



Pushing the Limits of Nature Suggested Reading and Discussion Questions

In our environments or within ourselves, the idea of “natural” is complicated. In your discussions consider how we define nature, and if that definition is fixed or in flux.

Flight Behavior

Barbara Kingsolver, Fiction. Dellarobia Turnbow is a restless wife who gave up her own plans when she accidentally became pregnant at seventeen. Now, after a decade of domestic disharmony on a failing farm, she has settled for permanent disappointment but seeks momentary escape through an obsessive flirtation with a younger man. As she hikes up a mountain road behind her house to a secret tryst, she encounters a shocking sight: a silent, forested valley filled with what looks like a lake of fire. She can only understand it as a cautionary miracle, but it sparks a raft of other explanations from scientists, religious leaders, and the media. The bewildering emergency draws rural farmers into unexpected acquaintance with urbane journalists, opportunists, sightseers, and a striking biologist with his own stake in the outcome. As the community lines up to judge the woman and her miracle, Dellarobia confronts her family, her church, her town, and a larger world, in a flight toward truth that could undo all she has ever believed. - *goodreads.com*

- Did you identify with a certain character or group in their attitude toward nature?
- What does Dellarobia think about the scientists, and how do they view people like Della, her family, and her neighbors? Does either side see the other realistically?
- Where does Dellarobia’s knowledge come from?
- How do you feel about the natural world? Do you think we know most of what there is to know and there are just a few “miraculous” events that we happen upon? When aberrant events happen due to an outside influence (such as new fish species showing up where they’ve never been seen, due to a coastline change) is that nature?

