

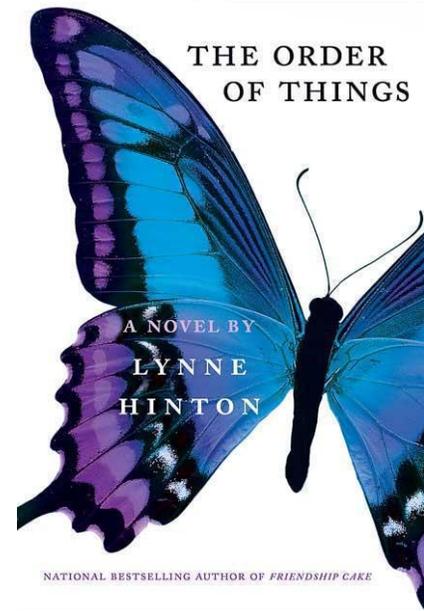
# READING GROUP GUIDE

## *The Order of Things*

By *Lynne Hinton*

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### **About this Guide**

The following author biography and list of questions about *The Order of Things* 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 *The Order of Things*.

### **About the Book**

An out of sorts librarian finds support and friendship in the most unlikely place—a new novel from the national bestselling author of *Friendship Cake*

Andreas Jay Hackett is a university librarian known for her love of keeping things organized. But one summer, she finds herself falling away from a sense of well-being, depressed, “out of order.” Her work doesn’t give her pleasure, her friends worry about her, and her own voice begins to frighten her. Therapy, pills and doctor visits don’t help, so Andreas checks herself into a psychiatric facility. There, she finds herself in a room next door to a prison inmate who has also been hospitalized. As she talks with her new neighbor, Andreas begins to come out of her despair--ultimately finding the healing she needs through a friendship that develops in the darkest of circumstances, and despite boundaries of race, gender, education, and age.



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## About the Author

LYNNE HINTON is a writer and journalist. She is the *New York Times* bestselling author of *Friendship Cake*, *Hope Springs* and *Forever Friends* (The Hope Springs Trilogy), among other books, and writes a monthly column for *The Charlotte Observer*. She lives in New Mexico, where serves as pastor of St. Paul's United Church of Christ in New Mexico.

## Discussion Questions

1. Andreas begins her story by explaining that she “lost the order of things.” It’s her way of describing her depression. Do you think that’s a fair description? In what other ways have you heard depression explained?
2. Andreas tried various methods of treatment for her depression and finally goes to a hospital emergency room and eventually to a private psychiatric hospital. How much do you know about the treatment of depressed or mentally ill persons in our society? When do you think it’s appropriate for a person to seek inpatient treatment?
3. What does Andreas do or not do that caused her to be labeled as noncompliant? What were the consequences for this label?
4. Andreas saw Lathin for the first time during a chapel service at Holly Pines. What draws her attention to him or what about him catches her eye?
5. Beginning with the third chapter, the rest of the book is a conversation and it is a conversation that changes Andreas’ life. Have you ever had a significant conversation with a stranger? Where did it happen and why do you consider it significant?
6. Why was Lathin sentenced to prison? Why did he come to Holly Pines?
7. Lathin talks about his prison experience. What do you remember about his description and experience?
8. What kind of relationship did Andreas have with her mother? Do you think the relationship between a single mother and an only daughter is different than the relationship between a mother and a daughter when there is another parent and other siblings? If so, what makes it different?
9. What relationship from Andreas’ past taught her the most about racism?
10. What was Andreas’ dream for herself when she was a little girl? Why didn’t she think it could ever come true?
11. Lathin and Andreas end up having a huge argument late in the conversation and late in the night. What was the argument about and how did it lead to Andreas finally uncover her truth?



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12. How did that “uncovering” lead to her healing? How important is “confession” to healing?

13. Do you think Andreas will ever talk more about what happened that summer her cousin died or was the conversation she had with Lathin all she needed? Does she need to reconnect with her extended family? Why or why not?

14. What do you think happened to Lathin? Do you think that the girl Andreas’ mother saw was his daughter?

15. It was a conversation with someone completely different from Andreas through the walls in a psychiatric hospital that ultimately relieved her from her burden and set her towards healing and wholeness. What about this conversation, the other person, the place, the timing, made it sacred and life-changing for Andreas? Why couldn’t it happen with the professionals she encountered?

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