



FLATIRON  
BOOKS  
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# *Fierce Little Thing* Reading Group Guide

Spoiler alert! In order to provide reading groups with the most thought-provoking questions possible, I found it necessary to reveal some of the plot's secrets down below. If you have not finished reading *Fierce Little Thing*, I hope, for the sake of your enjoyment, that you'll resist peeking at this guide.

Thanks for reading!

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1. This story is told from Saskia's point of view, but in the early drafts of this book, the narration was also close to Ben, Issy, Cornelia and Xavier's viewpoints. How would that story have been different? Why do you think I made the choice to strictly stick close to Saskia instead?
2. Is Saskia a good person? Is Issy? Is Xavier? Is Cornelia? Is Ben?
3. When we meet Saskia, Xavier, Issy, Cornelia, and Ben in the present day, they have all put distance between their lives and the people they were when they lived at Home. But in what ways are they each who they've always been? And in what ways have they changed?
4. How and why do Saskia, Xavier, Issy, Cornelia, and Ben come to rely on each other as children, despite their differences? How does Abraham exploit these connections? Should the adults be forgiven for a crime committed when they were children and believed their safe place, Home, was under threat of attack? Or should they be held accountable?
5. Home is not exactly a luxurious place to live, but the individuals and families that make it their home find peace and happiness there, at least initially. What is it about Home that makes it such a refuge for Teresa, Jim, Sarah, Ephraim, Gabby, Philip, and Amos? How does Abraham exploit the very characteristics that make these characters feel comfortable at Home, in order to bind them closer?

6. What really happened on the day Saskia's brother Will died holds the key to how Saskia thinks of herself, even in middle age. Is she right in letting this idea of herself affect every aspect of her current existence? Can she—should she—forgive herself? How did this idea of herself make her vulnerable to Abraham's manipulations?
7. Where do Abraham's manipulations come from? Is he bored, sadistic, passionate, curious—or something else entirely? What are his dreams for the Homesteaders? As he becomes increasingly concerned about the threat posed by the outside world, why does he turn against the Homesteaders in his midst?
8. How do women, especially mothers, fit into the world of Abraham's imagining? Is it possible for women to have power in a world conceived of, and controlled by, men (or a man)?
9. How does the pattern of adults leaving children behind—from Saskia's mother, to Jane, to Philip, to Ephraim, to Gabby—counterbalance Marta's decision to stick with Abraham? What are our responsibilities as parents to our children? In what ways do the parents mentioned uphold those responsibilities? In what ways do they let their children down?
10. What is it about the natural landscape and its promise that enlivens Home in Saskia's mind, and leads her to believe her brother Will is close at hand? Why does knowledge of Home, especially through Marta's lessons, make Saskia feel more at one with it?
11. Why does Marta take Saskia under her wing? What is it about Marta's knowledge of Saskia that makes Saskia decide that she must convince her friends to carry out their crime against her?
12. At the end of the book, Saskia decides not to tell her friends what has really happened to Abraham. Is this a good decision? Was it a good decision to do to him what she did?
13. Does this story have a happy ending? For now, Cornelia, Issy, and Ben's children will never know about the crime their parents committed—is that for the best? Do our parents owe us to tell us the sins of the past? Do we owe our children to tell them?
14. Where will Saskia be in five years? What about Issy and Sekou? What about Xavier and Billy? What about Cornelia and her husband and children? What about Ben and Jenny? What about Teresa and Tomas?