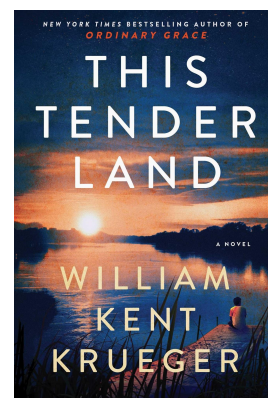


Discussion Questions

This Tender Land

William Kent Krueger



1. When Odie and Albert attempt to buy boots, the clerk is skeptical that they would be able to afford the \$5 price tag. After Odie lies about getting the money from their father, a second clerk remarks, “If he got a job these days, he’s one of the lucky ones.” This is Odie and Albert’s first experience of life outside of the Lincoln School. What sense of the current state of the world do you get from this encounter?
2. When Odie is working for Jack in his orchard, Jack explains his religious philosophy, saying, “God all penned up under a roof? I don’t think so.” Where does Jack think God is really to be found? What is it in Odie’s experience that makes him disagree with Jack’s outlook?
3. The vagabonds encounter a Native American man named Forrest. He appears friendly, but he’s also aware that there is a \$500 reward for their capture. The children are unsure whether to trust him or not. What would you do in their situation?
4. Why does Odie trust Sister Eve so wholeheartedly, but not her partner, Sid? How do some of Odie’s misjudgments lead to disastrous consequences?
5. When Odie is on his own, riding the rails, trying to get to St. Louis, he comes face to face with danger and violence. Do you think he was foolish for striking out alone? How was this encounter different from the things he experienced at Lincoln School?
6. Odie is a born storyteller even at his young age. Throughout the book he tells Albert, Emmy, and Mose tales about an imp, a princess, and the vagabonds. What purpose do these stories serve in the novel?
7. Sister Eve says to Odie that the only prayer she knows will absolutely be answered is a prayer for forgiveness. What do you think she means by this? Who are the people whom Odie needs to forgive, and for what reasons?
8. Odie, Albert, Mose, and Emmy are all searching for peace and a place to call home. What do you think each character is looking for and what are their different definitions of home? In the end, do they all find what they are looking for, and if so how?
9. The author has said that he drew inspiration from the works of Mark Twain, Charles Dickens, and Homer. Are there other authors whose work this story calls to mind?
10. The novel is divided into five parts. Why do you think the author structured it this way?