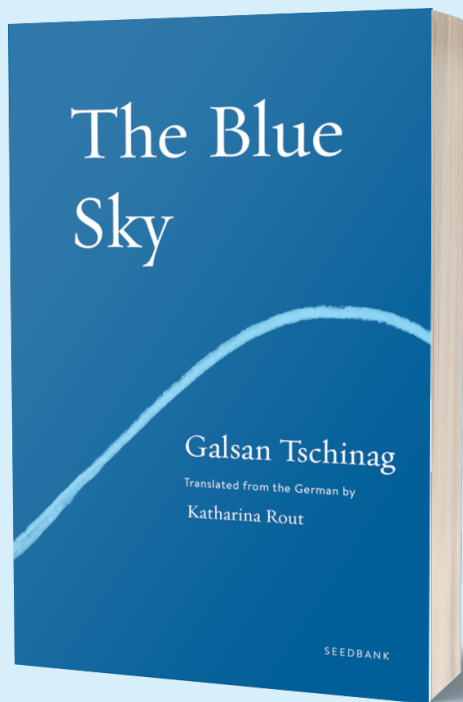


THE BLUE SKY

BY GALSAN TSCHINAG

TRANSLATED BY KATHARINA ROUT



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. *The Blue Sky* speaks to the beauty Tuvan tradition and their relationship with the natural world. Tschinag emphasizes the dangers facing their way of life. What are the biggest threats to Indigenous life and tradition? In what ways do you connect with this message?
2. *The Blue Sky* often reads as nostalgic and reminiscent of Tschinag's childhood. Think back to your own upbringing. What similarities can you identify? What resonates most with you?
3. Loss is a prominent theme in *The Blue Sky*. What is Tschinag trying to teach us about grief and loss? How do these lessons apply to your own life?
4. Tschinag expresses resentment and hurt towards formal education while his siblings seem to feel hopeful for freedom and opportunity. What is the relationship between the nomadic Tuvan people and education? Do you feel that education ultimately helps or harms their way of life?
5. Friendship is a tricky concept when you live so far away from your nearest neighbors. Tschinag resolved his loneliness by connecting deeply with his dog, Arsylang, and his flock. Can human-animal relationships be just as fulfilling as human-human relationships? Why or why not?
6. Dshurukuwaa experiences a great deal of hardship throughout *The Blue Sky*. Even as a child he is very observant and thoughtful. When does Dshurukuwaa show the greatest maturity? How would you have responded to the same hardships?
7. The setting of *The Blue Sky* could be a character itself; sometimes a villain like when winter strips them of comfort and wellbeing and sometimes a friend when spring warms their souls and provides their livelihood. Where did you see nature have the greatest effect on Dshurukuwaa and his family, positive and negative?
8. *The Blue Sky* incorporates Tuvan, Mongolian, Russian, and Turkic language into the English translation. How does this representation strengthen the writing and story?
9. Despite the tragedies of winter and difficulties of the terrain, Tschinag describes this corner of the world as his home. What does it mean for a place to also serve as a home?
10. As part of the Seedbank series, *The Blue Sky* can be regarded as a guide for reflection on our relationship to the world around us. In what ways does this book challenge and broaden your perception of the world and humanity?

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SYNOPSIS

The Blue Sky is the first novel in Galsan Tschinag's autobiographical trilogy. In the high Altai Mountains of northern Mongolia, the nomadic Tuvan people's ancient way of life collides with the pervasive influence of modernity as seen through the eyes of Dshurukawaa, a young shepherd boy. Dshurukawaa faces the normal hardships of childhood and is pushed further into manhood with the added tragedies of loss, rejection, and confrontation. We learn about what it means to grow up and accept what life has to offer—the good and bad experiences that shape us.

Environment plays a large role in this story as it affects livelihood, emotion, and action. We see the comforts of spring and summer and the pain of harsh winter as it impacts Dshurukawaa and his family. Nature's role is to teach us the danger of complacency and the values of hard work and dedication to the land. *The Blue Sky* is a heartwarming and tragic tale that will connect all of us to our past selves and remind us of what it means to grow up.

ABOUT THE SEEDBANK SERIES

This new series of world literature expands Milkweed's publishing program to bring ancient, historical, and contemporary works from cultures from around the world to American readers. Just as repositories around the world gather seeds to ensure biodiversity in the future, Seedbank gathers works of literature from around the world that foster conversation and reflection on the human relationship to place and the natural world—exposing readers to new, endangered, and forgotten ways of seeing the world.