



## ***The Bear by Claire Cameron***

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### **About the author:**

Claire Cameron grew up in Toronto and studied at Queen's University. She led canoe trips in Algonquin Park and worked as an instructor for Outward Bound, teaching mountaineering, climbing and white-water rafting in Oregon. She lived San Francisco and London, UK, until moving back to Toronto, where she now lives with her husband and two sons.

Source: Publisher's website (<http://penquinrandomhouse.ca/>)

### **About this book:**

Told from the point of view of a six-year-old child, *The Bear* is the story of Anna and her little brother, Stick--two young children forced to fend for themselves in Algonquin Park after a black bear attacks their parents. A gripping and mesmerizing exploration of the child psyche, this is a survival story unlike any other, one that asks what it takes to survive in the wilderness and what happens when predation comes from within.

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### **Discussion Questions:**

1. How did you react to reading an entire book from the perspective of a five-year-old? Did you like Anna's voice? Did it take some time for you to connect and/or relate to the differences in syntax?



2. One of the challenges an author takes on by using a young child as narrator is that their vocabulary is limited as often is their viewpoint. Because of this narrative style, the reader is left to connect a lot of the dots themselves. Were there any parts that you reread once you were used to the style?
3. Do you think the story would have been as compelling if it wasn't told in first person? How would it have differed?
4. The novel is divided into four sections (three parts and an epilogue), each with an identifiable theme. Discuss.
5. Did you sense an element of humour in the narrative? If so, what was its role? What are the different ways that Cameron used suspense to build the narrative?
6. What are five adjectives you would use to describe this book?
7. Have you ever encountered a bear in the wilderness? Will this story change the way you feel about camping and the outdoors?
8. Did the book make you feel anxious, were there any parts that were hard to read? Was there a particular scene that resonated with you? Explain what sort of emotions came up for you and why.
9. Examine the way the children responded to being alone in the wilderness. Do you think you would have acted similarly under the same circumstances at their age? Would you have returned to the island?



10. Discuss the evolution of Anna and Stick's relationship over the course of the narrative. What are some of the difficulties that the children have to deal with other than the bear?

11. How did you interpret the significance of Gwen?

12. What do you think Anna is talking about when she refers to the "black dog" in her belly? How did her perception of the bear change over the course of her life? Do you think the bear is also a metaphor for something? Are there any other metaphors that stood out for you?

13. Based on Anna's long road to recovery after the attack, and her bout of silence, she was clearly much more traumatized by the events than her initial telling of the story would have us believe. What are the implications of this trauma?

14. What kind of domestic conflict do you think occurred between Anna's parents before the trip? What was its significance to the story?

15. In what ways was the return to the island different for Alex and Anna? What did you think of the ending?

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- eBook