**The Women of the Copper Country**

**By Mary Doria Russell**

**About the Book**

In July 1913, twenty-five-year-old Annie Clements had seen enough of the world to know that it was unfair. She’s spent her whole life in the copper-mining town of Calumet, Michigan where men risk their lives for meager salaries—and had barely enough to put food on the table and clothes on their backs. The women labor in the houses of the elite, and send their husbands and sons deep underground each day, dreading the fateful call of the company man telling them their loved ones aren’t coming home. When Annie decides to stand up for herself, and the entire town of Calumet, nearly everyone believes she may have taken on more than she is prepared to handle.

In Annie’s hands lie the miners’ fortunes and their health, her husband’s wrath over her growing independence, and her own reputation as she faces the threat of prison and discovers a forbidden love. On her fierce quest for justice, Annie will discover just how much she is willing to sacrifice for her own independence and the families of Calumet.

**About the Author**:

Mary Doria Russell has been called one of the most versatile writers in contemporary American literature. Her novels are critically acclaimed, commercial successes. They are also studied in literature, theology and history courses in colleges and universities across the United States. Mary's guest lectures have proved popular from New Zealand to Germany as well as in the U.S. and Canada.

**If you enjoyed this book*:***

* At the Wolf’s Table by Rosella Postorino
* The Spies of Shilling Lane by Jennifer Ryan
* Meet Me at the Museum by Anne Youngson
* Carnegie’s Maid by Marie Benedict
* The Fallen Architect by Charles Belfoure

**Discussion Questions**

1. The prologue begins with the line “The dream is always simple. The memory never is.” How do you think this opening sets up the rest of the novel?  
  
2. Annie Klobuchar Clements was known as “America’s Joan of Arc.” Despite living centuries apart, how do you think these women were similar? How were they different?   
  
3. Annie’s height is frequently mentioned throughout the novel, often in regards to finding a husband, and “she admitted to six foot one when she finally married at eighteen.” Why do you think such emphasis is placed on her height?  
  
4. Chapters open with a quotation from Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet*. What do you think this represents?  
  
5. At the meeting with Charlie Miller and her fellow women, Annie says “we speak different languages, but we always find a way to talk, don’t we?” How do these women of diverse backgrounds and languages band together throughout the novel?  
  
6. A number of chapters are told from the point of view of Mr. MacNaughton, creating an interesting juxtaposition between his work and that of the miners. How does his life and perspective better illuminate the miners’ struggle?  
  
7. When Mike tells Annie his personal story, he speaks about both photographer Jacob Riis and the Orphan Trains. Do these references give you a better sense of the time period? Are there similarities between Sweeney’s life and the conditions in Calumet?  
  
8. After taking Annie’s photo, comparing her to Joan of Arc, Sweeney mutters, “And that’s the one for the history books.” How was Annie’s public persona and legacy shaped by both the press and those who knew her?  
  
9. The novel makes clear that Annie’s involvement with the union and strike strains her marriage to Joe. How do their perceptions of each other change over the course of the novel?  
  
10. What do you think is the greatest effect of Mother Jones’s visit to Calumet?  
  
11. How does the riot change things for each of the major characters in the novel?  
  
12. Consider the various characters’ reactions to the Italian Hall disaster. What do these reactions say about each of them?