender humility, deeply inspiring the wide-eyed fawn. Even trees damaged by lightning strikes express remarkable truths that shape her worldview. But sinister dangers are known to lurk in their wooded realm, and Maral risks everything to accompany her wise friend and receive the generous knowledge of the forest.

Their brave trek gradually transforms Maral's inner world, lending her an untold wisdom that leads to a discovery of profound fulfillment and lasting joy.

Discussion Guide

1. Maral was abandoned as a newborn. Do you think being abandoned drove her desire to learn more about herself and about life?
2. Along the same lines, do you think being abandoned influenced Maral's innermost wish for happiness, a wish more profound than those of other creatures in the forest? If so, how?
3. As you followed Maral's outward and inward journey through the forest, did you find your worldview opening as hers did?

4. What do you consider to be most significant about Bilge, such as the wisdom he generously shared, his kindness toward life, his friendship with Maral, or something else?
5. How did you feel about Kotu? Do you think his evil nature was portrayed convincingly?
6. Were you surprised when Bilge passed away? How did you feel about his death? Did Bilge's prior teachings and kindness make his passing any easier for Maral?
7. Do you think Maral could assume Bilge's place in the forest world, teaching forest creatures how to listen to the truths revealed by nature?
8. Did you reread any passages? Which stuck with you the most?
9. What is your interpretation of the book's title? Do the truths revealed throughout the novella justify the title?
10. What did you find most appealing about the book: the characters, their inner journey, their outward journey, the appeal of the forest world, or something else?

Author Bio

Maral and the Wisdom of the Forest: A Quest for Truth is Riya Aarini's debut novella for adults. She has also written prolifically for children, authoring both middle grade readers and picture books.

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