

Books by the Stack



Ghost Wall by Sarah Moss

A story at once mythic and strikingly timely, Moss urges us to wonder how far we have come from the "primitive minds" of our ancestors.

Why you'll like it: *Suspenseful. Haunting. Thought-provoking.*

About the Author: Sarah Moss was educated at Oxford University and is Professor of Creative Writing at the University of Warwick. Her books include the novels *Cold Earth*, *Night Waking*, *Bodies of Light*, and *Signs for Lost Children*, and the memoir *Names for the Sea: Strangers in Iceland*.

Questions for Discussion

1. Talk about Silvie, the narrator of *Ghost Wall*, and her family, especially her father Bill. Why is Bill so desirous of participating in the Iron Age enactment? Why is it important for him to lay claim to ancient ancestry?
2. Talk about Silvie's flat, almost deadpan, observation that "There was a new bruise on her [mother's] arm." What does her tone tell us about the family dynamics?
3. Why does Bill disdain the modern world? Do you feel any sympathy for his anger, beliefs or his personal quest for authenticity?
4. Silvie loves the natural world as much as her father, yet how does she differ from his need to claim it as his own?
5. How does Bill and his family compare to the university group of students and their professor? Talk about the class division between the two groups – how does class evidence itself? How seriously do the students take the enactment adventure? What is their attitude toward Bill and his need for original Britishness?
6. What does Silvie learn from the university students? How does her association with them alter her perception of the world and of her future? Have they corrupted her or enlightened her?
7. Talk about how traditional gender roles begin to develop as the Iron Age enactment continues.
8. What prompts the men's decision to build a ghost wall? Why does it indicate that perhaps they have gone too far in channeling the tribal past? What did the wall mean in ancient times – and what does a wall mean today?
9. Ultimately, this book poses the question about the wild-man archetype? What is the human cost of this type of mythological nostalgia?
10. Why does Moss open with a prologue of human sacrifice? How does it make you feel reading it? Are we, as readers, somehow complicit in the act of sacrifice...or not?
11. As the book progressed, did you believe Bill capable of sacrificing his own daughter to the gods of the bog, as Silvie comes to believe? Is the author pondering, perhaps, whether society has truly changed after

a thousand years or so?

12. What about the book's ending?

13. Overall, what was your experience reading *Ghost Wall* – did it evoke a sense of dread, curiosity, or something else?

(Questions provided by litlovers.com)



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