

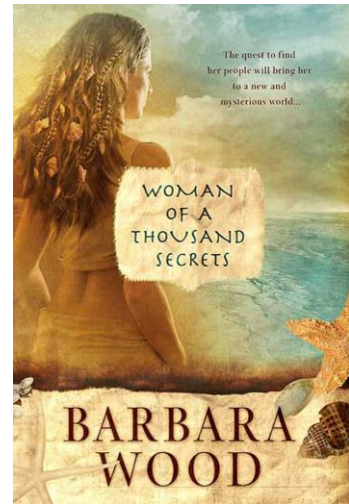
READING GROUP GUIDE

Woman of a Thousand Secrets

By Barbara Wood

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About this Guide

The following author biography and list of questions about *Woman of a Thousand Secrets* are intended as resources to aid individual readers and book groups who would like to learn more about the author and this book. We hope that this guide will provide you a starting place for discussion, and suggest a variety of perspectives from which you might approach *Woman of a Thousand Secrets*.

About the Book

She came to them from the sea, and to the sea they returned her. . . . A story of sacrifice and survival in the New World.

Tonina lives an idyllic life on a small island in the Caribbean hundreds of years before Europeans discovered it. But she has always been an outsider among her people. Unlike them, Tonina is tall and lean and light skinned, and her origins remain a mystery. Her adoptive parents had found her floating in a basket in the sea—a sacrifice? A shipwreck? No one knows.

When Tonina turns nineteen, her parents know she must return to the sea so that the gods don't become angry with the village for keeping something that is not theirs. Under the guise of finding a medicinal plant, they send Tonina to the mainland, a terrifying place she can't even imagine. They know, however, that they will never see her again. And here is where her adventure begins. It is a tale of survival and sacrifice, of luck, magic, intrigue, and danger, romance and betrayal, an epic filled with ancient lore, tales of bearded white men who sailed to this shore in giant ships, and discoveries of medicinal miracles in faraway places. But most of all, it's the story of one woman's quest to discover where—and to whom—she really belongs.



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About the Author

Barbara Wood is an internationally bestselling author of twenty-two novels. She lives in Riverside, California.

Discussion Questions

1. Tonina was considered ugly by the people of Pearl Island, because she didn't look them. What is beauty?
2. In *Woman of a Thousand Secretes*, the author describes the exciting game of football that seemed to dominate Mayan free time & make heroes out of players. Wagers were made on games and fortunes lost and made. Was this form of entertainment an essential ingredient in keeping life interesting? What would be a good substitute?
3. Tonina left her home forever perhaps. How do you think she felt? She had hopes of returning with the magical healing flower. Was it fair for her grandmother to lie to her?
4. Balam and Kaan were as close as brothers, which included feeling of jealousy, competitiveness and envy. Could Kaan have seen the envy and tempered his success on the ball field? Is that friendship?
5. What fueled the hatred between Baaalam and Kaan? Could the relationship have been saved and if so, when?
6. Balam refused to take responsibility for his actions that lead to the loss of his home, family and fortune. Was there an alternative for Balam's emotions other than revenge and misplaced blame?
7. The Mayans used cacao beans as a form of currency. How do you think they determined the worth of one bean? If they could grow a crop & harvest them, wouldn't they all be rich? How do you think this worked?
8. Tonina's constant belief in the healing powers of the red flower became a legend and attracted people to help her search for it. How important was it that the people held this belief?



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9. The Mayans used a message carrier – their version of a postman who would take days & days traveling along the white roads with news. All news was retained by memory. How effective do you think this was? How patient would you be without telephone, e-mail & letters & all of our modern-day means of communication?

10. As well as the red flower, Tonina searched for her people and ancestry and longed to feel that she belonged somewhere. Kaan was ashamed of his ancestry & desperately tried to fit in. Do you think this is what drew them to each other? Is knowing where we come from important?

11. Balam, Kaan, and Tonina are all on a pilgrimage. What are the similarities & differences?

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