

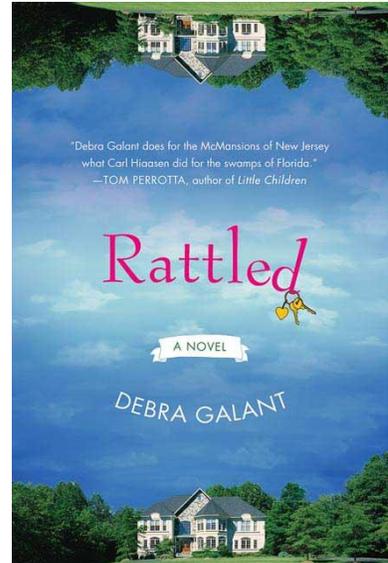
# READING GROUP GUIDE

## *Rattled*

By *Debra Galant*

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### About this Guide

The following author biography and list of questions about *Rattled* 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 *Rattled*.

### About the Book

Carl Hiaasen meets *Desperate Housewives* in this hilarious debut that describes what happens when the new suburban chic, a group of old time residents, one dishonest real estate mogul, and an endangered rattle snake face off over a new housing development

Set in the fictional subdivision of Galapagoes Estates, *Rattled* is a very funny look at what happens when soccer moms, animal rights activists, dishonest real estate developers and, of course, rattlesnakes get together and fight for ascendancy in the rapidly developing New Jersey exurbs.

Heather Peters is anxious to move to the newly minted development. All she wants there is a nice house. Well, a nice house and a nice piece of land. And of course a basement gym, a master bath with radiant heat, Jacuzzi and his-and-her toilets. She could make do without a media room if she had to. After all, the pioneers hadn't had plasma TV, and they'd survived. Heather is not your average suburban housewife—or maybe she is. Her fortuitous meeting with an endangered species of rattlesnake sets this first novel in motion. You may find yourself feeling sorry for the snake.



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## About the Author

**Debra Galant** is the author of *Fear and Yoga in New Jersey*. She is also the creator of the popular blog Baristanet.com. She lives in Glen Ridge, New Jersey.

## Discussion Questions

1. Most people describe Heather as vain and domineering, but she sees herself as just looking out for her family's interests. What was your reaction to Heather? Do you recognize her qualities in people you know, or in yourself? How do you feel about a main character whose qualities are so unattractive?
2. In *Rattled*, newcomers to the countryside threaten the rural lifestyle of characters like Harlan White, the chicken farmer and handyman. Do similar tensions exist where you live? Do you find yourself rooting for Harlan?
3. Heather is described by some characters as living in a McMansion. McMansions have become a flashpoint in culture wars about home, community, and aesthetics. How does *Rattled* contribute to this debate?
4. One of themes of the book is the contrast between the two basic creation motifs—Darwinism and the Garden of Eden. Heather lives in Galapagos Estates, but as in Eden, it's the sudden appearance of a snake that gets her ejected. How do you think these themes contribute to the novel?
5. Pine Hills Elementary School is a stewpot of anxieties, especially for Connor. Discuss Connor's difficulties finding his place in the cafeteria and on the playground. What do you think about his "worry doctor"? How might his parents contribute to his maladjustment? Why is Halloween such a trial for him?
6. The mothers at the school have their own pecking order, and Heather disregards this invisible hierarchy at her peril. Her attempt to pick Connor's teacher similarly backfires. Do you see similar dramas playing out in schoolyards today?
7. The Friends of the Fauna are frustrated by the fact that timber rattlesnakes are not a "cute" enough species to garner public sympathy. How do you feel about the rights of reptiles?
8. Harlan and Agnes are both old-timers in the New Jersey countryside, and although they both have contempt for Heather, that doesn't make them friends. Discuss what these characters represent and how their relationship changes over the course of the novel.
9. Do you think that Heather becomes a better mother at the end of the book? Is her change believable? Why do you think Heather is shown on a camping trip in the last chapter?

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