

# CROW

*a novel*

AMY SPURWAY

BOOK CLUB GUIDE





## I'LL GIVE YA SOMETHIN' TO TALK ABOUT

### BOOK CLUB DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1 When we first meet Crow, she's got a bit of an attitude about, well, everything. Whether or not that initial attitude is justified is up for debate, but as her story unfolds Crow does indeed change her tune. What are the pivotal moments/events for her character's evolution? Who or what helps shift and reshape her attitude? What about her character stays the same, and what changes?
- 2 Crow's mother, Effie, remains stoic and unsentimental, even in the face of her only child's dire situation. Why do you think that is? How and when do we see cracks in her facade?
- 3 As Crow digs through her bedroom closet, the old clothing she finds there sends her stumbling down memory lane. Why might clothes trigger such strong memories and emotions for some people? Are there items in your closet that hold a particularly strong or vivid memory for you?

- 4** *Crow*'s author, Amy Spurway, says that one of the central questions she wanted to explore in writing *Crow* was, "What makes a good death?" There are a number of deaths depicted in the story, all under very different circumstances. Are any of them "good deaths"? Do you think there is such a thing? If so, what makes a "good death"? And if not, why not?
- 5** Gossipy neighbours are an enduring feature of many small towns, and Peggy Fortune is the queen of gossip. Gossip is generally viewed as a bad thing, but how can it play a positive role in small-town life and close-knit communities?
- 6** Allie and Char couldn't be more different, but both have been *Crow*'s friends for a long time. What does *Crow* learn or gain from her friendship with Allie? What does she learn or gain from her friendship with Char?
- 7** What do you think of *Crow*'s relationship with Willy? Do they make a good couple? Why or why not?
- 8** The story of *Crow* blurs the line between blessing and curse, or gift and illness. How do we decide which is which? What prompts us to look for silver linings in dark situations or ascribe higher meaning to our suffering? Do you feel the Fortunes are cursed, blessed, or both?

- 9** How is humour used as a way of coping with grief, trauma, and struggle in the story? Do you use it that way in your own life?
- 10** How does the theme of redemption show up in *Crow*?
- 11** Cape Breton is a popular tourist destination renowned for its natural beauty and friendly people. Parts of the island also have very complex social, economic, and industrial histories. Cultural narratives that glorify the former while ignoring the latter give rise to some of Crow’s most conflicted feelings about “home.” How are these different versions of Cape Breton reconciled?
- 12** Like Peggy, the Spensers, Becky, and even Crow herself, we all have the potential to be cast as the villain in somebody else’s story. How does gaining insight into another person — and the reasons *why* they are the way they are — change how we perceive them? To what degree do such explanations take the edge off the “villain stories” in our lives?
- 13** In the end, the biggest “family secret” — the identity of Crow’s real father — is not revealed in her obituary, despite Crow’s earlier aim to expose such things. Who do you think made that decision, and why?
- 14** If you could hear the story from any other character’s point of view, whose would it be?

- 15** What character's story do you wish you knew more about?  
Whose memoir would you want to read?
- 16** If *Crow* were a movie, who would you cast?
- 17** What part of the story made you laugh?
- 18** What part of the story made you cry?
- 19** What part of the story made you think about life (or death) differently?
- 20** If you could puck one character in the tits, who would it be, when, and why?

## BONUS ART PROJECT FOR BOOK CLUB KEENERS

Imagine that Crow is looking at *you* with her squirrely vision. What might your best feeling look like? What about your worst?

## PUT ANOTHER CAN OF WATER ON THE BEANS

### A *Crow*-style Book Club Feast

- Effie Fortune's Stove Top Sludge Tea
- Wine, poured sloppily
- Foolishly expensive superfood blueberry juice

- Cream soda
- Doritos
- Lovingly prepared California salad with spinach, strawberries, slivered almonds, and goat cheese (gravy as salad dressing optional)
- Flossie Baker's Funeral Ham with pineapple rings and maraschino cherries
- Chicken wings, donair pizza, and poutine
- Bacon and cheese stuffed bacon-wrapped cheese balls
- Squares
- Broc-o-glop

## EFFIE FORTUNE'S TOP SECRET BROC-O-GLOP RECIPE

### Ingredients

- 1 can of cream of mushroom soup
- A goodly glob of mayonnaise (1/2 cup)
- Enough grated onion to make you bawl (1/2 cup)
- A mess of grated orange cheese (1 cup, cheddar)
- 2 eggs, beaten within an inch of their lives
- 1 bunch of broccoli, chopped and boiled, but not too much (tender crisp)

Mix the glop (first 5 ingredients) together well, then add the broccoli. Put in a buttered baking dish and top with enough crushed crackers and melted butter. Bake at 350°F until done (about 45-60 minutes, depending on depth of pan — cracker topping should be browned, edges slightly crisped, and inside should be fairly firm not soft and runny). If you wanna get real tony with it, try cream of wild mushroom soup and use grated red or chopped green onion.

## PEGGY'S BEST SQUARES

Mix in a bowl:

- 2 cups graham cracker crumbs
- 2 cups shredded coconut
- 1 can sweetened condensed milk
- ¼ cup melted butter

Press that into an 8 x 8 pan and bake for 10-15 minutes at 350°F. Smash up four of your favourite chocolate bars (leave them in their packages and hit them with a rolling pin) then mix with ¼ cup of oil. Nuke that on high for 1 minute and 30 seconds. Stir, then spread on top of the crust thing you baked. Cool in the fridge until hardened, then cut into squares — but not too big! Make sure everybody tries them.



## SONGS IN THE KEY OF CROW – PLAYLIST

- “Take Me Home, Country Roads” by John Denver
- “Hello, I Love You” by The Doors
- “The Purple People Eater” by Sheb Wooley
- “Cornflake Girl” by Tori Amos
- “Stairway to Heaven” by Led Zeppelin
- “Tales of Brave Ulysses” by Cream
- “All Along the Watchtower” by The Jimi Hendrix Experience
- “Smells Like Teen Spirit” by Nirvana
- “Me and Bobby McGee” by Janis Joplin & The Full Tilt Boogie Band
- “Me and Bobby McGee” by Kris Kristofferson
- “Ring of Fire” by Johnny Cash
- “Roadhouse Blues” by The Doors
- “Blackbird” by Sarah McLachlan
- “Hallelujah” by Leonard Cohen
- “Jolene” by Dolly Parton
- “Dr. Feelgood” by Mötley Crüe
- “New Orleans Is Sinking” by The Tragically Hip
- “I Think We’re Alone Now” by Tiffany
- “Home for a Rest” by Spirit of the West
- “Mull River Shuffle” by The Rankin Family
- “The Sister’s Reel” by Natalie MacMaster
- “Luckenbach, Texas” by Waylon Jennings
- “Nothing Compares 2U” by Sinéad O’Connor
- “Red Headed Stranger” by Willie Nelson
- “Push It” by Salt-N-Pepa
- “Basket Case” by Green Day

- “I’ll Be Home for Christmas” by Bing Crosby
- “Hazy Shade of Winter” by The Bangles
- “The Island” by The Barra MacNeils
- “It’s a Good Life If You Don’t Weaken” by The Tragically Hip
- “Rise Again” by The Rankin Family
- “Take on Me” (2017 Acoustic) by a-ha

[Click here](#) to listen to this playlist on Google Play.



*Crow* by Amy Spurway  
Copyright ©2019 by Amy Spurway

Published by Goose Lane Editions  
ISBN 9781773100234

Find more great books at [gooselane.com](http://gooselane.com)