

ALPHA SIGMA ALPHA ALUMNAE BOOK CLUB DISCUSSION QUESTIONS
AUGUST 2021 – “WILD” BY CHERYL STRAYED

1. What was your favorite moment while reading “Wild”? Why that particular moment?
2. To find herself after years of grief and some poor life choices, Cheryl decides to hike the Pacific Crest Trail by herself; one of the toughest hiking trails in the United States. What do you think about the courage it takes to set this as a goal? Could you do it? Would you do it?
3. “The Pacific Crest Trail wasn’t a world to me then. It was an idea, vague and outlandish, full of promise and mystery. Something bloomed inside me as I traced its jagged line with my finger on a map” (p. 4). Why did the PCT capture Cheryl’s imagination at that point in her life?
4. Cheryl is quite forthright in her description of her own transgressions, and while she’s remorseful, she never seems ashamed. How did that make you feel about Cheryl as a person?
5. Cheryl says her mother’s death “had obliterated me.... I was trapped by her but utterly alone. She would always be the empty bowl that no one could fill” (p 267). How did being on the PCT on her mother’s fiftieth birthday help Strayed to heal this wound?
6. “I knew that if I allowed fear to overtake me, my journey was doomed. Fear, to a great extent, is born of a story we tell ourselves, and so I chose to tell myself a different story from the one women are told” (p. 51). Fear is a major theme in the book. Do you think Cheryl was too afraid, or not afraid enough? When were you most afraid for her?
7. On the trail, Cheryl encounters mostly men. How does this work in her favor? What role does gender play when removed from the usual structure of society?
8. Cheryl chose her own last name: “Nothing fit until one day when the word strayed came into my mind. Immediately, I looked it up in the dictionary and knew it was mine...: to wander from the proper path, to deviate from the direct course, to be lost, to become wild, to be without a mother or father, to be without a home, to move about aimlessly in search of something, to diverge or digress” (p. 96). Did she choose well? What did you think when you learned she had assigned this word to herself and that it was no coincidence?
9. What does the reader learn from the horrific episode in which Cheryl and her brother put down their mother’s horse? What emotions were you feeling as you read that scene?
10. What is your biggest takeaway from reading “Wild”?

BONUS QUESTION: If you have also watched the movie starring Reese Witherspoon, what did you think of the movie adaption of Cheryl’s story?