



Discussion Questions for Lyanda Lynn Haupt's MOZART'S STARLING

1. Did *Mozart's Starling* change your view of starlings?
2. Do you find that the natural music around you (birdsong, wind, rain) affects your daily mood? In what ways?
3. Starlings are one of the most ubiquitous birds in North America, yet the majority of people cannot identify them accurately. What common things in the natural world around your home might you regularly overlook or know nothing about? How might you cultivate deeper attention?
4. Were you surprised to learn about Mozart's "potty mouth" and overt sex-talk? Does it affect your opinion of him as a composer?

5. Haupt dispels the myths that Mozart received a “pauper’s funeral.” Did you have any other misconceptions about the composer that were overturned by this book?
6. This book is a work of “creative nonfiction,” bringing literary language to topics like biology, linguistics, and biography that are normally treated with a more traditional nonfiction approach. How does the writing style affect the way you respond to factual information?
7. Do you know of any other famous human-animal friendships from history? How were they similar or different from Mozart’s relationship with his starling?
8. Should birdsong be called music? Should avian vocalizations that demonstrate use/recognition of syntax be called language? Or should the words “music” and “language” be limited to human experience?
9. Did *Mozart’s Starling* change or complicate your understanding of the conservation movement at all? If so, how?
10. Do you share the author’s sense that we can consider all animals “relations,” or “kin?” If so, how does this kinship affect your daily life? Your politics? If not, where do you draw the line, and why?
11. Of course, most wild animals should not be kept indoors or domesticated. But just for fun: If you could live with any wild animal in your home, what would it be, and why? What might you learn from the experience?