

## ***The Women of Copper Country* by Mary Russell ~ 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? Do you think this is an apt moniker?
3. Mr. McNaughton reads the newspaper, summarizing the major issues of the day, and also begins to contemplate the state of the American workforce. He thinks, of immigration, “How much of the Old World’s excess population can America absorb?” What does this say about attitudes about immigration and xenophobia during this time?
4. 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?
5. Chapters open with a quotation from Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet*. What do you think this represents?
6. 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?
7. 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?
8. 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?
9. 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?
10. 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?
11. What do you think is the greatest effect of Mother Jones’s visit to Calumet?
12. How does the riot change things for each of the major characters in the novel?
13. Consider the various characters’ reactions to the Italian Hall disaster. What do these reactions say about each of them?