

Book Club Discussion Questions for *The Gypsy Moth Summer*:

Reread the epigraph after you've finished the novel. Is *The Gypsy Moth Summer* a "revenge story?" How does the prevalence of "revenge stories" in books, films and television shows affect our perspectives, and why do we seek out—and sometimes find redemption in—these stories?

Familial love and the choices we make to protect our family is a central theme in *The Gypsy Moth Summer*. Would you pull the trigger if it meant saving your family?

There are a variety of love stories in the novel—the star-crossed first love of Maddie and Brooks, the time-weathered love of Veronica and the Colonel, the unstable and passionate love of Leslie and Jules, Dom's devotion to his older sister, among them. Which story resonated with you and why?

Set on an island home to a major military aircraft factory, loyalty to the island, and to country, is a motivating factor in the characters' decisions. Are the choices Veronica, the Colonel, and even young Dom make worth the necessary sacrifices?

*The Gypsy Moth Summer* takes place twenty-five years in the past, yet there are many parallels between the political climate of 1992 and today. How are the novel's depictions of racism, classicism, sexism, environmental pollution, and the military-industrial complex in 1992 relevant to the current political situation in the United States?

Which character changed the most over the course of the summer? Did that character's evolution affect the way you sympathized with his or her plight?

There is a great divide between the generations of Avalonians in the novel. Leslie and Jules are members of the Baby Boom generation, some of whom, like Leslie, came of age as "flower children" protesting the Vietnam War. Leslie's parents, as well as the senior islanders like Veronica and the Colonel, are members of The Greatest Generation, who grew up during the Great Depression and fought in WWII. Finally, teenagers Maddie and Dom belong to Generation X, coming of age in a time of prosperity and peace with the end of the Cold War. How do the differences among these generations affect the characters' ability to communicate, negotiate, and live peacefully on the island together?

Where were you in the summer of 1992? Which of the three generations do you identify with most?

Today's teenagers have instant access to information via the Internet but *The Gypsy Moth Summer* is set in the pre-Internet, pre-cell phone era. How do the teens like Maddie, Brooks and Dom search for solutions to their questions on everything from sex, class, race, and even the politics shaking the foundation of the island?

Jules is the first African-American resident in East Avalon and the presence of his and Leslie's biracial family reveals the deeply rooted racism hiding under the seemingly idyllic surface of Avalon Island. Although the novel takes place over two decades ago, recent studies have shown American cities and suburbs are only slightly less segregated today. Research the racial composition of your own city online. Were the results surprising or predictable, and how does the presence of (or lack of) racial diversity affect your community?

Avalon is an "island with one exit"—a single lane causeway leading to the mainland. The characters have different reactions to the geographic isolation of the island. When Jules first visits he experiences it as an idyllic escape from urban chaos and when summer ends, yet Maggie and Brooks, a biracial couple, fear their young love has no future there. Is Avalon Island more paradise or prison?