

ABOUT THE PROGRAM



EVENTS

Joplin Public Library

April 4th, 6-8:00pm **Chat and Craft & Makerspace Event**

April 4th, 6-7:30pm **Master Gardening Class**

April 6th, 1-2:00pm **Book Discussion**

April 6th 6:30-7:30pm **PAL Art Opening Reception:**

Lost & Found: Remarkably Bright Objects

April 11th, 6-7:00pm **Researching Your Roots**

April 12th, while supplies last **Adult Take-Home Kit**

April 15th 10:30-11:30am **Wonders of Wildlife**

April 18th, 6-7:00pm **Book Discussion**

April 27th, 6:00pm **Author Shelby Van Pelt Visit & Book Signing**

READ-A-LIKES- FICTION

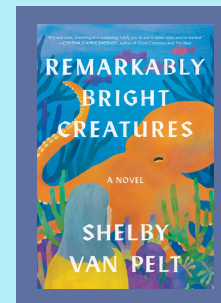
- **This Time Tomorrow** by Emma Straub
- **Lessons in Chemistry** by Bonnie Garmus
- **The Measure** by Nikki Erlick
- **A Man Called Ove** by Fredrik Backman
- **Tomorrow and Tomorrow and Tomorrow** by Gabrielle Zevin
- **The Lincoln Highway** by Amor Towles

READ-A-LIKES- NON FICTION

- **The Soul of an Octopus** by Sy Montgomery
- **If I Live Until Morning** by Jean Muenchrath
- **Oceanlife** by Sally Morgan

ABOUT REMARKABLY BRIGHT CREATURES

After Tova Sullivan's husband died, she began working the night shift at the Sowell Bay Aquarium, mopping floors and tidying up. Keeping busy has always helped her cope, which she's been doing since her eighteen-year-old son, Erik, mysteriously vanished on a boat in Puget Sound over thirty years ago.



Tova becomes acquainted with curmudgeonly Marcellus, a giant Pacific octopus living at the aquarium. Marcellus knows more than anyone can imagine but wouldn't dream of lifting one of his eight arms for his human captors—until he forms a remarkable friendship with Tova.

Ever the detective, Marcellus deduces what happened the night Tova's son disappeared. And now Marcellus must use every trick his old invertebrate body can muster to unearth the truth for her before it's too late.

Shelby Van Pelt's debut novel is a gentle reminder that sometimes taking a hard look at the past can help uncover a future that once felt impossible.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Shelby Van Pelt was born and raised in the Pacific Northwest, she's now missing the mountains in the Chicago area with her husband and two children.



DISCUSSION GUIDE

JOPLIN READS



1. What kind of person do you think Marcellus would be if he were human? What qualities do Marcellus and Tova both share that make this remarkable friendship a success?
2. On page 9, Tova empathizes with the sharks in the big aquarium tank, musing that she “understands what it means to never be able to stop moving, lest you find yourself unable to breathe.” Why do you think she feels so compelled to keep busy? What would happen if she simply stopped?
3. In contrast to how Tova keeps busy, Cameron emerges as a character who deals with grief by remaining stagnant, refusing to even try to reach his potential, much to the frustration of those who care about him. Why do you think he sabotages himself? Have you had someone like this in your life?
4. Marcellus is extremely smart — smarter than any human he encounters. Have you had encounters with animals who demonstrated surprising levels of intelligence, emotional or otherwise? Have you felt “seen” by an animal or felt a relationship with an animal deepen upon earning their trust?
5. In the middle of the novel, on page 177, Cameron says to Tova, “conscience does make cowards of us all.” What do you think he means by this statement? Do you agree with this?
6. Tova reflects on her experience caring for her husband through his illness and eventual passing, and with no surviving family to do the same for her, she worries about being a burden on her friends as she ages. How do you view the role of community and family in caring for older people? How did Tova’s views on this change throughout the book, and why do you think they did?
7. Marcellus remarks on page 59 that “fingerprints are like keys, with their specific shape. I remember all keys, too.” From the house key Tova loses to the ring of keys Marcellus finds at the bottom of the sea, the novel is filled with various types of keys. What do you think keys symbolize in this novel?
8. This novel explores different characters who are faced with major choices: they can open themselves up to something new and take an unexpected, daring opportunity, or they can continue on as they have been. Have you ever faced a moment in your life where a critical choice could change everything? Did you take the leap or not?
9. Marcellus’ life in captivity is much different than the life of an octopus in the wild — and eventually, Terry reveals that Marcellus was rescued from the sea after a life-threatening injury. Aquariums play an important role in education and conservation, but some people view keeping animals, especially intelligent ones, in captivity with skepticism. What do you think?
10. Tova’s Swedish Dala horses are some of her most treasured possessions. Why do you think that is? Are there heirlooms in your family that carry a similar significance?
11. In the last few pages of the novel, Tova and Cameron realize how they are truly connected. What do you imagine they are doing a year from the novel’s end?

