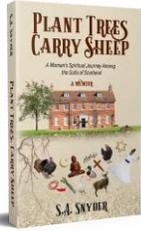


Reading Group Discussion Questions

Plant Trees, Carry Sheep: A Woman's Spiritual Journey Among the Sufis of Scotland



Read S.A. Snyder's blog at www.LunaRiverVoices.com!

Were you brought up in a faith community, and if so, which? Describe what it was like, whether you still practice the faith of your childhood and why or why not. Are there customs or beliefs you were brought up with that you still hold dear or still practice; that you stopped practicing; that you changed your mind about?

Have you ever reached out to practitioners of other religions to learn more about their faith? What did you discover? Did it make you feel more connected or less connected? If you previously had a negative view of that religion, did the interaction improve your outlook?

Have you ever done something completely different, pushed your comfort limits, or otherwise dared to try something out of scope? What did you learn about yourself and others? How has that changed you?

If you've never done anything outside your comfort zone, are you inspired to after reading this book? What would it take for you to embark on an adventure like the author did? Does the thought frighten you, excite you, or both?

What fears or self-limiting beliefs might prevent you from creating your own adventure?

Were you concerned for the author when she first arrived not knowing what Braemar was about? Have you ever feared or held negative views of a particular religion?

The author repeats certain behaviors that she knows aren't beneficial yet she can't help herself. Intellectually, she understands what serves her higher purpose, but in practice she keeps falling into the same traps. What behaviors do you repeat even though you know they don't serve your higher purpose? What could you do differently?

One of the author's challenges is not overworking herself. Yet, "getting it done" is not part of the Braemar Order. What does the Braemar Order say about work? How does your culture or family upbringing view busyness, work, rest, and relaxation? How has this affected you in both a positive and not so positive way?

The title of the memoir comes from a Buddhist saying, *Before Enlightenment, chop wood, carry water. After enlightenment, chop wood, carry water.* Discuss the author's interpretation and what the saying means to you.

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Could you relate to any of the characters or situations in the story? In general, people can hold seemingly contradictory characteristics simultaneously, such as spiritually wise, irreverent, self-righteous, pious, easygoing, playful, accepting, rejecting, indifferent, and judgmental. What do you think about that?

What did you like least about this memoir? What did you like most? Did you find the ending satisfying?

What particular lesson stood out for you, either that the author learned about herself or that you discovered about yourself by reading about her experience?

What do you think the author's main message is? Why did she write this book?

If you could hear this story from another character's point of view, whose would that be and what do you think that person would have to say?

What was your favorite scene in the story? What parts of the author's experience did you most relate to? Least relate to?

What parts of the book did you find yourself skipping over and why?

If you could ask the author one question, what would that be? Where there places she shared too much or not enough?

What did you think of Braemar and their teachings?

If you could go on a retreat anywhere in the world, where would you choose?

If the book were made into a film, which actors do you see playing the different roles?