

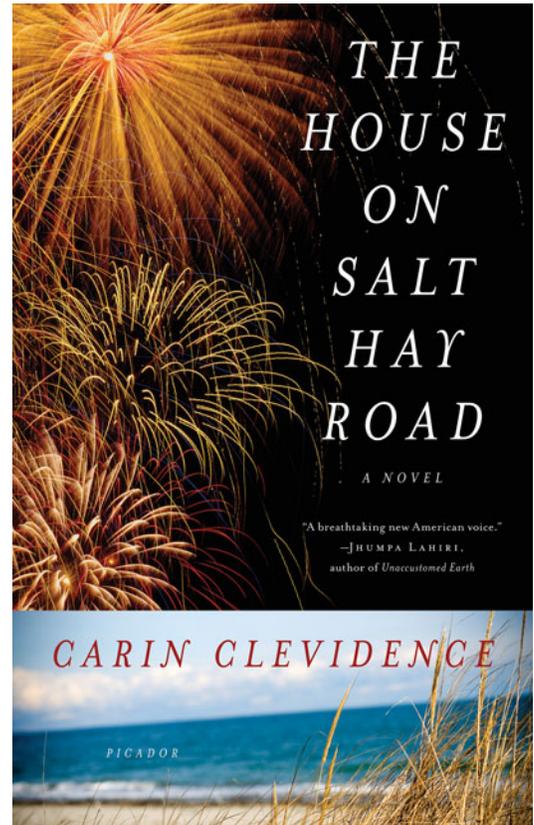
READING GROUP GUIDE

The House on Salt Hay Road

A Novel

by Carin Clevidence

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About this Guide

The following author biography and list of questions about *The House on Salt Hay Road* 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 *The House on Salt Hay Road*.

About the Book

Long Island, 1938. A fireworks factory explodes in a quiet coastal town. In the house on Salt Hay Road, Clay Poole is thrilled by the hole it's blown in everyday life. His older sister, Nancy,

is more interested in the striking stranger who appears, dusted with ashes, in the explosion's aftermath. The Pooles—taken in as orphans by their mother's family—can't yet know how the bonds of their makeshift household will be tested and frayed. A vivid and emotionally resonant debut, *The House on Salt Hay Road* captures the golden light of a vanished time, and the hold that home has on us long after we leave it.

About the Author

Carin Clevidence has won a Rona Jaffe Foundation Writer's Award and received a fellowship from the Provincetown Fine Arts Work Center. Her stories have been published in a number of journals. *The House on Salt Hay Road* is her first novel.

Discussion Questions

1. *The House on Salt Hay Road* begins with a fireworks factory explosion. How does this opening introduce us to the characters of the novel? To the setting? What echoes of this explosion does the reader encounter later in the novel?
2. Why does Nancy want to leave Fire Neck? Why does Clayton want to stay? In what ways do each of the characters' different relationships with the landscape define who they are?
3. Repetition is sometimes used as a literary device. Do any repetitions or parallel structures within the text stand out to you? What purpose do they serve?
4. Roy feels partly responsible for his niece and nephew's financial situation. In what other ways do the characters in this book feel they have failed each other? What does this suggest about them, individually? How does this increase our understanding of who they are?
5. Clayton and Nancy's mother, Helen, has died before the novel opens. What do we learn about her from the other characters?
6. Early in the book, Roy offers to drown a bag of cats for Judith Purlowe, and, toward the end of the book, Scudder tries to imagine God, for the sake of his daughter Mavis. In what other odd ways do the characters convey their affection for each other? What do you make of their attempts? Are they successful? To what degree?
7. How does the landscape in this book affect the lives of these characters? How does the fragility of the landscape, and its capacity for change, echo the changes faced by the people within it? How much do these characters change over the course of the book?

8. How does the author balance the different points of view of the cast of characters? Was there a character you identified with, or one who particularly held your interest? What would the book have been like had it been limited to a single point of view?
9. Discuss the significance of the title, and of the house itself. What does it represent for the different people within it?
10. Discuss the ways that themes of guilt and forgiveness recur in the book. Is Mavis responsible for the death of Captain Kelley? Is Clayton responsible for the death of his uncle? How does guilt affect the actions of the characters? Is forgiveness possible for them? Is self-forgiveness?
11. This novel is set primarily in the 1930s. Discuss the ways the characters are defined by their times. In what ways would the book be different had it been set at another point in history?
12. One of the final images in the book is the release of the exotic birds at Washington Lodge after Washington's death. How is the birds' release perceived by Clayton? By Nancy and Robert? What is the significance of the image itself?



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