

## Reading Group Guide

### *The Sturgeon's Heart* by Amy E. Casey

***Three people in the same northern city of Duluth, Minnesota, are vanishing in different ways.***

*The Sturgeon's Heart* startles from the beginning of this visionary debut novel. Howard finds his skin turning transparent, revealing the bloody workings of musculature beneath. His body becomes otherworldly and insistent, spinning him into visions that echo his childhood. Sarah is living under an assumed identity, on the run from her past as a meteoric scientific prodigy. Jo seeks a new start in Duluth after a bitter divorce. She moves into the apartment unit across from Howard's, leaning on alcohol and a stubborn will to reinvent herself. The woods and the lake seem to call to her as she laments her shipwrecked life.

When instinct, the swiftly warming spring, and Howard's monstrous body conspire to bring the three together, each will discover how long they can hide—Jo from her loneliness, Sarah from her rising paranoia, and Howard from his intensifying transformation. On one remarkable night along the rugged shore of Lake Superior, the lines between reality and legend intersect. Identities are broken and remade. In this contemporary monster story, the earth itself amplifies both the grotesque and the beautiful.

*The Sturgeon's Heart* by Amy E. Casey is published by Gibson House Press, April 2022. Paperback, \$16.95. 9781948721165. Ebook formats, \$9.99; 9781948721172.

## About the author

**Amy E. Casey** lives and writes in Wisconsin, near the cold freshwater shore of Lake Michigan. From there, she dreams up stories of quiet monsters and wild landscapes. Her short fiction and poetry have been published in *Split Rock Review*, *Psaltery & Lyre*, *Club Plum*, *NonBinary Review*, *Bramble*, and elsewhere. She does a large portion of her writing on a Smith Corona Classic 12 manual typewriter from 1964. *The Sturgeon's Heart* is her first novel.

708.647.0908

INFO@GIBSONHOUSEPRESS.COM

 @GIBSONPRESS

 FACEBOOK/GIBSONHOUSEPRESS

## Reviews

“The writing is exquisite. . . . Wonderful characters, beautiful plotting, and a dramatic finale add up to a splendid novel.”—ALA *Booklist*

“Amy Casey's *The Sturgeon's Heart* is one of the best-written debuts I've read this year: every page contains a sentence that should make you gasp with joy, and the story is as thrilling as the prose. I won't forget Casey's characters anytime soon, or the beautifully evoked landscape against which their moving story is set.”—Matt Bell, author of *Appleseed*

“Casey does not shy away from flawed characters, but renders them honestly, tenderly, and without cynicism. *The Sturgeon's Heart* is intricate and beautiful. It made me long to see the shores of Lake Superior.”—Cole Nagamatsu, author of *We Were Restless Things*

“Quietly powerful and gorgeously written, *The Sturgeon's Heart* flickers and twists before your eyes, luring characters together in unexpected ways. This is a moving and elegant debut, well worth the read.”—Valerie Laken, author of *Dream House* and *Separate Kingdoms*

“The inner workings of a young man's body suddenly become visible through his skin, and the start of his nightmare draws two women on the run from their past lives together in a darkly sensual fantasy tale that comprises equal parts David Lynch and *The Shape of Water*. I loved the poetic weirdness and stark sense of place in this gutsy first novel, from the first fluid transformations to the somber realism of the conclusion.”—Peter Robertson, author of *Conclusion*.

## Conversation starters

1. The sturgeon of the title appears periodically in the book. What do you think the author intends the sturgeon to symbolize?
2. The three central characters all struggle with loneliness in different ways. What do you make of their various approaches to dealing with isolation?
3. How would you assess the part of the setting of Duluth in the story?
4. In what ways are Jo, Sarah, and Howard drawn to each other? Which characters do you think had the strongest connection?
5. Do you think there's still room in our modern society for the belief that monsters are real? Do you see Howard as a monster? Why or why not?