

# WHERE TREES TOUCH THE SKY BOOK CLUB KIT

## LETTER TO THE COORDINATOR

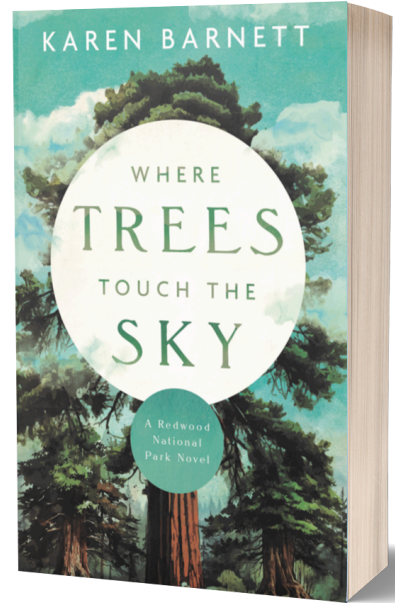
Hi, fellow book lover!

With all the incredible books available, I am honored that you chose *Where Trees Touch the Sky* for your Book Club. As an author, one of my all-time favorite things to do is chat with readers. So, if you're interested in having me visit your group via Zoom (or in-person if I'm in your area), send me a message, and I'll check my schedule. You can reach me at [Karen@KarenBarnettBooks.com](mailto:Karen@KarenBarnettBooks.com).

The characters in this novel are near and dear to my heart, and I hope they touched yours as well. Since book club members are often excellent reviewers, please consider leaving a review on your favorite retail site, Goodreads, and/or BookBub. Reviews only take a few minutes (2-3 lines are fine), and they are a huge help to readers and authors, alike.

Blessings!

*Karen Barnett*



## WHAT'S INSIDE

---

- Discussion Questions
- National Park Trivia Game
- Sunny's Trail Mix
- Crosscut's Famous Patty Melt
- Fun Facts
- Interview with the Author
- Trivia Answer Key

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS - PAGE 1

1. Have you ever visited Redwood National & State Parks? What are your favorite memories of it? Are there other parks you dream of visiting?

2. Which character did you most easily relate to, Marion or June? Why?

3. Marion Baker refers to her favorite redwood grove as “the one place she sensed God’s voice, as sure as she heard the wind whispering in the branches and the chatter of the trickling stream.” Do you have a place where you feel extra close to God? What makes it special?

4. Marion names trees after deceased family and friends as a way to honor and remember them. How do you keep memories alive? If you could choose how your loved ones memorialize you, what sort of place/object would you select?

5. June’s Uncle Walt and her brother Jonathan helped her to grow in strength and independence, and to better understand herself. Is there someone in your past who helped you recognize your own value?

6. Writing about the 1970s was a fun walk down memory lane. If you experienced the decade, what special phrases, styles, or references triggered memories for you?

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS - PAGE 2

7. Frank relates to the story of the prodigal son as told in Luke 15:11-32. How was his experience similar to the parable? How was it different?
8. Frank believed he needed to make up for what he did to his father years before. Do you think he fulfilled this goal? Is there anything more he could have—or should have—done?
9. The redwood walking stick passes from Frank to Marion and on to June. It could hold various meanings for different readers. What did it symbolize to you?
10. While researching this story, I was disturbed to learn that several of my conservation heroes had been ardent supporters of eugenics. Have you ever had a “don’t meet your heroes” moment? Or have you met someone famous who did live up to your expectations?
11. Marion’s decision to sacrifice the Gales grove in order to protect the one she loved was a choice that haunted her for nearly fifty years. Did her choice surprise you? What would you have done in her place?
12. Marion and Frank start out on opposite sides of a complex debate. Do you have friends/family with whom you can discuss hot-button issues without it turning hurtful? What are your best tips for getting along with people who think differently than you?

## NATIONAL PARK TRIVIA GAME

Difficulty Level: Advanced. 12 points possible  
Answer key on back page.

**1. Besides Redwood National Park, can you name three other national parks named after plant species?** (One point each).

- a. S\_\_\_\_\_ National Park
- b. S\_\_\_\_\_ National Park
- b. J\_\_\_\_\_ National Park

**2. The world's tallest tree, "Hyperion," is found in Redwood National Park. How tall is it?**

- a. 216 feet (55 m)
- b. 357 feet (109 m)
- c. 380 feet (116 m)
- d. 401 feet (122 m)

**3. Which US president has an official National Park (not a birthplace or memorial) named after him?**

- a. Dwight D. Eisenhower
- b. Abraham Lincoln
- c. George Washington
- d. Teddy Roosevelt

**4. As of 2024, how many National Parks are there in the US?**

- a. 63
- b. 47
- c. 431
- d. 26

**5. Which National Park has territory in three different states?**

- a. Denali
- b. Yellowstone
- c. Great Smoky Mountains
- d. Grand Canyon

## NATIONAL PARK TRIVIA GAME - PAGE 2

**6. Which US National Park is the largest?**

- a. Everglades
- b. Wrangell-St. Elias
- c. Gates of the Arctic
- d. Yellowstone

**7. Which President signed the legislation creating the first national park?**

- a. Abraham Lincoln
- b. Rutherford B. Hayes
- c. Theodore Roosevelt
- d. Ulysses S. Grant

**8. Which state has the most National Parks?**

- a. Alaska
- b. California
- c. Utah
- d. Delaware

**9. Which state has no National Park Service units?**

- a. Idaho
- b. Rhode Island
- c. Vermont
- d. Delaware

**10. Which of these movies contain scenes shot in Redwood National & State Parks?**

- a. Jurassic Park: The Lost World
- b. Star Wars: Return of the Jedi
- c. The Big Trees
- d. Bird Box
- e. All of the above

## SUNNY'S TRAIL MIX

*Want to try Sunny's famous trail mix? Carob can still be found in health food stores and places like Whole Foods and Trader Joe's. Or you can replace with semi-sweet chocolate chips.*

“Almonds, raisins, sunflower seeds, granola, and dried apricots. Oh--do you mean the carob chips? They're like chocolate but healthy.”

~ Sunny, p. 179

- Almonds
- Raisins
- Sunflower seeds
- Granola
- Dried Apricots
- Carob Morsels



## THE CROSSCUT'S FAMOUS PATTY MELT



Slice sweet onions and fry in butter until caramelized. Mix ground chuck with salt and pepper to taste before forming into patties. Grill patties until browned. Butter both sides of sourdough bread. In the frying pan, layer one piece of bread with a slice of American cheese, the grilled hamburger patty, onions and

more cheese. Top with the second slice of buttered bread. Grill until brown and flip. Serve with ketchup, pickle spear, and well-salted crinkle-cut fries.

## FUN FACTS ABOUT THE WRITING OF WHERE TREES TOUCH THE SKY

### Character Names:

- I often change character names as I draft a novel, but **Marion** was solid from the first time I imagined her walking through the forest. I considered renaming her at one point because I have a “Margie” in my novel, *The Road to Paradise*, but she refused to cooperate.
- **Frank Duncan:** As a child, I collected Hardy Boys books. Frank was my favorite character.
- **June Turner** started as Junia—a name mentioned by Paul in the book of Romans. My annoying spell-checker kept changing it to Julia, and in time I let it have its way. Eventually, I decided that I preferred June over Julia.
- **Sunny**’s name also kept changing simply because I couldn’t remember what I’d chosen. While reading the first draft, I discovered she was called Sunny, Summer, and sometimes April.
- The first scene I wrote for **Adam** was the one where he was filming the redwoods and records June’s fall. He references Cat Stevens’s *Morning Has Broken*, which made me think of Adam and Eve.

I fell in love with the redwoods sight unseen. When I was a little girl, I discovered a teacher discarding old textbooks, and I rescued a compilation of children’s books. It included the story *Big Tree* published by Mary & Conrad Buff in 1946. I was enchanted and have dreamed of coastal redwoods and giant sequoias ever since.

My first actual experience exploring California’s redwood parks was with fellow historical author and photographer, Lori Benton. She and I took a road trip to a writing conference and planned to see Yosemite after the event, but we were snowed out. We drove home via the redwoods and spent a few hours photographing the trees. Have you read any of Lori’s books? They’re incredible!

## INTERVIEW WITH THE AUTHOR

### **What was the hardest part of writing *Where Trees Touch the Sky*?**

Writing about June's disability was daunting for me. I wanted to be sure her situation was accurate and the descriptions were respectful. Even after doing extensive research, I still second-guessed everything I wrote. I have a couple of friends who live with similar challenges to June's, and they graciously answered my questions and read over her scenes. Their assistance helped her scenes come to life!

### **What was the most fun part to write?**

That's easy! I loved writing Frank and Marion's reunion. As a longtime romance writer, it was gut-wrenching to leave them in such a sad place at the end of the 1923 timeline and not provide them with a happily-ever-after. But if that breakup hadn't happened, we wouldn't have had Uncle Walt and spunky June Turner.

Bringing them together fifty years later was magical and by far the easiest scene in the book to write. The characters picked up their friendship right where they'd left it—in Gladys's shadow, Sigh!

### **Did you have a favorite character?**

I'd have to say that each of them was a favorite at one point or another. I adored June's grit. I loved her from day one as she walked away from her life to return to the redwoods.

Writing Frank's double life was a challenge, but also very fun. When I would write scenes between Frank and his father, it shocked me how different he was in Marion's presence. It's interesting to think about how we react and behave around the various people in our lives.

And Sunny—she was a joy. We all need a friend like her.



## **INTERVIEW WITH THE AUTHOR - PAGE 2**

### **Is it difficult to write about two time periods?**

Yes and no. When everything works well, the two timelines feed off one another—inspiring new plot twists. I love seeing how a character’s choices trickle down through the generations. But it does take considerably more research and mental gymnastics since I’m essentially writing two novels. Both stories—with their own complete character journeys—must fit into the same word count as one regular novel. It’s a fun challenge!

### **This is your fifth National Park novel. Do you plan to write more? What park will we get to explore next?**

I’m currently finishing up a novel set in Zion National Park that is tentatively scheduled to release in the fall of 2025. My husband and I took a research trip to Utah last year, and I fell in love with Zion. The brilliant colors of the Navajo Sandstone cliffs and the lush oasis formed by the Virgin River as it winds through the canyon—there’s no place quite like it.

After I turn in this manuscript, I plan to take a deep breath and spend time asking God what lies ahead. I have sketched out a couple of storylines for additional park novels, but I also have ideas for other kinds of stories. Whatever happens, I only want to proceed if it’s what He wants me to be doing.

## ABOUT KAREN BARNETT

KAREN BARNETT is the award-winning author of nine novels, including *Where Trees Touch the Sky*, *When Stone Wings Fly* and *The Vintage National Parks Novels*. Before becoming a novelist, she worked as a ranger naturalist and outdoor educator at Mount Rainier National Park and Oregon's Silver Falls State Park. When not writing, Karen enjoys photography, hiking, public speaking, and decorating crazy birthday cakes. She lives in Oregon with her family.



## DOWNLOAD KAREN'S FREE CHRISTMAS NOVELLA

If you enjoyed *When Stone Wings Fly*, you might also like Karen's other books! Add the free novella, *Christmas in Paradise*, to your ebook collection now. You can find it at [KarenBarnettBooks.com/free-ebook/](https://KarenBarnettBooks.com/free-ebook/).

### Connect with Karen

**Website:** [KarenBarnettBooks.com](https://KarenBarnettBooks.com)

**Newsletter:** [KarenBarnettBooks.com/free-ebook/](https://KarenBarnettBooks.com/free-ebook/)

**Facebook:** <https://www.facebook.com/KarenBarnettAuthor/>

**Instagram:** <https://instagram.com/karenbarnettauthor/>

**Goodreads:** <https://www.goodreads.com/karenbarnett>

**BookBub:** <https://www.bookbub.com/authors/karen-barnett>

## NATIONAL PARK TRIVIA ANSWERS

### Answer Key

1. Sequoia, Saguaro, and Joshua Tree.
2. c. Hyperion is 380 feet (116 m) tall. Wow!
3. d. Teddy Roosevelt National Park is located in North Dakota.
4. a. 63. While there are 63 “National Parks,” the park service actually manages 431 different units including National Monuments, Battlefields, National Historic Sites, Parkways, and many other designations.
5. b. Yellowstone. Yellowstone crosses into three states: Montana, Wyoming, and Idaho. Great Smoky Mountains overlaps two—Tennessee and North Carolina. Death Valley is located in California and Nevada.
6. b. Alaska’s Wrangell-St. Elias National Park is the largest, containing over 13 million acres. Death Valley is the largest in the lower 48 states (#5 overall) at over 3 million acres.
7. d. Ulysses S. Grant signed legislation establishing Yellowstone National Park on March 1, 1872. Technically, President Abraham Lincoln signed the Yosemite Valley Grant Act in 1864, but Yosemite was not made a National Park until 1890.
8. b. California has the most at nine. Alaska has eight. Utah has five.
9. d. Delaware is the only state with no NPS units.
10. e. All of the above