

## Discussion Questions for "The Songcatcher" by Sharyn McCrumb

(Questions compiled by Sharyn McCrumb )

1. Compare the relationships of Lark and Benjamin to their respective fathers.
2. How does the wise woman's curse on Islay resonate through the generations of the McCourry family?
3. What is the curse-- or blessing-- that seems to run through your own family?
4. What is Tir nan Og, and how does frontier Appalachia meet the requirements to be that place?
5. When Cecil Sharp attempted to collect traditional music in Britain in the early 1900's, he could not find the songs in Great Britain, where they had originated. He found them only in the remote mountains of the southeastern United States. Why do you suppose that was?
6. Has anyone read "How the Irish Saved Civilization?" Sharyn McCrumb sometimes jokes that her novel "The Songcatcher" could be called "How the Irish Saved Civilization-- Part Two." What is the connection?
7. What can we do today to preserve the heritage of our family or our community?
8. The song "The Rowan Stave" is taken from the Scottish story of Thomas the Rhymer. Who was he?
9. Near the end of the book, it was revealed that Bonnie Wolf was a ghost, but there were clues to that fact all along. Name some of them.
10. "Songcatcher" is a term used by the mountain people to describe ballad collectors who came through the region in the 20th century collecting traditional music. In what ways was this practice good and in what way did it justify the term "intellectual strip mining" ?
11. One of the author's agendas in writing about the mountain South is to combat the regional stereotypes. Where in the novel does she make this point?
12. "The Songcatcher" is the true story of the author's paternal ancestors. How does McCrumb make that story into a novel instead of a non-fiction genealogy? For the reader, is anything gained by using this technique?