

Book Club Kit

Winter in the High Sierra

~ a Love Story ~



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Discussion Questions

Let's explore how Lou and Bandit's characters evolved from the beginning of the story to the end. In what ways does the wilderness challenge Lou—and ultimately reveal her strengths? How does Bandit adapt, and what does he hold steadfast?

Readers have said that the Sierra Nevada setting helps to shape the mood and tone of the story. In what ways does nature act as a character in its own right?

Lou and Bandit are two very different people forced into an intense and isolated situation. What did you find were the key moments that shift their relationship from wary cooperation to deeper understanding?

The novel is set at the turn of the 20th century. How do the social expectations of that time influence Lou's initial decisions and perspectives? How might the story play out in a modern setting?

Let's discuss spirituality in the Gilded Age and how people's views of Christianity, and on religion in general, are similar and different from today's views and practices.

Did you see the reveals in Bandit's storyline ahead of time? What were your clues?

Would you want to be in a snowbound cabin with no outside influences for a wintry season? What would you want to do in such a situation? Would you miss modern conveniences, or revel in the simplicity?

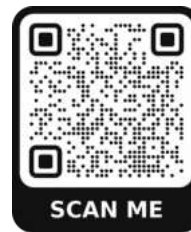
If you're like many other readers, you'd like to see this made into a movie. Who would you cast as Lou and Bandit?

Activity Ideas & Hosting Tips

Activity: Character Journals

Imagine entries from Lou or Bandit's journal during the winter. How do they reflect inner changes? What might you have written?

Activity: Making Pine Cone Ink (see Robert's Video for Making This Ink!)



Supplies Needed:

- 3 fully opened Ponderosa Pine cones (brown and dry)
- 2 cups of water
- 2 small handfuls of sodium carbonate (washing soda)
- Stainless steel pot with lid (use a pot large enough so 2 cups water will reach (only) about halfway up the cones)
- Standard cheesecloth
- Small bottles for storing ink



Instructions:

- Crush the pine cones using your hands or a mortar and pestle (the more surface area exposed, the better the extraction).
- Bring the water and washing soda to a near-boil, then add the pine cones and small bits released from crushing. Reduce heat and simmer for about 15 minutes, stirring occasionally. The liquid will turn dark brown when ready.
- Strain the liquid through cheesecloth into a bowl or jar.
- This is your raw ink. Bottle the ink by pouring the ink into a clean jar or bottle. Label and date it. With a fountain pen or nib, dip into the bottle and write or draw as you wish, or use a brush for a Japanese effect. Enjoy!

Recipes and Hosting Tips

Tip: Create a Comforting Cabin Environment

- Dim the lights and use lanterns or candles to recreate the feel of the remote cabin.
- Arrange pine cones or branches for a wintry scent and decorative touch.
- Light pine scented candles or incense to set the stage.

Recipe: Beef (or Game) Stew

A warm and filling stew that captures the spirit of Bandit's wilderness lifestyle.

Ingredients:

- 2 lbs beef, cubed. (You may also use venison or rabbit, as Bandit did.)
- 3 cups root vegetables (carrots, potatoes, parsnips)
- One yellow onion and two garlic cloves, diced
- 3 cups of beef broth (or enough to cover beef and vegetables)
- Bay leaves, thyme, salt, pepper

Instructions:

- Brown meat in a pot, add vegetables and broth, and simmer slowly for 2–3 hours.
- Serve with crusty bread or muffins.



Recipes and Hosting Tips

Recipe: Cornmeal Biscuits

Rustic and simple, perfect with stew or honey and butter.

Ingredients:

- 1 cup flour
- 1 cup cornmeal
- 1 tbsp baking powder
- ½ tsp salt
- 1/3 cup butter, room temperature
- ¾ cup buttermilk

Instructions:

- Mix dry ingredients, cut in butter, add buttermilk.
- Bake at 425°F (220°C) for 12–15 minutes. (Bandit and Lou would have used their woodburning stove.)



Tip: Setting the Table

- Prepare and serve cozy comfort foods in a buffet style to allow guests to serve themselves and enjoy various dishes.
- Use winter themed plates and mugs, or light colored mugs and place settings.
- Place pine cones or sprigs around the plated food items.

Recipes and Hosting Tips

Recipe: Pour-Over Coffee

Bandit had laid in a supply of the famous Delmonico's coffee, a favorite of Lou's. Try a pour-over version to bring out the flavor of your favorite coffee.

Ingredients:

- Generous teaspoon(s) of freshly ground coffee
- Pour-over coffee carafe
- Paper filters, or very tight strainer
- Boiling water
- Cream or sugar, optional, to taste

Instructions:

- Scoop as many teaspoons as the number of coffees you are preparing.
- Very slowly pour the boiling water over the grounds, allowing the coffee to open/bloom for at least 60 seconds.
- Pour a bit of extra water into the coffee, stir and serve.



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