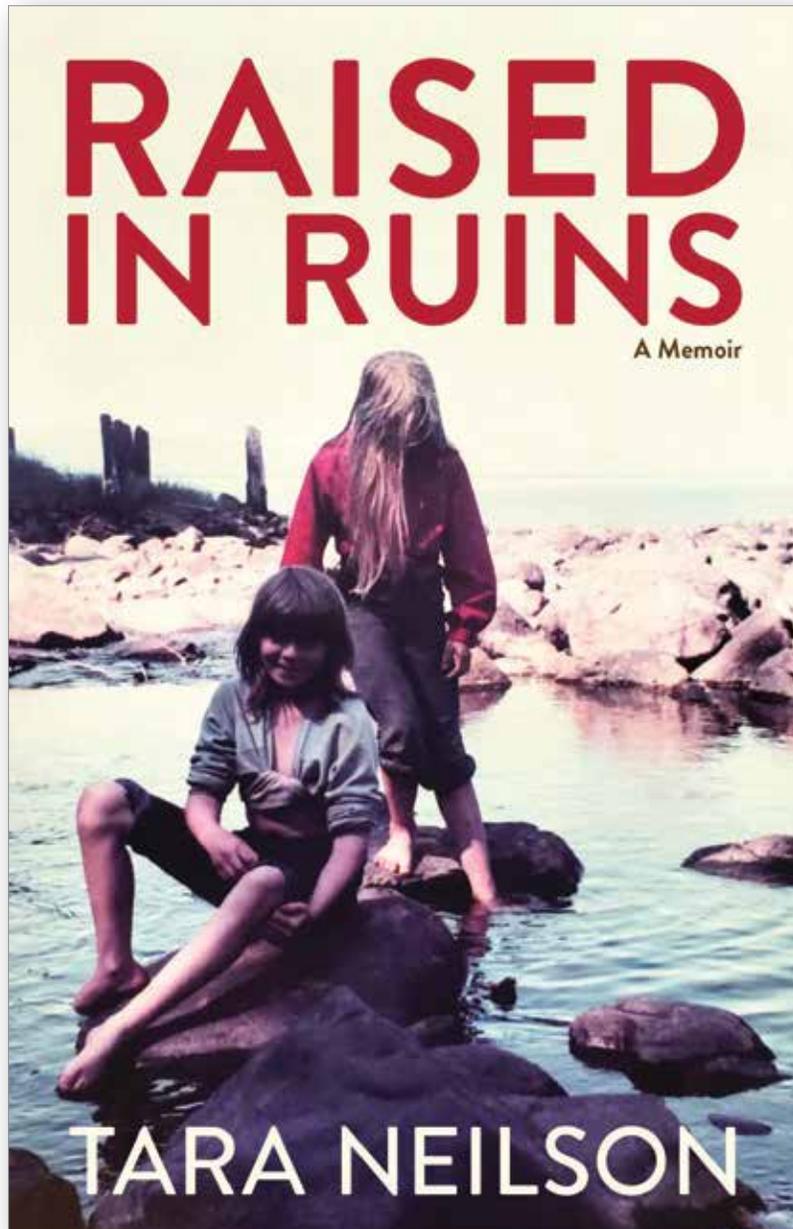




BOOK CLUB QUESTIONS FOR
Raised in Ruins
A Memoir

By Tara Neilson



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1. Compare where you currently live to the remote location in Alaska where the Neilsons lived. What are some reasons that people choose to live off the grid in Alaska? Why do you think the Neilsons were attracted to moving specifically to the cannery ruins? Consider if you were a parent; would you have taken your family to live in the cannery ruins? Why or why not?
2. Living close to nature has its own dangers, including the wildlife in the area. How would you deal with the threat of bears and wolves? Do you think the Bear Drill was a practical tactic, or do you think it had another purpose?
3. The Neilsons had limited contact to the world of movies, TV, and music, yet clearly this type of entertainment was very important in their lives. How would you describe your relationship to the entertainment world, and how would that relationship change if you moved to the cannery ruins?
4. The Neilsons identified with the Wilderness Family movies. Can you think of a movie or TV show that reflects, however inaccurately, your family situation or how you grew up? If you only got to watch movies once a week as the Neilsons did, which favorite movie of yours would you pick when it was your turn?
5. Imagine if you'd never had neighbors. How do you think you'd have reacted to the concept? What do you think of how the Neilson kids reacted? Now imagine if you always had neighbors. How would you react to suddenly having none?
6. The author describes challenges her family had that most people today wouldn't have trouble with. This includes difficulties in traveling, schooling, dealing with storms, even getting mail and groceries. What other challenges did the Neilsons have that you do not have to worry about? What struck you the most as being difficult that you would normally take for granted in your own life?
7. Much of the time the children and Romi only had each other as company. How would you feel if you were the only adult for miles around with only children to talk with on a daily basis? Are there ways to prepare for this if you knew you'd have no adults around? What did Romi do to feel connected to other adults and adult concerns?
8. For the most part, the author had only her brothers and sister to play with. What impact do you think having few other kids around made on the author and her relationships with her family?
9. Compare the concept of isolation to the concept of loneliness. Is there a difference? How do you deal with isolation and loneliness? How did this isolation affect the Neilson children, whether positively or negatively?
10. One effect of living in isolation is the natural development of independence and self-sufficiency. The Neilsons built gardens, bridges, and a six-bedroom house. Using only your family's combined knowledge, skills, and labor, discuss what you and your family can build. What other types of challenges do you think you could overcome with your knowledge?
11. After living isolated for years at the ruins, the author moved for a short time in a busy city. Why do you think the author had a hard time adapting to life in the city? How could someone prepare for this change?
12. According to Merriam-Webster, *déjà vu* is "the illusion of remembering scenes and events when experienced for the first time." Have you experienced *déjà vu*? How would you describe your experience of time? Discuss the author's experience and thoughts of time. How do you think her childhood shaped her conclusions about time?
13. The book closes with the stories of three cannery workers who lived and worked where the Neilsons did. Why do you think the author included their stories? What experiences did the Neilsons share with the cannery workers?