



Pushing the Limits of Tradition Suggested Reading and Discussion Questions

Adults pass along practices to children, and the human body physically benefits from the repetition of motions and routines—two very different types of traditions! Traditions can manifest in many ways—such as beliefs, events, and even repetitions of certain activities. Include in your discussions how our traditions can become springboards to exceeding our current limitations.

The Seed Keeper

Diane Wilson, Fiction. Rosalie Iron Wing has grown up in the woods with her father, Ray, a former science teacher who tells her stories of plants, of the stars, of the origins of their Dakhóta people. After becoming suddenly orphaned, she’s sent to live with a foster family and meets rebellious Gaby Makespace. Their friendship will transcend the damaged legacies they’ve inherited.

On a winter’s day many years later, Rosalie returns to her childhood home. A widow and mother, she has spent the previous two decades on her white husband’s farm, finding solace in her garden even as the farm is threatened first by drought and then by a predatory chemical company. Now grieving, Rosalie begins to confront the past as she searches for family, identity, and a community where she can finally belong.

The Seed Keeper is a beautifully told story spanning several generations. This novel follows a Dakhóta family’s struggle to preserve their traditional way of life and their sacrifices to protect what matters most. goodreads.com

- How does Wilson feature storytelling within Rosalie’s community and personal story (in linear and non-linear ways) to enrich history and legacy within the character?
- Which tribes and Indigenous communities live or lived near our home? Which crops and harvests do they hold sacred and are they still able to grow them? Have you eaten these foods? Why do you think certain foods might be sacred in one area, but not in another?
- The closing epigraph of this book is a prayer: “Love the seeds as you love your children, and the people will survive. Wačhékiye.” (361) Consider this prayer and Rosalie’s connection with her son. What might the significance of this parallel between Wakpa /Tommy and the seeds be? How does the genetic heritage in the seeds resonate for you as it’s own kind of “tradition”?

