

Fremont Public Library Great Books Book Club
“The Country of the Pointed Firs” by Sarah Orne-Jewett
August 24, 2024

1. The novella is considered a shining example of local color. Did the regional dialect used in the book add to, distract from, or have a neutral effect on the story?
2. Did you feel like Orne-Jewett transported you to coastal Maine about 130 years ago? How does the at times idyllic and other times harsh coast of Maine, or “Country of the Pointed Firs,” relate to the townspeople’s inner lives?
3. How has the town of Dunnet Landing changed over time based on the stories related to the narrator? Has the community become tighter-knit as the men of the town died at sea or in the Civil War, the shipping industry declined, and younger folks moved away?
4. Why do you think we never find out the narrator’s name? Is it unusual that none of the townspeople ever address her by name as would have been the custom of the time? How much writing do you think she actually accomplished? Do you think the narrator ever returns?
5. Throughout the story, several townsfolk tell the narrator stories featuring supernatural events. How did these second-hand accounts interweave with the realistic tone of the rest of the novella?
6. Meals are often served before major storytelling sections. What is the interconnection between food and people’s lives?
7. Throughout the novella, the theme of friendship comes up in different ways. What was the author trying to express about this type of relationship for the townspeople?
8. Consider the story of Mrs. Todd’s and the minister’s visit to Joanna Todd. Also consider the book is set during the Victorian era. What is the view of religion in Dunnet Landing? Did the allusions to Greek mythology and other classics seem more pervasive than Protestant or Christian allusions?
9. Do you consider the novel a feminist work?
10. Did you read the “Four Related Stories” about Dunnet Landing? Did they provide a different view of the town and its people?

Sources and Further Reading:

<https://www.gradesaver.com/the-country-of-the-pointed-firs-and-other-stories/study-guide/essay-questions>

<https://www.enotes.com/topics/country-pointed/themes>

<https://litdevices.com/literature/country-pointed-first/>