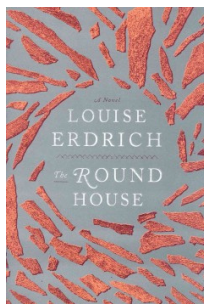


Further Reading

The Round House (Oct 2012)

by Louise Erdrich

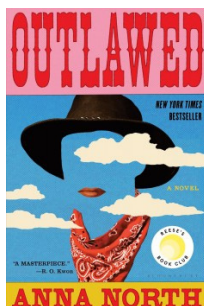
When his mother, a tribal enrollment specialist living on a reservation in North Dakota, slips into an abyss of depression after being brutally attacked, fourteen-year-old Joe Coutz sets out with his three friends to find the person that destroyed his family.



Outlawed (Jan 2021)

by Anna North

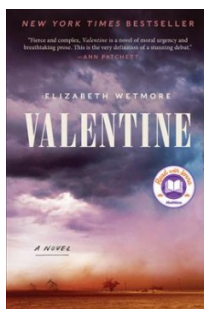
A riveting adventure story features a fugitive girl, a mysterious gang of robbers, and their dangerous mission to transform the Wild West.



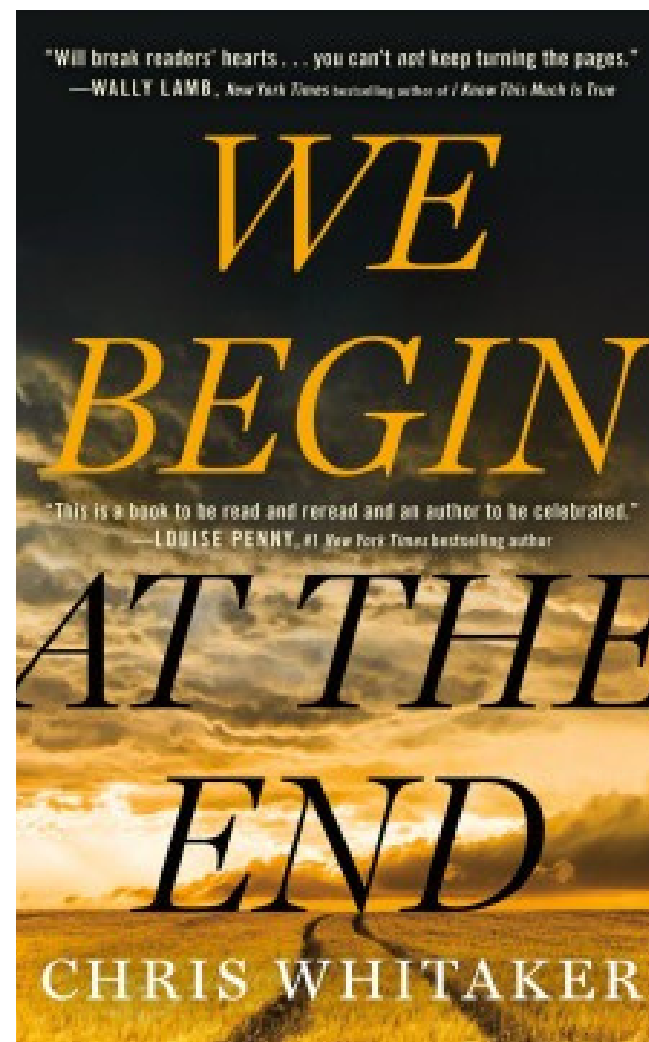
Valentine (Mar 2020)

by Elizabeth Wetmore

A teenager had been viciously attacked in a nearby oil field--an act that is tried in the churches and barrooms of Odessa before it can reach a court of law. When justice is evasive, one of the town's women decides to take matters into her own hands, setting the stage for a showdown with potentially devastating consequences.



BOOK DISCUSSION



Discussion Questions

1) Duchess says to Walk, "There's always a man. Whenever anything f**ed up happens in the world, there's always a man." (chapter 1, p. 10). Later, Duchess thinks about Darke: "She knew what men could do, all of them, capability was enough." (chapter 24, p. 199). What do you make of the portrayal of each gender in this book? Are men or women worse in this novel, or might they be equally good or bad?

2) Star tells her daughter, "Selfless acts, Duchess. They're what make you a good person." (chapter 5, p. 42), yet she seems to be entirely selfish in many of her actions. Why do you think this is? Do you agree with Star? What makes a good person good?

3) Hal asks Duchess, "If the good stand by idle, are they still good?" (chapter 25, p. 204). What do you think? Are there any ostensibly good characters in this novel who lose their goodness by standing by?

4) Hal tells Duchess: "I am a constant disappointment to myself." (chapter 25, p. 207). Why do you think he feels this way? What could he have done differently in his life? Is self-disappointment what makes people decent?

5) Considering Walk's intervention, Duchess thinks: "...sometimes adults though watching out meant doing shit that'd lead to the kind of consequences that rippled far from them." (chapter 6, p.48). In this novel, are good intentions a dangerous thing?

6) Duchess addresses Vincent: "'Freedom', she said. 'Is it the worst thing to take? Worse than anything. Maybe it is.'" (chapter 6, p. 53). Later, talking about Vincent, Hal tells Duchess: "After that night, after what he did, he knew none of us would find freedom again." (chapter 25, p. 208). Why do you think Duchess asks Vincent this? What could be worse than losing freedom? Do any of the characters reclaim it?

7) Star says to Walk: "You're like a kid. Better and worse. Bad and good. None of us are any one thing. We're just a collection of the best and worst things we've done." (chapter 8, p. 67). Later, Duchess talks about Dolly's abusive father to Hal: "Some people are all dark." (chapter 25, p. 203). But Hal, thinking about Sissy, tells Duchess, "But with children . . . there is no bad." (chapter 25, p. 206). Are any of the characters in this novel morally pure in either direction?

8) Star believes "the universe finds a way to balance the good and the bad"(chapter 8, p. 67). Thinking about the story, do you agree with her?

9) Warden Cuddy and Walk discuss morality (chapter 13, p. 114): "But then maybe there aren't degrees of bad. Maybe it doesn't matter by how much you cross the line." "Most people get near. At least once in their life." "Not you, Walk." Is there a moral line that, once crossed, cannot be retraced?

10) Cuddy tells Walk that he sees himself in Vincent: "His life and mine. They aren't all that different, save for a single mistake." (chapter 13, p. 114). Later, explaining to Duchess how Star found out that he'd sent Baxter to kill Vincent, Hal says, "All and everything. A single act on a distant night and here we are because of it." (chapter 25, p. 217). Is it fair for one mistake to forever change a life? What does this novel say about the possibility of forgiveness for mistakes?

11) Is Duchess right to tell Robin several times that he doesn't ever need to apologize to her? Why does she tell him that?

12) At school, Duchess learns that the triangle is the strongest shape (chapter 23, p. 189). How is this fact reflected in her life? What's the strongest trio of characters in this novel?

Questions provided by bookclubz.com/discussion-guides/we-begin-at-the-end