



Reading Group Gold

Revenge

by Mary Morris



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About this Guide

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

About the Book

Revenge, by acclaimed writer Mary Morris (*Acts of God* and *House Arrest*), is a compelling portrait of two talented women at a crossroads in their lives: Andrea Geller, an attractive young painter unable to stop thinking about the mysterious circumstances surrounding her father's death; and Loretta Partlow, an older, extremely successful novelist suffering from writer's block and in search of a story. Next-door neighbors, these two women embark on a brief yet intense friendship, in search of answers, but ultimately motivated by cross-purposes that ends in betrayal. "A compelling and darkly beautiful book," writes Michael Cunningham (*The Hours*).

About the Author

Mary Morris is the recipient of the Rome Prize for Literature and teaches writing at Sarah Lawrence College. She is the author of five other novels, four travel memoirs, and three story collections. She lives in Brooklyn, New York, with her husband and daughter.

Discussion Questions

1. How does the novel's opening scene, with Andrea at her apartment window observing the Partlows, prepare you for Andrea and Loretta's relationship? Do you think it is significant that Morris begins her novel this way? Explain.
2. Andrea and Loretta's professions, that of a painter and writer, requires them to observe the world around them. Do you see differences in the way each woman observes life? Explain. In what ways might a painter and writer observe the world differently? In what ways might it be similar? Explain.



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3. Gil Marken refers to Andrea's House on Shallow Lake series as obsessive (p. 70), while Jim Alder calls it compulsive (p. 183). Do you see a difference between an obsession, a compulsion and a rut? Explain. Which best describes Andrea's behavior? Why?
4. Why do you think Andrea is initially drawn to Loretta? How does Andrea's attraction to her change?
5. On page 80, Andrea reveals that she keeps reading Loretta's books believing that "she will find a clue to her own life." Does she? Do you think what she eventually learns about herself is different from what she originally hoped? Explain. In what ways might Andrea's motivation for reading be similar and/or different from your own reasons for reading?
6. Why do you think Andrea is drawn to both Gil *and* Charlie? Can you identify with her attraction to such different people? Why? By the last chapter, do you think Andrea is finally capable of a healthy sexual relationship? Explain.
7. In the beginning of chapter six, Andrea finds a duck frozen to a pond by its foot (pp 164-65). What is the significance of that scene to the story as a whole? Do you see any parallels between the duck's struggle and any of the other characters in the novel? Explain.
8. On page 167, Morris writes: "Andrea remembers once telling a guidance counselor that she wanted to search for her biological parents. The problem was, she told that counselor, she wasn't adopted." What does this memory reveal about Andrea? How is it part of a larger theme in the novel concerning parents and children?
9. On page 185, Loretta recalls someone saying that "An artist's revenge is her work," while, for Andrea, she views her art as a form of solace. What do these two perspectives reveal about the differences in Loretta and Andrea's approach to their art? Can an artist's work be both a source of revenge and solace? Explain. At the novel's end, why does Andrea take a photo of Loretta's house? How is it her ultimate act of revenge?
10. In Andrea's letter to the editor (pp 226-27), regarding the paper's coverage of Loretta Partlow and her book *Revenge*, she asks: "Does a writer have the right to take whatever story has been handed to her and retell it as if it were hers? Or worse, distort it in unspeakable ways?" How would you answer these questions? Are novelists the only artists susceptible to such charges?
11. Do you think Andrea eventually sends the letter she wrote to the newspaper? Do you think it is important whether she does or not? Why?
12. The novel Loretta has written is called *Revenge*, which is the same title as the book you are reading. Do you think they are one and the same?
13. The novel is rich in visual detail – the duck's foot, Shallow Lake, the details of Loretta's house. Do you feel this visual detail deepens our sense of Andrea as an artist? Are these things she would see?