



Book Club Guide:

Kalyna

1. Why did you write this book?

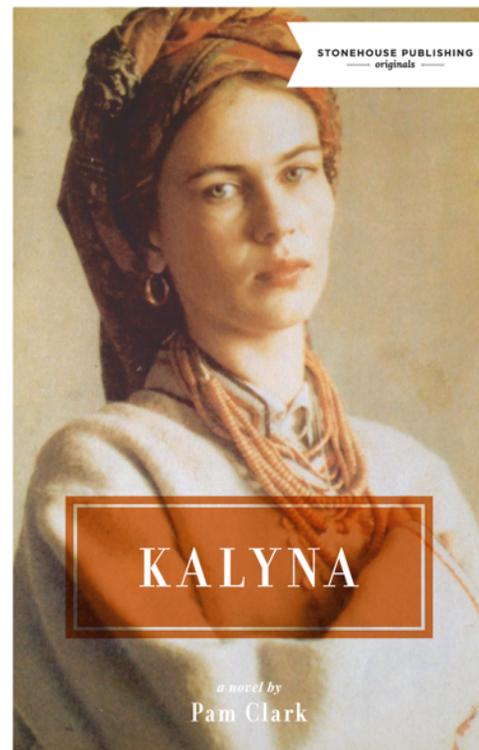
I wrote *Kalyna* to explore the experience of my great grandparents as Ukrainian settlers in Alberta and my Grandma's life in Edna-Star. I wanted to understand the internment of Ukrainian Canadians during WWI through a settler's eyes and those of their children, the next generation. Thus, the journey of Katja, Wasyl, and Kalyna and the quest for understanding and redress unfolded in my mind.

2. What would you like people to take from your work?

Kalyna is a novel about our collective history as Albertans. It explores the story of one family's journey from Galicia, Ukraine, and their settlement in the developing bloc settlement of Edna Star, but I hope it will resonate with the thousands of families whose ancestors undertook similar journeys from a multitude of countries. "We are all settlers" was a prevalent thought as I was writing *Kalyna*. Themes of love, forgiveness, injustice, and belonging are woven throughout this novel which seeks to share the little known history of Ukrainian Canadians' internment in Banff National Park in World War 1. The novel is an ambitious work, spanning over seven decades in Alberta. I hope readers will see their own histories, whether their families came in the first wave of settlement or their families have just settled here.

3. Give us a little insight into the background of the story?

The story begins in Ukraine in the early 1900s, a time of changing borders and conflict; a time of collective farms under controlling owners; a time of poverty and fear. A young couple is wooed by Clifford Sifton's promise of land and freedom in the "last best west" and embark upon the journey to Canada's prairie land. The bulk of the story takes place in Edna-Star, a bloc community of settlers, banded together by culture and determination to prosper in the new



land. Banff, Alberta figures prominently as one of the main characters, Wasyl Federchuk, is interned in Castle Mountain camp in the summer months and Cave and Basin camp in the winter months during WW1 from 1915-1917. Then, the novel spans several decades as Kalyna's quest for acknowledgement of the internment takes her from University of Alberta in Edmonton to Ottawa.

4. What kind of experience could I provide my book club that would give them some insight into the characters and their experiences?

Special Notes:

- a. Food: paska, babka, kutia (wheat cereal with honey), poppyseed rolls, peroghy, garlic sausage, sauerkraut, beets/ borscht
- b. Music: folk music on youtube, musica troistki (musical trio)
- c. Video: Pam's youtube - archival photos
- d. Recipes can be found on allrecipes.com ; saffron is key to paska!

5. What are a few important questions for discussion to get us started?

- a. Which character do you most identify with and why?
- b. How did this novel compare with your own family's story of settlement?
- c. What relevance do you feel this novel has with present day immigration to Canada and our role as a society?
- d. Were you surprised about anything in the novel? If yes, what was it and why were you surprised about it?
- e. The Castle Mountain camp closed in July, 1917 and yet it took until 2008 for then-Prime Minister Stephen Harper to formally acknowledge this part of our history. Why do you think it took so long? Why was it not discussed openly for so many years?
- f. What role do you think history plays in determining our future? Is it important to know this history or not?
- g. Some readers have expressed they wished Wasyl had taken revenge on Edward Smith or been angry and bitter at the government for what had happened. Do you agree or do you think his portrayal in the novel is realistic. Why do you think author Pam Clark chose forgiveness over revenge? How would the novel been different if revenge were the primary response?
- h. Kalyna is divided into four sections: the elements of the earth. On the surface, their relevance coincides with the main plot line of the novel. Do you see any deeper connections that came to you as you read? Discuss.
- j. Wasyl and Katja are intimately connected to the land they live on. It provides for and sustains them. As the novel progresses, Kalyna becomes more distant from the land. What effect do you think this has on her ultimate quest for acknowledgement? What is your own relation to the land and what ways are our relationships to rural life today similar and different from our ancestors?

k. Letters are an important way of communicating in Kalyna and speak to the times. Katja says she can read more into what Wasyl isn't saying in his letters from the camp than from his words themselves. Some people say letters are a lost art, that email, texts, blogs, and the digital space can never compare. What are your thoughts on the journey of the written word in Kalyna up to the 21st century? Have we lost that art or is the written word simply evolving and is alive and well.

6. Give me a little insider info about you in relation to this book.

My research for Kalyna took two main paths: family and community history and archival research. Weaving these two together was an intricate process of discovery. Sometimes, an archival photo or letter would enrapture me and there was a new story there, a new character there and I had to decide whether to include this or not. In particular, the letters from children to their fathers pulled my heart strings thus the letters played an important part in the Fire section of propelling the story forward. Photographs were very inspiring to me, the position of the face, the warmth of the eye and the expression of the body took hold of my imagination. I believe the archives are filled with characters with stories to share. My Grandma Olga is an inspiring force for the novel: the scenes of Edna-Star, the country fair and amusement rides, the farmer's market, Borden Park...they are her stories told anew, oral storytelling written down for another generation of readers.

7. What are your writing habits, philosophies, superstitions?

The most difficult part of writing this novel was sitting down with the express intent of completing the story of Kalyna that had unfolded in my mind. An opportunity to commit myself to writing the novel came in 2012 when I took a leave of absence from teaching and moved to Newfoundland. The deadline was set for me because I knew I only had so many months before I would return to teaching full-time; this time was a gift and I unwrapped it. Writing Kalyna was a 20-month process, from writing each day to editing to putting the manuscript away again and then reviewing and editing some more, but I didn't know that when I started; I just knew I had to begin. My writing routine for Kalyna was 4-5 hours at my iPad Monday to Friday. Although I was tempted to continue to go back over what I had written, each day I surged forward, knowing that time was of the essence. On my long walks with my dogs in Pippy Park each morning, I wrote the next section, revised, made choices, and propelled the plot line forward. I wanted to explore as much of the story even in skeletal form before I had to return home to Calgary. When I finally did come home, the last section was written but it was completely different. I was not satisfied with it and put the novel away for about 6 months. One morning, I was ready to write AIR. It fit!

These days, I try to write for up to 5-10 hours a week. I believe a good writer needs to read and be inspired by others, so I try to balance my passion for writing by surrounding myself with books. I view writing as reading from my head and putting the story that is "up there" down on paper.