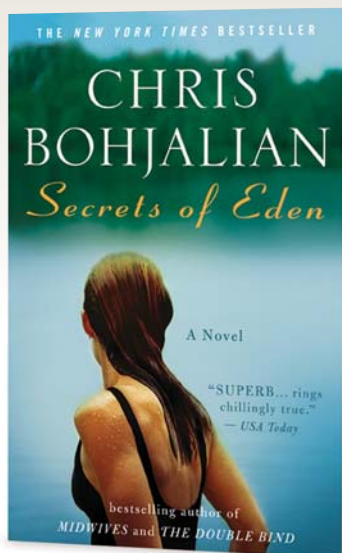


# The Random House Library Book Club

NEW & NOTEWORTHY TITLES



Suggested titles and  
sample discussion questions  
for the Book Clubs @ your Library



## Chris Bohjalian

# Secrets of Eden:

### A Novel

978-0-307-39498-9 | \$15.00/\$17.00C | Three Rivers Press | TR



#### READERS' ADVISORY:

From the bestselling author of *Midwives*, *The Double Bind*, and *Skeletons at the Feast* comes a novel of shattered faith, intimate secrets, and the delicate nature of sacrifice, written with Chris Bohjalian's trademark compassion and explosive revelations.

#### ABOUT THE BOOK:

**T**here," says Alice Hayward to Reverend Stephen Drew, just after her baptism and just before going home to the husband who will kill her that evening and then shoot himself. Rev. Drew, tortured by the cryptic finality of that short utterance, feels his faith in God slipping away and is saved from despair only by a meeting with Heather Laurent, the author of wildly successful, inspirational books about . . . angels. Heather offers herself as a mentor to Alice's daughter and a shoulder for Rev. Drew—who flees the pulpit to be with Heather and to see if there is anything to be salvaged from the spiritual wreckage around him. But then the state's attorney begins to suspect that Alice's husband may not have killed himself—and Alice herself had secrets that only her minister knew.

#### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. How does the setting of *Secrets of Eden* impact the characters? How is it vital to the story? Could these events have taken place in another landscape, another social context? Why or why not?
2. The novel begins from Reverend Stephen Drew's perspective. How would you describe his voice as a narrator? Is he sympathetic? Reliable? In the first few pages of the first chapter, what does Reverend Drew reveal about himself? What words would you use to describe him?
3. How would you describe the reactions, so far, of Reverend Drew, Heather, and Katie to the terrible events they're faced with—as mourning or grief?
4. Pay particular attention to the minor characters: Ginny O'Brien, Emmet Walker, David Dennison, Amanda and Norman, Alice Hayward. What does each minor character reveal about the narrators? How does each move the story forward?
5. Chris Bohjalian's readers know that his novels often address a significant social issue. *Secrets of Eden* tackles the tragedy of domestic violence. How did reading this novel influence your understanding of domestic violence?

For More Discussion Questions: [www.ChrisBohjalian.com](http://www.ChrisBohjalian.com)

Chris will be glad to answer a few questions by email or schedule a 20-minute conference by speakerphone when you're reading one of his books!

# Melanie Benjamin

## Alice I Have Been:

### A Novel

978-0-385-34414-2 | \$15.00/\$17.00C | Bantam | TR



#### READERS' ADVISORY:

For the millions in each generation who fall under the spell of Lewis Carroll's beloved heroine *Alice in Wonderland* comes an enthralling novel that explores the life that existed beyond the looking glass.



#### ABOUT THE BOOK:

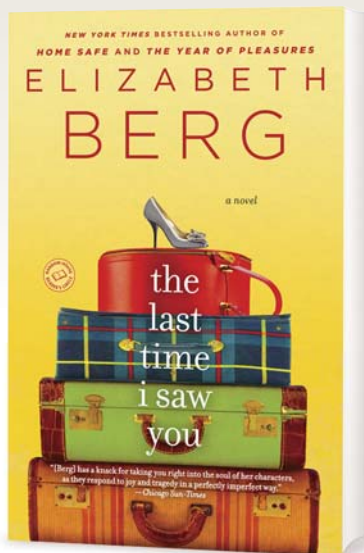
Who was Alice Pleasance Liddell? Eighty-two-year-old Alice mines her way to the heart of this question—speaking of the implacable mother who raised her, of the prince who loved her, of the sons she sent off to war, of the love affair that shattered her life. She reflects back upon her halcyon days in Oxford, of great privilege and greater tragedy, of being courted by royalty and of finding life beyond the looking glass a tumultuous but astonishing journey. In this remarkable novel, a feather in the winds of literary history is ensnared as a woman reminisces about a lifetime spent trying to escape Wonderland.

#### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. What social forces motivate each of the characters to deny Dodgson's inappropriate attention to Alice?
2. Alice became famous through no fault of her own. Can you come up with a modern day version of Alice? How do their lives compare?
3. Alice refuses to read *Alice in Wonderland* until she is well into her eighties. Why do you think she avoids reading the story she inspired?
4. The relationships between Alice and her sisters Ina and Edith range from rivalry to a life-long bond. What effects do these have on Alice, and what are the consequences?
5. How does Benjamin take both the reader and Alice from ignorance and denial to the self-realization of her complicity in the ruptured friendship with Rev. Dodgson? Is this believable?

For More Discussion Questions: [www.randomhouse.com/rgg](http://www.randomhouse.com/rgg)

To request an author chat for your reading group, visit [authorphonechat.com](http://authorphonechat.com), and enter the author's name in the book club name field.



## Elizabeth Berg

# The Last Time I Saw You: A Novel

978-0-345-51731-9 | \$15.00/\$17.00C | Ballantine | TR



### READERS' ADVISORY:

This wonderful novel about women and men reconnecting with one another—and themselves—at their high-school reunion is a charming read for Berg's many fans and anyone who believes in the possibility of second chances.

### ABOUT THE BOOK:

To each of the men and women in *The Last Time I Saw You*, their fortieth high school reunion means something different—a last opportunity to catch the attention of the most popular guy in school, an escape from the bleaker realities of everyday life, a chance to save a marriage on the rocks, a time to connect with a thirty-year-old daughter over what to wear. As the old classmates reconnect with their former friends and former selves over the course of a weekend, they discover things that will irrevocably affect the rest of their lives.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Many people say they're going to a reunion for one reason, when it's really for another. Why do you think most people attend reunions?
2. Berg portrays a diverse group of high school classmates in her novel. Did you have a favorite character before the reunion? After?
3. Much of what we learn about Berg's characters comes from stories told by others. Which of the characters seems best known by his or her classmates? Which classmate are people most wrong about?
4. Which characters were actually the happiest in high school? Does this match or contradict the perceptions of others?
5. In your opinion, is nostalgia generally a good or a bad thing? Other than reunions, what are some examples of things that happen in our lives that lead us to think, sometimes obsessively, about the past?

For More Discussion Questions: [www.randomhouse.com/rgg](http://www.randomhouse.com/rgg)

To request an author chat for your reading group, visit [authorphonechat.com](http://authorphonechat.com), and enter the author's name in the book club name field.

# Jonathan Dee

## The Privileges:

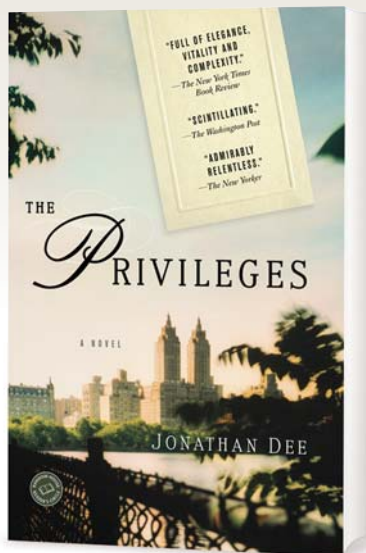
### A Novel

978-0-8129-8079-0 | \$15.00/\$17.00C | RH Trade Paperbacks | TR

6

#### READERS' ADVISORY:

For readers who enjoy novels about life in New York City, as well as fans of *The Emperor's Children*, *The Corrections*, and *The Good Life*.



#### ABOUT THE BOOK:

An odyssey of a couple touched by fortune, changed by time, and guided above all else by their epic love for each other. Lyrical, provocative, and brilliantly imagined, this is a timely meditation on wealth, family, and what it means to leave the world richer than you found it.

"Dee breaks fresh artistic ground with the sheer beauty and quiet poignancy of his prose... A suspenseful, melancholy, and acidly funny tale about self, family, entitlement, and life's mysteries and inevitabilities." —*Booklist*

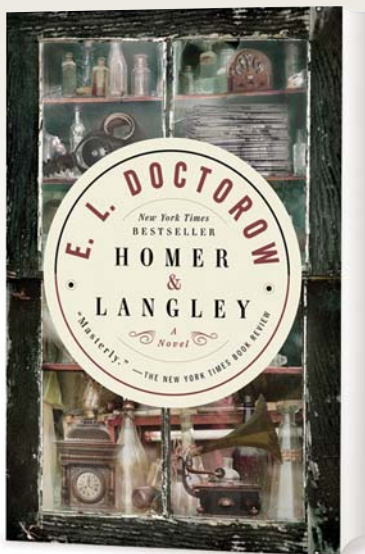
#### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. What do you think the author was ultimately trying to say about wealth and greed? Do you agree with him?
2. Adam and Cynthia have a bit of an obsession with leaving their pasts behind them. Do you think this serves them well? What about their children? Does it ultimately help or hinder them?
3. There are no specific references to dates in the novel, giving the story a sense that it is suspended in time. Why do you think the author chose to do that?
4. Did you find yourself able to sympathize with these characters throughout their rise? How important or necessary do you think it is for the reader to be able to do that?
5. Would you describe Adam and Cynthia as amoral, or as having their own sort of morality? Is there a difference?

For More Discussion Questions: [www.randomhouse.com/rgg](http://www.randomhouse.com/rgg)

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E.L. Doctorow

# Homer & Langley:

## A Novel

978-0-8129-7563-5 | \$15.00/\$17.00C | RH Trade Paperbacks | TR



### READERS' ADVISORY:

For the many fans of Doctorow's works like *The March*, *Ragtime* and *Billy Bathgate*.

### ABOUT THE BOOK:

A spellbinding novel inspired by the lives of two brothers whose reclusiveness and infamous deaths—buried under decades of accumulated debris in their Fifth Avenue town house—captured the American imagination. Like the house of his two indelible main characters, Doctorow's mesmerizing, elegant, and unforgettable novel contains an entire century, and an entire country, within.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. *Homer & Langley* was inspired by the real-life Collyer brothers—recluses who actually lived in a Fifth Avenue townhouse filled with rubble until their deaths in the late 1940s. Doctorow took some creative liberties in his retelling of their story—namely, extending the brothers' lives by several decades. Why do you think Doctorow made these factual changes, and how would you say this affects the impact of their story as a whole?
2. Why do you think Doctorow chose to write from Homer's point of view? How would the novel have been different if Langley was the narrator?
3. Homer and Langley lose their parents to Spanish influenza while Langley is abroad fighting in World War I. Do you think the brothers' lives would have been different had their parents survived? How? How did the war affect Langley?
4. Describe Homer and Langley as individuals. How do they change over the course of the novel? How do their opinions of the outside world change? How does their relationship as brothers change?
5. Through the eyes of the Collyer brothers, Doctorow shows us a vision of New York City from the 1930s through the 1960's. Discuss the different eras and the historical significance of each.

For More Discussion Questions: [www.randomhouse.com/rgg](http://www.randomhouse.com/rgg)

Carl Elliott

# White Coat, Black Hat:

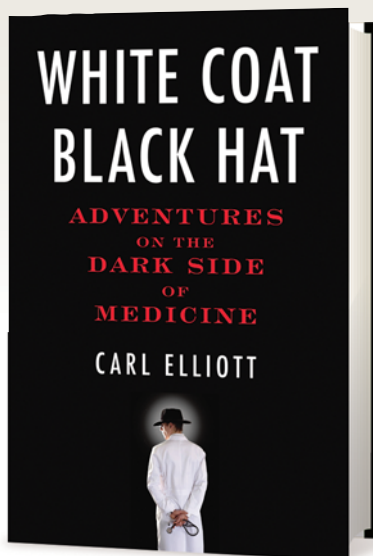
Adventures on the  
Dark Side of Medicine

978-0-8070-6142-8 | \$24.95/\$27.95C | Beacon Press | HC



## READERS' ADVISORY:

For fans of deeply researched nonfiction exposés like “Food Inc.” or this year’s surprise hit, *Invasion of the Prostate Snatchers*.



## ABOUT THE BOOK:

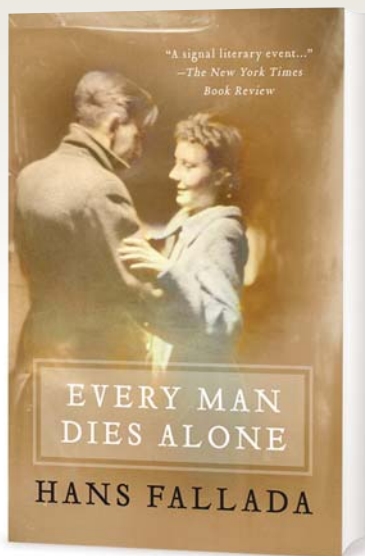
It’s fascinating to read comments from prominent physicians who declaim the negative influence of industry connections while working as paid consultants and speakers for those same industries. VERDICT: Enjoyable to read and laced with sardonic wit, this is an eye-opening work that all consumers of health care should read.”

—Library Journal

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. According to Elliott, “Patients are being replaced by health-care consumers” (p. 71) as the industry becomes more market-driven. Do you see yourself as a patient or a health-care consumer? How does this shape your perception about the health care you receive?
2. “Drug testing has always involved a kind of moral trade-off in which subjects are asked to take risks for the good of other people” (p. 16). Do you think the decision to participate in a study is an altruistic one? What else could motivate participants besides money? What would motivate you to take the risks?
3. On page 115, Elliott reveals that “Although some PSAs [Public Service Announcements] are sponsored by nonprofit groups, many are backed by corporations.” Do you think this matters? Does it make the warnings on the PSAs any less valuable?
4. In a case like Prozac, when the drug causes an increased risk of suicide “on rare occasions,” (p. 98) should the risk be made more public? Do you think it is likely that it will “frighten depressed patients from taking medication for their illness and increase the rate of suicide” (p. 101) as some doctors claim? Is it worth risking on either side?
5. What is Elliott’s purpose in writing this book? What does he hope to unveil? How does he expect us to respond?

For More Discussion Questions: [www.beacon.org/client/readguide/6142rg.cfm#questions](http://www.beacon.org/client/readguide/6142rg.cfm#questions)



# Hans Fallada

## Every Man Dies Alone

978-1-935554-04-2 | \$16.95/\$19.95C | Melville House | TR



### READERS' ADVISORY:

For readers of Holocaust literature such as the works of Elie Wiesel and also for readers of the classic family dramas of Tolstoy and Dostoyevsky.

### ABOUT THE BOOK:

A richly detailed portrait of life in Berlin under the Nazis which tells the sweeping saga of one working-class couple who decides to take a stand when their only son is killed at the front. With nothing but each other against the awesome power of the Reich, they launch a simple resistance campaign that soon has an enraged Gestapo on their trail, and a world of terrified neighbors and snitches ready to turn them in.

"A signal literary event..." —*The New York Times Book Review*

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. When we first meet Otto and Anna Quangel, we have the sense that their relationship is very static. Does their relationship change over the course of the novel? How does it change? Many would call *Every Man Dies Alone* a love story. Would you agree?
2. Hans Fallada brilliantly creates an atmosphere of fear, where all the characters are afraid of something. What are the different kinds of fear that affect them all? What role does fear play in controlling and motivating Borkhausen? Persicke? Enno Kluge? The judge? Otto? Inspector Zott? Trudel?
3. Enno Kluge is a shirker and a gambler, and behaves reprehensively in some instances. But he seems motivated more by laziness and selfishness than inherent evil. What do you think Fallada meant to represent with this character and his fate? How is Enno different from his some-time colleague Emil Borkhausen?
4. Although Inspector Escherich is a Nazi, is he meant to be a sympathetic character? Does his character change, and what brings about that change? Why do you think Escherich kills himself?
5. For most of his lifetime, Otto preferred to keep to himself and avoid interactions with other people. In prison he is confronted with many types of people. How do these experiences change him?

More discussion questions available in the back of the book.



# Gillian Flynn

## Dark Places:

### A Novel

978-0-307-34157-0 | \$14.00/\$17.00C | Three Rivers Press | TR



#### READERS' ADVISORY:

**If your book group is looking for a chilling, page-turning thriller look no further than Gillian Flynn for complex characters and plot twists that will make your pulse race!**



#### ABOUT THE BOOK:

**L**ibby Day was seven when her mother and two sisters were murdered in “The Satan Sacrifice of Kinnakee, Kansas.” She survived—famously testifying that her 15-year-old brother, Ben, was the killer. Twenty-five years later, Libby agrees—for a fee—to reconnect with the players from that night and report her findings...and possibly admit that her testimony wasn’t so solid after all. As Libby’s search takes her across the Midwest, the narrative flashes back to the events of that day, relayed through the eyes of the doomed Day family. And when the unimaginable truth emerges, Libby finds herself right back where she started—on the run from a killer.

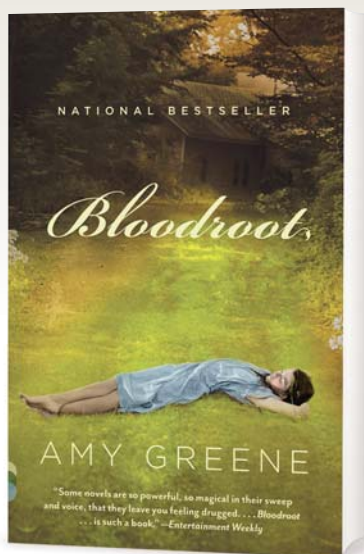
“Edgar-finalist Flynn’s second crime thriller tops her impressive debut, *Sharp Objects*...When the truth emerges, it’s so twisted that even the most astute readers won’t have predicted it.”

—*Publishers Weekly* (starred review)

#### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. “I have a meanness inside me, real as an organ...Draw a picture of my soul and it’d be a scribble with fangs.” What does Libby’s opening narration tell you about how she views herself? Do you agree with her description?
2. Why do you think we are so interested in the murders of people we don’t know? Is the fascination exploitive, or does it serve some purpose?
3. What do you think of Patty Day as a mother? Is she doing the best she can, or is she making excuses for herself? What emotions ultimately fuel her choices? Can you see yourself making the choices she makes?
4. Why do you think the author chose to set the murders on a farm? What images and themes does the heartland and farming evoke?
5. Libby is a liar, a manipulator, a kleptomaniac, and an opportunist. Does she have any redeeming qualities? Are you able to empathize with her? If so, why?

For More Discussion Questions: [www.Gillian-Flynn.com](http://www.Gillian-Flynn.com) If you’d like to invite Gillian to attend or call in to your book club, or just send her a question, email her at [gillian@gillian-flynn.com](mailto:gillian@gillian-flynn.com).



## Amy Greene

# Bloodroot

978-0-307-39057-8 | \$15.00/\$17.00C | Vintage | TR | January



### READERS' ADVISORY:

**"If *Wuthering Heights* had been set in southern Appalachia, it might have taken place on Bloodroot Mountain...Brooking, dark and beautifully imagined."**

**—*The Atlanta Journal-Constitution***

### ABOUT THE BOOK:

One family moves through the Depression up to the present and the setting is a remote region known as Bloodroot Mountain, named for a flower that has both healing and deadly properties. The family passes its legacy of magic and madness, faith and secrets, passion and loss—down through the generations—centering on Myra Lamb with her sky-blue eyes that bewitch people and animals alike. But when John Odom falls in love with Myra and tries to change her, their lives are forever changed.

"...this debut offers stirring testimony to the resilience of the human spirit."

—*Booklist* (starred review)

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Amy Greene uses the voices of six characters in different time periods to share their memories, their connections to one another, and the circumstances that have enriched their lives or led to unintended sorrow. Why do you think she chose to tell the story this way?
2. Magic plays an important role in this story, just as it has in the real lives of generations of Appalachian families. This family believes that a curse will be lifted when a baby with "haint blue" eyes is born, yet Myra's birth seems to lead to even more trouble for the Lambs. Why doesn't Myra's birth break the curse—and do you think it even existed in the first place?
3. All of the female characters marry and have babies at a young age, which often makes their lives more difficult—but some of their relationships are shown to be warm and loving. How does this create tension in the novel?
4. Why do you think Myra loves Wordsworth's "Tintern Abbey"? How does poetry provide both her and Johnny with a means of escaping reality in some of their worst moments?
5. Amy Greene told one interviewer that "the discovery in the novel is that it is possible to take what's good from the life you've lived and move forward, and leave the rest behind." Which characters do you think illustrate this statement best?

For More Discussion Questions: [www.ReadingGroupGuide.com](http://www.ReadingGroupGuide.com)

# Kay Redfield Jamison

# Nothing Was the Same:

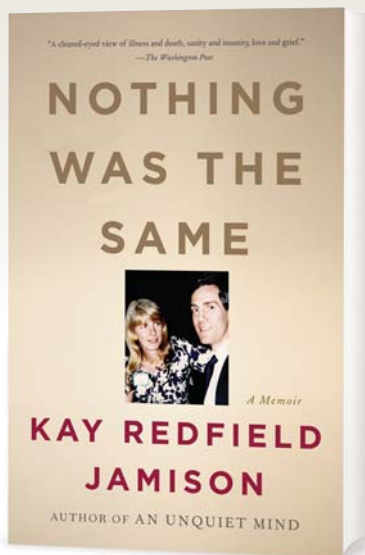
## A Memoir

978-0-307-27789-3 | \$14.95/\$16.95C | Vintage | TR | January

**E**

### READERS' ADVISORY:

For readers seeking answers to dealing with the loss of a loved one. Similar titles would include: John Bayley, *Elegy for Iris*; Joan Didion, *The Year of Magical Thinking*; and Calvin Trillin, *About Alice*.



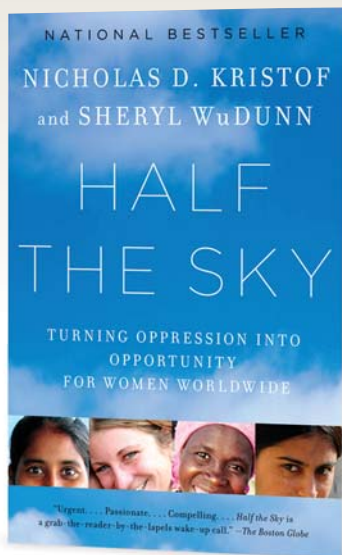
### ABOUT THE BOOK:

Kay Redfield Jamison is well known for *An Unquiet Mind*, the story of her struggle with manic-depressive illness. When she was thirty-eight she met, fell in love, and married Richard Wyatt, M.D., who was forty-five. He had become a leading researcher on schizophrenia and Chief of Neuropsychiatry at the National Institute of Mental Health after overcoming severe dyslexia earlier in life. After 20 years of uncommon challenges and unanticipated joys together, he was diagnosed with lung cancer and died in 2002. This is the moving portrait of that marriage.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. How does the prologue set the stage for Jamison's investigation into grief? What does it convey about the narrative method she has chosen to employ? Does her expertise as a psychologist color her description of her immediate reaction to her husband's death?
2. What does the use of metaphors, analogies, humor ("[Richard] had, as he put it, the fine motor coordination of a clam"), and other devices reflect about the way we deal with disabilities or illness?
3. In writing about his impending death, Wyatt says, "Certainly there were many times I did things that hurt others or committed sins of omission, but by my accounting I stayed ahead and feel I am still ahead. For me, not being in debt means I do not have to be concerned about death." Do you agree? What other aspects of a person's life would you add?
4. Are Wyatt's and Jamison's attitudes influenced by their ability to take advantage of medical advice and breakthroughs not available to others? What does their story demonstrate about America's medical system? What does it reveal about the possibilities, as well as the limitations, of modern medicine?
5. Does *Nothing Was the Same* transcend Jamison's personal story to illuminate the universal experience of grief? What practical guidance and emotional insights does the book offer to readers?

For More Discussion Questions: [www.ReadingGroupGuide.com](http://www.ReadingGroupGuide.com)



Nicholas D. Kristof  
and Sheryl WuDunn

# Half the Sky: Turning Oppression into Opportunity for Women Worldwide

978-0-307-38709-7 | \$15.95/\$18.95C | Vintage | TR

**E**

## READERS' ADVISORY:

**"A grab-the-reader-by-the-lapels wake-up call"**  
—*The Boston Globe*.

In the tradition of such books as  
Greg Mortensen, *Three Cups of Tea*;  
Dave Eggers's, *What Is the What?*; and  
Muhammad Yunus's, *Banker to the Poor*.

## ABOUT THE BOOK:

From Pulitzer Prize-winning journalists Nicholas Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn, a passionate call to arms against the oppression of women around the globe—"the central moral challenge" of today. Inspiring stories of extraordinary women show that the most effective way to fight global poverty is to unleash the potential of women. They offer an uplifting do-it-yourself toolkit for those who want to help.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. "The modern global slave trade is larger in absolute terms than the Atlantic slave trade in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries". Given the scale of the problem, what is suggested as a reasonable effort towards ending human trafficking?
2. The authors argue that "universities should make it a requirement that all graduates spend at least some time in the developing world." Do you agree that young Americans should be required to widen their knowledge by direct experience? How might such a requirement change their lives and their view of poverty and privilege?
3. The authors present a great deal of information about the troubles surrounding the education of girls. Discuss this thorny problem and the ways that Ann Cotton has succeeded in addressing many of them with her Camfed project in Zimbabwe.
4. "Microcredit: The Financial Revolution," focuses on the positive changes that are possible when you lend women money to start businesses, or when women have control of the family purse. Does India's law, assuring that one third of village leaders will be women, suggest a better place for children?
5. The authors hope to convince readers to help bring about changes that are desperately needed in the developing world. How effective would you predict *Half the Sky* will be in its effort to create new activists, donors, and volunteers for the international women's movement?

For More Discussion Questions: [www.ReadingGroupGuide.com](http://www.ReadingGroupGuide.com)

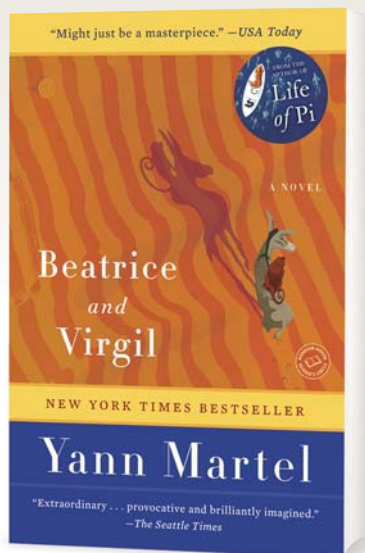
# Yann Martel *Beatrice and Virgil*: A Novel

978-0-8129-8154-4 | \$14.00 | Spiegel & Grau | TR | March 2011

978-0-307-39878-9 | \$22.00C | Vintage Canada | TR



**READERS' ADVISORY:**  
For readers looking for the next thoughtful discussion book in the never-ending struggle to understand the Holocaust, after *Maus*, *The Reader*, and *Suite Francaise*.



## ABOUT THE BOOK:

The follow-up to the international bestseller and Booker Prize-winning *Life of Pi*, this is another novel that uses animals to discuss the human condition, in this case to address the atrocities of the Holocaust. At the center of the novel is the relationship between two Henrys—a novelist and a taxidermist—who collaborate on a play about a donkey and a howler monkey who have survived a genocide. Heartbreaking and utterly original, the novel asks enduring questions about life and art, truth and deception, responsibility and complicity. Like *Life of Pi*, it will elicit endless discussion among readers and is destined to become a storytelling classic.

"Might just be a masterpiece about the Holocaust." —*USA Today*

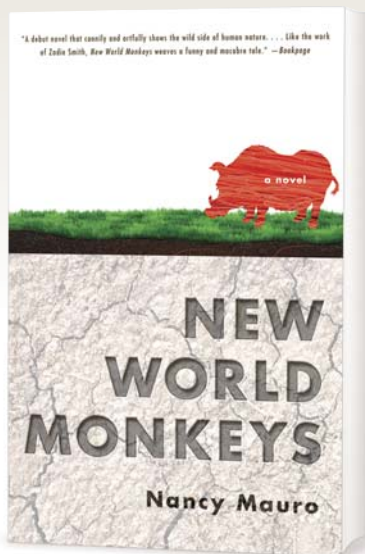
## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. What is *Beatrice & Virgil* about?
2. Why do you think Martel decided to name both of his characters "Henry"?
3. Discuss the characters of *Beatrice and Virgil*. Why might Martel have chosen them to be a donkey and a howler monkey, and why might he have chosen to name these characters after Dante's guides through hell, purgatory, and heaven?
4. What do you think of Henry's original idea for his book? Do you agree with him that the Holocaust needs to be remembered in different ways, beyond the confines of "historical realism"? Why, or why not?
5. How would you compare *Beatrice & Virgil* to *Life of Pi*? How do Yann Martel's aims in the two novels differ, and how are they similar?

For More Discussion Questions: [www.beatrice-and-virgil.com](http://www.beatrice-and-virgil.com)

To request an author chat for your reading group, visit [authorphonechat.com](http://authorphonechat.com), and enter the author's name in the book club name field.





# Nancy Mauro

## New World Monkeys:

### A Novel

978-0-307-46142-1 | \$14.00/\$16.00C | Three Rivers Press | TR  
E

#### READERS' ADVISORY:

**“Educated-Women’s Lit”:** Carolyn See coined this term and compared Mauro to Alison Lurie, Diane Johnson, and Alice Adams.

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#### ABOUT THE BOOK:

Fans of Tom Perrotta and Zadie Smith will enjoy this “trippy, hilarious debut” (*More magazine*) that sets a young married couple on guard when they accidentally kill the mascot of the town they plan to live in for the summer. Lily, a PhD candidate, can’t seem to get her dissertation off the ground and instead befriends a Peeping Tom at the library and accompanies him on his illicit sojourns. Ad executive Duncan has been handed the account that will make or break him. But when he digs up a human femur in the yard, the decidedly unrelaxed spouses embark on an exhumation of what may be the skeleton of a former household nanny.

Chosen as one of the Best Books of 2009 in the year-end roundup from *Publishers Weekly*.

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#### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. There is a strong animal presence in *New World Monkeys*—beginning with the title. Can you describe how Duncan and Lily experience animal nature? Is it something to be feared or revered?
2. There are two very distinct settings in the book: the small upstate town of Osterhagen, and Manhattan. Could you argue that the Vietnam of Duncan’s imagination is a third setting?
3. In Osterhagen, Duncan and Lily are surrounded by wilderness—or wildness. How does savageness start seeping into their lives? How does this affect Duncan, in particular, who must return to his city life each Sunday night?
4. *New World Monkeys* is written from a dual perspective. How do you feel about this if you are a male reader? A female reader? Who do you think is the emotional center of the story? Or can there be two emotional cores?
5. How is the idea of ‘returning to the wild’ echoed in the book? Give examples of how both Duncan and Lily ‘re-wild’ both the mind and body over the course of their bizarre summer.

For More Discussion Questions: [www.nancymauro.com](http://www.nancymauro.com)

Nancy Mauro is available for book group phone-ins! Email your request to [nancy@nancymauro.com](mailto:nancy@nancymauro.com).

Simon Mawer

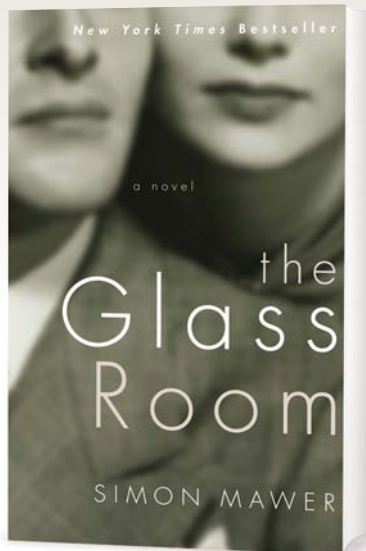
# The Glass Room:

A Novel

978-1-59051-396-5 | \$14.95/NCR | Other Press | TR



**READERS' ADVISORY:**  
*Loving Frank* meets *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* in this WWII-era love story centered around an architectural masterpiece in Europe.



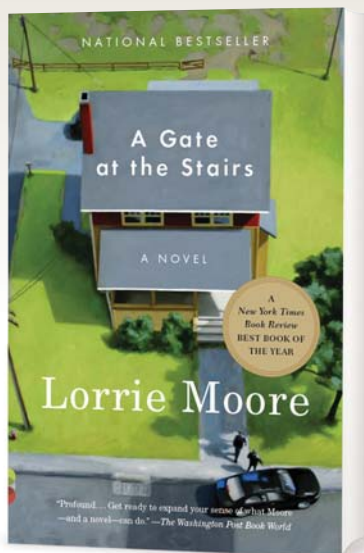
## ABOUT THE BOOK:

Liesel Landauer, the heroine at the center of the story, is torn between duty-bound love for her husband, passionate infatuation for the architect of her dream home, and a growing Sapphic love for her dearest friend. The tangled web of friends and lovers in *The Glass Room*, and the smoldering heat they generate, feel as modern as if the story were set in the present day. Short-listed for the Man Booker prize in 2009.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Why are the Landauers so devoted to modernity? What makes them so intent on shedding the past, and how is this tied to their country's history or future?
2. During the housewarming party at the Glass Room, von Abt speaks of his masterpiece, saying, "A work of art like this demands that the life lived in it be a work of art as well." Do you think this prophecy comes to fruition?
3. Why does Viktor initially approach Kata in Vienna? What is he looking for in her? How is she different from Liesel?
4. *The Glass Room* takes on many personas throughout the book, moving from a home to a laboratory to a gymnasium to a museum. Does the original concept of the house remain intact through all of its internal transformations? Does the house ever become part of the past?
5. Do you believe that Viktor is in love with both Liesel and Kata? Does he fall for Kata before or after she comes to live with the family? What does the scene at the train station reveal about both him and Liesel?

For More Discussion Questions: [www.otherpress.com/reading-group-guides](http://www.otherpress.com/reading-group-guides)



# Lorrie Moore

## A Gate at the Stairs: A Novel

978-0-375-70846-6 | \$15.00 | Vintage | TR

978-0-385-66826-2 | Bond Street Books/Anchor Canada | \$19.95 | TR



### READERS' ADVISORY:

A young college student searches for love and family. Fans of Dori Sanders, *Clover*; Anne Tyler, *Digging to America* and Ayelet Waldman, *Love and Other Impossible Pursuits* will come to this title.

### ABOUT THE BOOK:

Set in the aftermath of the 9/11 terrorist attacks, Tassie Keltjin, daughter of a gentleman farmer, has come to a university town as a student. Between semesters she takes a job as a part-time nanny for the newly adopted child of a mysterious and glamorous family. She becomes enchanted by the little girl. Her feelings for the parents, Sarah, owner of a trendy restaurant, and Edward, a scientist pursuing independent research, are less easily defined. Also her boyfriend turns out to be quite different from what he seems; vacations home are visits to an alien country; and her loving, eccentric family no longer provides the certainties that shaped her childhood.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. In addition to her sense of humor and intelligence, what are Tassie's strengths as a narrator? How does what she describes as "an unseemly collection of jostling former selves" affect the narrative and contribute to the appeal of her tale?
2. Does this picture accurately reflect the persistence of racism in America? What do the comments and encounters sprinkled throughout the novel show about the various forms racism takes in our society?
3. Nannies and other household help often grasp things families don't realize about themselves. Is Tassie an objective chronicler of life in this household? What biases does she bring to her observations? How do her perceptions and opinions change?
4. Does the Midwestern setting of the novel offer a distinctive perspective on September 11, 2001, and the mood of the country? How were the events experienced in other parts of America—for example, in the cities directly affected by the terrorist attacks?
5. Lorrie Moore has been widely praised for her affecting depictions of human vulnerability and her dark humor. How does she integrate clever one-liners, puns, and wordplay into the serious themes she is exploring? What role does humor play in exposing the thoughts, feelings, and fears the characters are unwilling or unable to express?

For More Discussion Questions: [www.ReadingGroupGuide.com](http://www.ReadingGroupGuide.com)

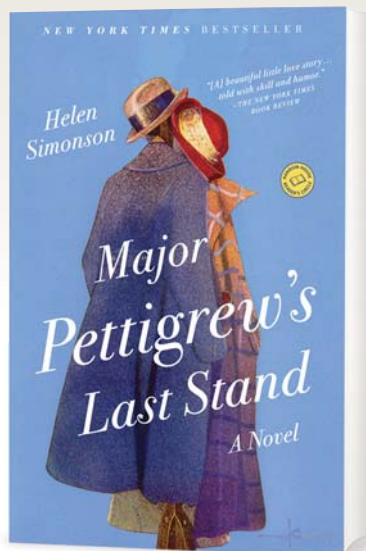
Helen Simonson  
**Major Pettigrew's  
Last Stand:**  
A Novel

978-0-8129-8122-3 | \$15.00 | RH Trade Paperbacks | TR

978-0-385-66866-8 | \$22.00C | Anchor Canada | TR



**READERS' ADVISORY:**  
For readers who appreciate a wonderful  
against-all-odds love story and those  
who enjoyed the charm of *The Guernsey  
Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society*.



## ABOUT THE BOOK:

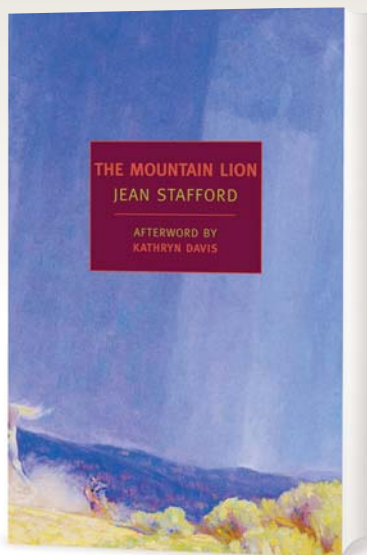
When retired Major Pettigrew strikes up an unlikely friendship with Mrs. Ali, the village shopkeeper who is of Pakistani descent, he is drawn out of his regimented world and forced to confront the realities of life in the twenty-first century. Brought together by a shared love of literature and the loss of their respective spouses, the Major and Mrs. Ali soon find their friendship on the cusp of blossoming into something more. The Major has always taken special pride in the village, but will he be forced to choose between the place he calls home and a future with Mrs. Ali?

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. A crucial theme of *Major Pettigrew's Last Stand* is that of obligation. What are the differences between the Pettigrews' familial expectations and those of the Alis'? What do different characters in the novel have to sacrifice in order to stay true to these obligations? What do they give up in diverging from them?
2. Major Pettigrew clings to the civility of a bygone era, and his discussions with Mrs. Ali over tea are a narrative engine of the book and play a central role in their burgeoning romance. In our digital world, how have interpersonal relationships changed? Do you think instant communication makes us more or less in touch with the people around us?
3. Much of the novel focuses on the notion of "otherness." Who is considered an outsider in Edgcombe St. Mary? How are the various village outsiders treated differently?
4. First impressions in *Major Pettigrew's Last Stand* can be deceiving. Discuss the progressions of the characters you feel changed the most from the beginning of the book to the end.
5. The Major struggles to find footing in his relationship with his adult son, Roger. Discuss the trickiness of being a parent to an adult child, and alternatively, an adult child to an aging parent. How does the generation gap come to impact the relationship?

For More Discussion Questions: [www.randomhouse.com/rgg](http://www.randomhouse.com/rgg)

To request an author chat for your reading group, visit [authorphonechat.com](http://authorphonechat.com), and enter the author's name in the book club name field.



Jean Stafford;  
Afterword by Kathryn Davis  
**The Mountain  
Lion**

978-1-59017-352-7 | \$14.95/\$17.95C | New York Review Books | TR

**READERS' ADVISORY:**

For fans of classic adolescent characters like Jem & Scout Finch, Holden Caulfield, and Huckleberry Finn. Comparable to Carson McCullers's masterwork *The Member of the Wedding*.

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**ABOUT THE BOOK:**

**R**alph and Molly are siblings united against authority until they're shipped off to their uncle's ranch in backcountry Colorado, where they're enchanted with this whole separate world. They return frequently for years, until life gets in the way and they find their relationship crumbling and their youth and innocence hurtling toward a devastating end.

---

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:**

1. What makes Ralph and Molly so different from their mother and sisters? We are told the two characters are isolated within their family because they battled scarlet fever—is this the only reason? Do Ralph and Molly really love their mother? Does she love them?
2. The seeds of Ralph's discontent with Molly are planted at the beginning of the book: we learn that "Ralph had had moments of irritation with her" (p. 6). By what process does their discord grow as the novel goes on? Are the two equally responsible for it?
3. Ralph and Molly hotly anticipate Grandpa's visit (p. 33). What does the figure of Grandpa represent to the children? Contrast Grandpa with the deceased Grandfather Bonney, whom Ralph and Molly despise and their mother loves. What is the difference, in their eyes, between Grandfather Bonney and Grandpa? Why does Ralph say to Leah that his mother killed Grandfather Bonney (p. 72)?
4. The passage detailing Ralph and Molly's initial arrival at Uncle Claude's ranch is vividly descriptive (p. 95). What was your impression of the ranch? Does the landscape seem idyllic or foreboding?
5. As Ralph begins to become occupied with what it means to be a man, how does the model set by Uncle Claude figure into his musings? Why is Ralph conflicted about his opinion of Uncle Claude (pp. 102–104)? Does it seem like Ralph wants to be the kind of man Uncle Claude is? Does the answer to this question change as the novel goes on?

For More Discussion Questions: [www.nybooks.com/books/supplemental/reading-group-guide](http://www.nybooks.com/books/supplemental/reading-group-guide)



Julia Stuart

# The Tower, The Zoo, and The Tortoise:

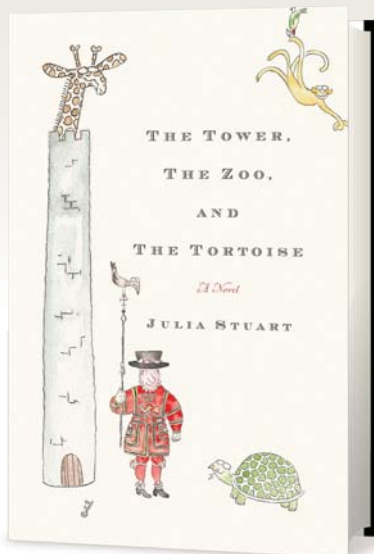
A Novel

978-0-385-53328-7 | \$25.00 | Doubleday | HC  
978-0-385-66968-9 | \$29.95 | Doubleday Canada | HC

E

## READERS' ADVISORY:

**Follows in the tradition of *The Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society* and *Chocolat* (for all fans of Alexander McCall Smith) and brims with charm, whimsy, and wonder.**



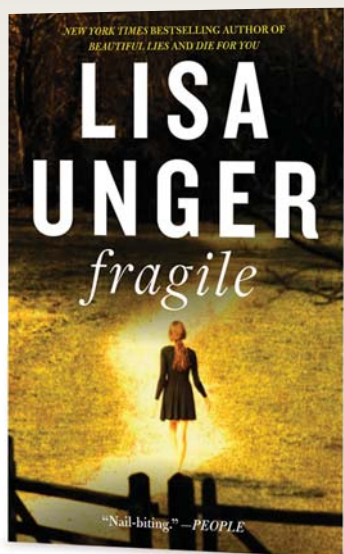
## ABOUT THE BOOK:

**B**althazar Jones has lived in the Tower of London with his loving wife, Hebe, and his 120-year-old tortoise Mrs. Cook, for the past eight years. He is a Beefeater while Hebe works at London Underground's Lost Property Office. Balthazar and Hebe share a world populated with strange animals, strange people, and one great and perhaps overwhelming sadness. And then he is asked to head up a Royal menagerie.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. While filled with humor, there is an undercurrent of heartache. Why do you think the author included the tragic element—could the story have survived without it?
2. Discuss the correlations between Balthazar's inability to cry and his obsession with collecting rain drops.
3. Hebe Jones sarcastically states that "It's every woman's dream to live in a castle." How is this statement not true for Hebe? What is Hebe's dream?
4. All of the characters seem to be in search of something—whether lost love, items, loved ones, or animals. Who do you think is the most fulfilled character in the book, if there is any? Why?
5. What role does Mrs. Cook play in the novel? She is in part responsible for Balthazar's job at the menagerie—how else has she played an integral role in Hebe and Balthazar's lives?

For More Discussion Questions: [www.ReadingGroupGuide.com](http://www.ReadingGroupGuide.com)



Lisa Unger  
**Fragile:**  
A Novel

978-0-307-39400-2 | \$15.00/\$17.00C | Broadway | TR | May 2011



**READERS' ADVISORY:**

Readers of Jodi Picoult, Anita Shreve and Jacquelyn Mitchard will love this book; it's suspenseful, sensitive, sexy, and subtle.

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**ABOUT THE BOOK:**

**D**espite their mostly happy marriage, Maggie and Jones find themselves at odds when their son Ricky's girlfriend vanishes. With Charlene gone, the memory of another young girl who went missing some twenty years ago is haunting the town. As Jones and the police turn their focus on Ricky, Maggie must find out the truth about what happened all those years ago. In order to save her son and the young woman whose life hangs in the balance, she'll test the bonds of her community--and find out just how fragile they can be.

---

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:**

1. *Fragile* opens with a dramatic scene on a dark and stormy night: Jones Cooper drops a package into a deep muddy hole, a mysterious package that "represented everything dark and ugly within him" (2). What kind of man does Jones seem to be in the first few pages? Did your opinion of him change over the course of the novel? Why or why not?
2. In addition to moving from one character's voice to another, the novel also moves back and forth through time. How did this help you understand each character? Did it force you to slow down, to get your bearings, even when you were dying to know what happened next?
3. Minor characters are often central to a novel. Discuss Charlie, for instance: why do you think he's in the story? What does he represent, how does he connect the characters and move the plot forward?
4. The word "fragile" appears in several places in the novel, one of them on the night that Sarah is killed. How does this realization change Jones? Do you think he understands the fragility of life differently later as a husband, a father, a "good cop" than he did as a young man on that fateful night?
5. Do you think most people carry a secret, a moment in our lives that defines them and yet remains hidden?

For More Discussion Questions: [www.lisaunger.com](http://www.lisaunger.com)

Lisa would be glad to answer a few questions by email or schedule a 20-minute conference by speakerphone when you're discussing one of her books!

# Katharine Weber

## True Confections:

### A Novel

978-0-307-39587-0 | \$14.00/\$16.00C | Broadway | TR

E

#### READERS' ADVISORY:

A tasty treat for the sweet toothed book group, Weber gives us a smart and entertaining story for fans of *Candy Freak* and whistleblower dramas like *Intuition*.



#### ABOUT THE BOOK:

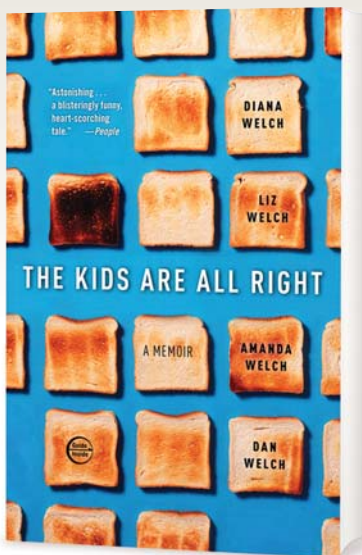
From the critically acclaimed author of *The Music Lesson* and *Triangle* comes the ingenious, witty, and affecting fictional story of Zip's Candies, a family-run candy factory trying to stay alive and "sweet" after 85 years, despite the challenges of both global competition and internecine feuds.

Alice Tatnall Ziplinsky's greatest ambition is to belong, to feel truly entitled to the heritage she has tried so hard to earn. Which is why Zip's Candies, her husband's family's company, is so much more to her than just a business. In *True Confections*, Alice looks back on the family-owned-and-operated candy company, now in a crisis of intergenerational struggle over succession. As the outsider, Alice is more devoted than anyone to finding and relating the truth of Zip's history, starting with the rags-to-riches story of how Hungarian immigrant Eli Ziplinsky developed his famous candy lines, and how each of his candies, from Little Sammies to Mumbo Jumbos, was inspired by an element in a stolen library copy of *Little Black Sambo*. But at its heart, *True Confections* is about timeless and universal themes: love, betrayal, and, of course, sweets.

#### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. How reliable a narrator is Alice? Do you trust her? She observes the hidden meanings and subtle inflections all around her, but is she equally aware of her own subtexts?
2. *True Confections* is a novel in which there are many instances of lies and deceptions. What is the truth about the history and meaning of Willie Wonka's lovable Oompa Loompas? What is Howard's relationship with his relatives in Madagascar? Is Alice entirely innocent of the arson charges that seem to be a pattern in her life?
3. Why do you think Alice cheats on her psychoanalyst by seeing another therapist on the side?
4. Did reading *True Confections* change the way you think of chocolate? Did reading the book make you crave candy? Which kind? Did you succumb?
5. What would it be like to have Alice Tatnall Ziplinsky as a member of your book group?

For More Discussion Questions: [www.KatharineWeber.com](http://www.KatharineWeber.com)



# Diana Welch, Liz Welch, Amanda Welch, and Dan Welch

## The Kids Are All Right: A Memoir

978-0-307-39605-1 | \$15.00/\$17.00C | Three Rivers Press | TR



### READERS' ADVISORY:

The 2010 ALEX Award selection is  
an excellent choice for YA and/or  
cross-generational book groups!

### ABOUT THE BOOK:

The four Welch children were living a fairy-tale existence: Handsome, affluent dad; glamorous, soap opera star mom. Country clubs, horses, private schools. Then everything changed. In the span of three traumatic years, their beloved father died mysteriously, leaving behind millions of dollars of unknown debts that made their mother sell the family's home. Shortly after, she succumbed to cancer. Orphans, the Welch siblings (Amanda, 19; Liz, 16; Dan, 14; and Diana, 8) found themselves adrift at a time when they desperately needed the anchorage of parents and a home. *The Kids Are All Right* is their haunting but ultimately inspiring story of how four siblings torn apart by tragedy came to terms with their past and found the strength to reunite. Written in four alternating voices, it is an eloquent testament to the power of shared history, forgiveness, acceptance, and—above all—unconditional love.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Memory plays a big role in all memoirs. The Welches rely on not just one but four accounts of the past—and in some cases they disagree about what happened. What does this tell you about memory as a reliable narrator?
2. "That was the biggest thing for me, being the only boy." Throughout the book, Dan struggles with what it means to be a man. How did this affect his relationship with his sisters? And how did it affect the way he perceived himself within the family?
3. Animals and pets played a large part in the book—from Bentley, the misbehaved dog that Liz bought for her mother to the "demon bunny" Liz's friends surprised her with in college. What are the parallels between these two scenes? What were the intentions of these gifts, and what were the reactions to receiving them?
4. How does food and holiday cooking play a role in this family's identity?
5. How did music play a role in re-connecting the Welch children? How would you describe the soundtrack to *The Kids Are All Right*?

For More Discussion Questions: [www.TheKidsAreAllRightBook.com](http://www.TheKidsAreAllRightBook.com)

If you want one of the Welches to call or Skype in to be part of your book club's discussion, please email your request—date, time and which Welch—to: [thekidsareallrightbook@gmail.com](mailto:thekidsareallrightbook@gmail.com).

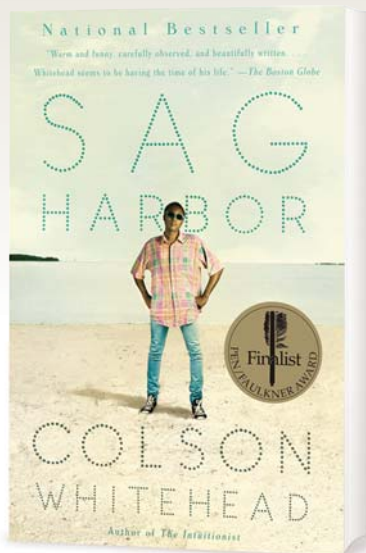
# Colson Whitehead Sag Harbor

978-0-307-45516-1 | \$15.95/\$18.95C | Anchor | TR



## READERS' ADVISORY:

**This ALA/BCALA Fiction Honor book is for all groups that love coming-of-age stories—told from a deeply affectionate and fiercely funny perspective. The perpetual mortification of teenage existence and the desperate quest for reinvention will strike a nerve with many.**



## ABOUT THE BOOK:

The year is 1985 and Benji Cooper is one of the only black students at an elite Manhattan prep school. A social gaffe on his first day (deep enthusiasm for the horror movie magazine *Fangoria*) seals his social doom for the next four years. Also not helping is his misshapen haircut which seems to have a will of its own. But every summer he escapes to Sag Harbor, where a small community of African American professionals have built a world of their own. This summer Benji will be tested in ways large and small...but just maybe, with a little luck, things will be different—better—if all goes according to plan, that is.

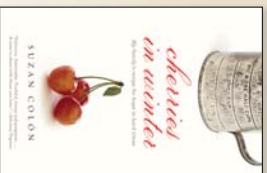
## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Benji grapples with his identity throughout the novel. "According to the world we were the definition of a paradox: black boys with beach houses." How is his community a paradox? How is his identity shaped by the two worlds he inhabits?
2. How does each of Benji's comrades contribute to the group? What challenges do they face as friends?
3. "The rock" near his beach house serves as a racial barrier. White people won't walk much further past it. What similar examples can you think of that exist today or in your own community. How have racial barriers changes in the last twenty years? How are they still the same?
4. Throughout, there looms a hint of darkness behind the relationship between Benji's father and his family. How does this affect the family? What is the role of the father in a young man's coming-of-age?
5. Benji clearly realizes toward the end of the summer that what he loves, is perhaps not the girls he pines after, but his beach home and "what he put into it." What is it about our childhood that evokes such special memories within us?

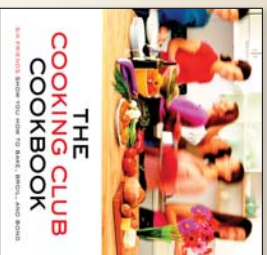
For More Discussion Questions: [www.ReadingGroupGuide.com](http://www.ReadingGroupGuide.com)



# Recipe for Book Group Success



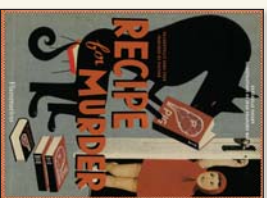
*Suzanne Colon*  
Cherries in Winter  
978-0-307-47583-0



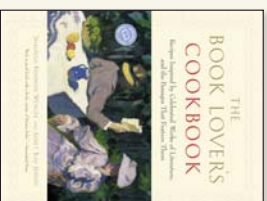
*Cooking Club*  
The Cooking Club Cookbook  
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*Cynthia Nims*  
Gourmet Game Night  
978-1-58008-088-0



*Estelle Payany;*  
*Illustrated by Jean-Francois Martin*  
Recipe for Murder  
978-2-08-030164-2



*Shaunda Kennedy Wenger*  
*and Janet Jensen*  
The Book Lover's Cookbook  
978-0-345-46546-7

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