

ARRT Book Club Study
May 16, 2023
Virtual Meeting
Anywhere You Run by Wanda M. Morris
Led by Kelly Griffin
Notes taken by Elizabeth Hopkins
14 participants

Kelly began by sharing a brief recap of the book and some author information. She then invited participants to introduce themselves and share where they work and if they liked the book/if it was something they would normally pick up.

-I run a book club here and it would not pass muster for my group. I found it a chore to get through.

-I appreciated that her language was written on a popular level. It was not a literary work. I think she did a really good job of getting the details right for 1968. I was more fascinated by the historical setting than I was by the characters.

-This made me question my memories of this time. I started to think about how adults were talking about these events when I was a child. I almost wouldn't call it a thriller. There were elements of it, but it felt more Southern Gothic to me.

-My favorite part of the book was the love story between Hank and Vee. I mostly read Romances. I don't read a lot of things set in the 60's and I enjoyed it. I don't mind that I read it.

-I did not enjoy the way it was written, but I enjoyed the setting and learning about the context of what was going on at that time. Many of the interior monologues didn't match up with how the author wanted you to perceive the characters. Some of the word choices threw me off as well.

-I wouldn't have picked this up, I normally only read Romance. I found the historical details very compelling. The fast pace of the short chapters helpful

Kelly mentioned she chose this book because our leadership topic is Genre Fiction. There's always been a debate at CPL about using genre fiction in book club or if it always has to be literary fiction. Yes, it's like a "popcorn" book. Short, fast chapters. But there's enough in it, historical setting/characters, that I think it's discussable.

The author does paint these women as morally gray characters. They are complex women and not entirely "good." How do you feel about these characters? Do you sympathize with them?

-I think the author is really good at making it clear that these women have had really bad things happen to them. It's hard not to have sympathy for them. She's pretty tempered about explaining the bad things that happened.

-I would agree. I thought it was interesting how young they were and all the terrible things that happened, I can't say that their choices weren't understandable. What would I do if I were on the run and I knew society wouldn't help me. The decisions were logical even if they weren't correct.

-The one scene that I was shocked by- the final scene where they killed the two guys. It was an easy and quick tie-up at the end.

-When Hank started talking about the sell shed, I figured out a couple of bodies would be disposed of under the foundation. The question was who. It was a fun recognition of the genre. How would you run from committing a murder in a society that was not going to help you? How would you feel sitting on a bus near police officers?

-I agree. It's hard to imagine what that would feel like. I think the author was trying to pack in a lot regarding what's going on in the 60's. This was also when the women's movement started to kick off. And these people knew about corrupt police. Even though it was unrealistic for her to go off and shoot her rapist, that part is the thriller/suspense, but there's a lot of real history too.

-Marigold dragging the dead bodies while going through a miscarriage, that was a lot. It felt like a lot thrown together at the end.

-It did feel like a lot of loose ends so things were wrapped up very quickly.

-How does everyone feel about leading a discussion on a genre title that isn't a "feel good" title?

-Sometimes when the book ends well (happy), people are actually pretty disappointed because it doesn't reflect real life. I think the book ended pretty well given what was presented at the beginning. Marigold might be able to go to college for example. Violet found a community that cared about her and ground beneath her feet. She found herself.

-I'm going to look for a balance in my book club. Maybe having a book that ends well and one that doesn't every other month.

-Most book clubs like to do literary fiction or issue-related. But if you have patrons coming in and saying they couldn't get through a book, something like this might work out for them.

Does anyone have anything to say about Mercer or Rose's diary?

-I think Mercer's character brought up another issue. The lack of health care and the lack of education. If you've ever met people from back woods parts of the country, he rang pretty true. He loved his family and yet he was willing to do anything to make money. He was life's desperation.

-I don't think Mercer's chapters added any suspense to the book. I didn't need his narration. I didn't actually find the book suspenseful at all.

-I read a lot of suspense/thrillers and I had a hard time assigning that tag to this.

-Mercer was a necessary plot tool in order for Vera to get found.

I remember when her first book came out, she was on every list. How did the first book compare to this?

-Set in a completely different time period but feels very similar- fast-paced, mystery-ish.

-I read her first book. I think the first one was stronger.

-She did a good job of adding other women's issues to this book. An unwanted pregnancy. And an LGBTQ character.

-Structured like a suspense/thriller (short chapters, multiple point of view) but the historical details are what drives the plot.

-When Violet goes to work for the police officer, you think that's going to build suspense. But it was more about her relationship with the wife.

-It might be a good entry level book to the genre. You could dip your toes into the genre with this one.

-The ending was the only part that wasn't really believable. How did these two women know how to mix cement? That's a small critique. I think the author wanted us to see how these women felt and how they were treated.

-I also had to suspend my belief that these women would be with men like Roger and Dewey. They were way too put together for these men.