If the Creek Don’t Rise by Leah Weiss

It is 1970 and pregnant seventeen-year-old Sadie Blue is trapped in a marriage with her horrific moonshiner husband Roy in an Appalachian mountain town. Their friends and neighbors live stark, gritty lives that are written with vivid and captivating detail. Hope and strength shine through in bits and pieces in this terrific debut about Sadie’s struggles.


About the Author: Leah Weiss is a national bestselling author born in eastern North Carolina and raised in the foothills of Virginia. Her debut novel, IF THE CREEK DON’T RISE, is set in the Appalachian mountains of North Carolina. The book was chosen as an Indie Next, Okra Pick and LibraryReads. It was a finalist in the Library of Virginia 2018 Literary Award for Fiction and the People's Choice Award.

Questions for Discussion

1. Life in 1970 Appalachia (and fictional Baines Creek) was undeniably hard and harsh. What did the novel tell you about that historic time and place that you expected? What did you learn that surprised you?

2. In what way is Sadie’s life woven into the lives of others in Baines Creek. Trace the way each of the different storylines connect back to Sadie. Which character did you most engage with, appreciate, admire, dislike? What do their various voices convey: pain...fear...hope...wisdom...perseverance?

3. Did you root for Sadie from the start? What were her key moments of growth? Who were her mentors and supporters? What did they do that helped her grown a stronger backbone?

4. Gladys and Marris were best friends. Who needed the other the most? Who gave the greatest purpose to their relationship?

5. Did you think Gladys was oblivious to her mean behavior? Why did she feel entitled to that mean behavior? How do you think she would have described herself?

6. Who were the most lovable or admirable characters? What made them that way? What were their strengths and weaknesses? In what ways were they important to Sadie’s salvation?

7. Preacher Eli Perkins never quite believed he was good enough for his job. How did that quality make you feel about him? How do you think he performed his job?

8. When Kate Shaw arrived in Baines Creek, she expected to be doing the teaching. What were the things she learned instead? What made Kate Shaw different from other teachers who had come to Baines Creek?

9. With her father dead, Sadie turns to her grandmother. What does she offer Sadie? How does Gladys’ past parallel that of her granddaughter’s?

10. Birdie’s Books of Truths: What insights did they give you into life in Appalachia and the gifts Birdie possessed?

11. What role did Tattler Swann play in the book? Was he a good spokesman for Jerome Biddle? If so, why?
12. Mary Harris Jones is perhaps everyone’s favorite character. Talk about her gifts to the community, both literal and metaphorical. When Marris first arrived at Baines Creek, at the age of 10, what were her initial impressions, especially when compared to Rock Bottom where she had come from?

13. How would you describe the economic conditions – and life in general – in Baines Creek? What do you find appealing about the community – and what most disturbs you?

14. What is the significance of the title and it’s relationship to Loretta Lynn’s ballad? Talk about Sadie’s attachment to the country folk singer.

15. A number of murders were committed in the book. Do you think any of them were justified? If so, which ones and why?

(Questions provided by BookBrowse.com and Litlovers.com)