



The Last Kings of Sark

Rosa Rankin-Gee

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READING GROUP GUIDE

About the book:

"My name is Jude. And because of Law, Hey and the Obscure, they thought I was a boy." Jude is twenty-one when she flies in a private plane to Sark, a tiny carless Channel Island and the last place in Europe to abolish feudalism. She's been hired for the summer to tutor a rich local boy named Pip. But when Jude arrives, the family is unsettling. Pip is awkward, overly literal, and adamant he doesn't need a tutor, and upstairs, his enigmatic mother Esmé casts a shadow over the house. Enter Sofi: the family's holiday cook, a magnetic, mercurial Polish girl with appalling kitchen hygiene, who sings to herself and sleeps naked. When the father of the family goes away on business, Pip's science lessons are replaced by midday rosé and scallop-smuggling, and summer begins. Soon something powerful starts to touch the three together. But those strange, golden weeks on Sark can't last forever. Later, in Paris, Normandy and London, they find themselves looking for the moment that changed everything. Compelling, sensual, and lyrical, *The Last Kings of Sark* by Rosa Rankin-Gee is a tale of complicated love, only children and missed opportunities, from an extraordinary new writer.

Discussion Questions

1. What makes Jude and Sofi different as characters? In what ways do you think their differences draw them together?
2. How would you describe Pip's relationships with his parents?
3. What were your impressions of Sark? Were there any aspects of the place that you found strange or unusual? Would you want to visit the island?
4. Sark was the last place in Europe to abolish feudalism – in 1998. How does the novel comment on the British class system?
5. All three of the main characters are only children. [*Only Children* was actually an earlier working title!] How do you think this affects them, and the ways they interact with each other?



6. In the second half of the novel, the narrative splinters to try and capture the fragmented nature of adult life. How did this change your reading experience? In what ways did it shape your understanding of the characters?
7. Were there any lines in the novel that particularly stood out for you? If so, why?
8. The novel has been described as a triangular love story. Who do you think loved who, and in which ways?
9. "Just like that, I walked back into childhood and it was an island... If it's an island, it's the smallest one, where the sun shines white, and we went there, and we knew we could not stay." In your opinion, is the ending of the book happy, sad or somewhere in between?
10. In many ways, the novel explores how we experience our first loves. Did you identify with the depictions of first love in the novel? How so?

Want to learn more about Rosa?

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