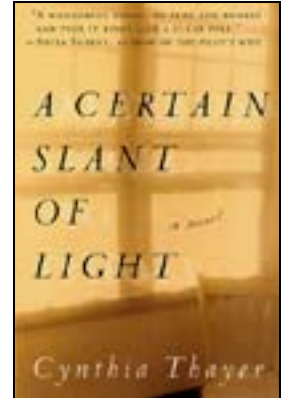


# READING GROUP GUIDE

## *A Certain Slant of Light* by Cynthia Thayer



St. Martin's Press

ISBN: 0-312-27564-1 (hardcover)

### *Introduction to A Certain Slant of Light*

At the heart of Cynthia Thayer's debut novel, *Strong for Potatoes*, was the tender relationship between a girl and her grandfather, constantly evolving as their lives grew and changed. Now, in Thayer's second novel, she tackles another kind of relationship, one between strangers.

Peter lost his wife and children in a fire years ago, yet the wounds are still as fresh as if it happened yesterday. He's turned into something of a hermit in a cabin on the coast of Maine, shearing sheep and gardening to live, an old Passamaquoddy woman his only friend. Elaine is eight months pregnant and on the run from her husband, a hard man more interested in control than love. Fear is simply a part of her life, fear for herself and her unborn child.

When Elaine turns up outside Peter's cabin during one of Maine's worst winter storms in years, Peter can't turn her away into the ice. Holed up together in his one-room home, the two troubled, lonely adults clash, then slowly discover that friendship, support, and healing can come in the most unlikely places.

### *Praise for A Certain Slant of Light*

"Thayer's tale is deeply poetic...an engrossing story with inspirational power."

- *Publishers Weekly*

"A lyrical tale of piety and grace...[a] testament to the powers of faith and forgiveness."

- *Kirkus Reviews*

## Reading Group Guide Questions

1. What kind of role does religion play in the novel? What about faith, in any form? How has the characters' faith and religion changed over the course of the story? Is there one message to be gained about faith or religion from the novel?
2. Compare and contrast the images of pregnancy and birth with those of aging and death in the novel. How does the author use such images to tell or enhance her narrative?
3. How important to the story is the novel's setting: the landscape, the weather, the wilderness, the water? How does the author make use of these physical details?
4. What is the role of music and song in the book?
5. What is the nature of guilt and responsibility, according to Peter? According to Elaine? Should either of them feel responsibility for their personal tragedies?
6. Peter has held onto his daughter's dollhouse as an embodiment of his grief over the fire. What role do such objects play in the cycle of grieving and healing, in the novel and in life? Was his decision to burn the dollhouse a method of moving on, or a form of celebration? Does his grieving seem self-indulgent? Healthy? Understandable?
7. Discuss the role of fate in Peter and Elaine's lives, before their meeting and after.
8. If you were the author of *A Certain Slant of Light*, would you change the end of the novel in any way?
9. Why do you think Elaine makes the decision that she does about her marriage?

## About the Author

**Cynthia Thayer** and her husband run an organic farm in Gouldsboro, ME. She has been a teacher, a basketmaker, a weaver, and she published her first novel at age 54.