

## Discussion Questions for *Ordinary Wolves* by Seth Kantner

1. What different factors contribute to Cutuk's search for identity? Why is it so hard for him to find satisfying answers to the questions "Who am I? Who do I want to be?"
2. Why does the novel refer repeatedly to Cutuk's flattening his nose? What experiences of your own can you relate to this gesture?
3. How would you describe your own relationship to the natural environment, as a child, adolescent and young adult? What has influenced this relationship in your life?
4. In what ways can you relate any other factors playing a role in Cutuk's search for identity to your own life (as different as it may be from Cutuk's)?
5. Eruk, Abe, Jerry, and Iris represent possible role models for Cutuk. How would describe Cutuk's relationship with each? How does each of these characters influence Cutuk? How does he differentiate himself from each?
6. What relationships do you most admire in the novel? What relationships are most troubling to you? Do you think the novelist shares your views? Why?
7. What different facets of native culture are represented by Eruk, Melt, Janet, Stevie, January, and Dawna? How would you describe the novel's portrayal of contemporary Alaskan culture, overall?
8. How does the novel portray mainstream, white American culture? How much does this portrayal fit with your own views of this?
9. What is the significance of the short chapters that focus on the experiences of the wolves?
10. What do you think this novel says about an individual's need to connect with others, to seek out and create community?
11. This novel shows that any community, just like any individual within it, is shaped by many interacting forces, such as physical location, cultural inheritance, and powerful influences from "Outside." Does this representation of "community" seem more similar or different to your usual way of thinking about the concept of community?
12. What scenes or situations in this narrative provoked a specific reaction in you (e.g. uneasiness, laughter, confusion, criticism, sadness, inspiration)? More specifically, what parts of Kantner's portrayal of Alaska and this "coming of age" experience do you find most troubling?

*Seth Kantner will be on campus Tuesday, August 26, to talk with us about his novel and his experiences in Alaska. His presentation will begin at 7:00 p.m. Be sure to put that on your calendar; attendance is required for all Alpha Seminar students. And you won't want to miss it!*