

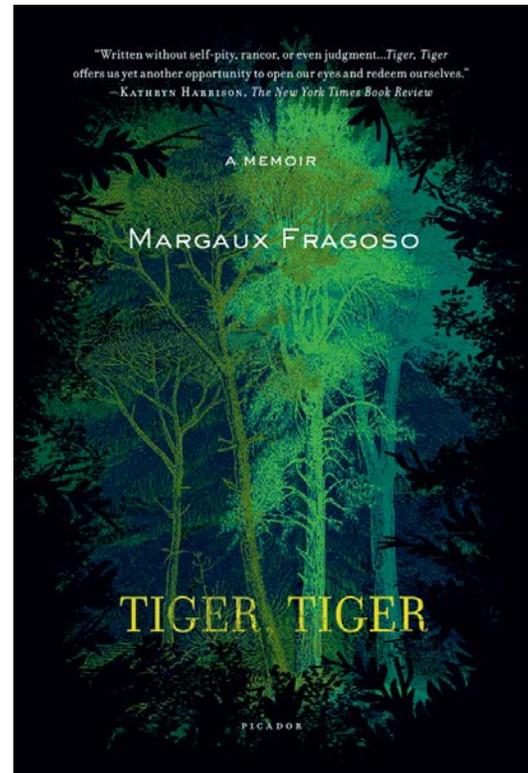
# READING GROUP GUIDE

## *Tiger, Tiger*

### *A Memoir*

by Margaux Fragoso

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### About this Guide

The following author biography and list of questions about *Tiger, Tiger* 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 *Tiger, Tiger*.

### About the Book

One summer day, Margaux Fragoso meets Peter Curran at the neighborhood swimming pool, and they begin to play. She is seven; he is fifty-one. When Peter invites her and her mother to his house, the little girl finds a child's paradise of exotic pets and an elaborate backyard garden. Her mother, beset by mental illness and overwhelmed by caring for Margaux, is grateful for the attention Peter lavishes on her, and he creates an imaginative universe for her, much as Lewis Carroll did for his real-life Alice.

In time, he insidiously takes on the role of Margaux's playmate, father, and lover. Charming and manipulative, Peter burrows into every aspect of Margaux's life and transforms her from a child fizzing with imagination and affection into a brainwashed young woman on the verge of suicide. But when she is twenty-two, it is Peter—ill, and wracked with guilt—who kills himself, at the age of sixty-six.

Told with lyricism, depth, and mesmerizing clarity, *Tiger, Tiger* vividly illustrates the healing power of memory and disclosure. This extraordinary memoir is an unprecedented glimpse into the psyche of a young girl in free fall and conveys to readers—including parents and survivors of abuse—just how completely a pedophile enchants his victim and binds her to him.

## About the Author

**Margaux Fragoso** recently completed a Ph.D. in English and creative writing at Binghamton University. Her short stories and poems have appeared in *The Literary Review* and *Barrow Street*, among other literary journals.

## Discussion Questions

1. Margaux Fragoso loved storytelling and role playing as a child, and Peter exploited these creative traits. How did her gift for narrative ultimately become part of her healing? How can the vividly written scenes of her memoir help others face the truth with clarity and courage?
2. As the ones who stayed home while others provided for them, what common ground did Margaux's mother and Peter share? What does Margaux's story tell us about the way children are sometimes forced to take on a care giving role?
3. Margaux describes the intense exhilaration of being with Peter, a high that nothing else could match. When has someone tried to blur your concepts of joy and harm, making you vulnerable to this sense of exhilaration?
4. Peter's many animals were part of the allure for Margaux. How did they reflect his relationship to her, marked by captivity? Did the sight of his caged, domesticated animals encourage her to fantasize about being a wild animal?
5. How did your impressions of Poppa shift throughout the memoir? Did you sympathize with him, or did you blame him for making his wife and daughter long to escape?
6. How did *Tiger, Tiger* change the way you think of your own childhood? When you were a child, were there any adults you could turn to no matter what, or were you on your own?
7. One of the most haunting aspects of Margaux's story is that many adults came close to uncovering the truth; even after Peter abused his daughters, he escaped scrutiny and was still able to become a foster father. And even after serving a jail sentence because of accusations made by

his foster child, he was able to continue his relationship with Margaux. How did Peter keep Margaux's mother and Inès fooled? Did the social worker unwittingly undermine her case against Peter, or did he and Margaux simply outsmart her? After reading *Tiger, Tiger*, what do you think is the best way to be vigilant without wrongly accusing members of your community?

8. Margaux reveals the barter system Peter established, though in fact their arrangement cost her dearly. How did Peter "compensate" Margaux? Margaux liked to fantasize about being a fierce adult woman, savoring her secret "marriage" to Peter; he fantasized about precisely the opposite image of her. Beyond the realm of sex, how did they gratify each other? What kept Peter from rejecting Margaux even as she grew into her twenties?

9. Though Peter damaged all aspects of Margaux's young life, from her ability to form supportive friendships to her faith in unconditional love, she proved repeatedly to be a survivor, even after attempting suicide. Where did this kernel of strength come from? What nurtures strength in even the most wounded among us?

10. How does Peter's occupation as a locksmith serve as a metaphor for his pedophilia? What gave him the tools to unlock so many vulnerable people, gaining their trust? Do you think Margaux could ever have "changed the locks" on her psyche if Peter had not committed suicide?

11. What can we learn from Peter's memories of being a victim of abuse throughout his childhood? What would it take to transform society's approach to this addiction, putting faith in rehabilitation?

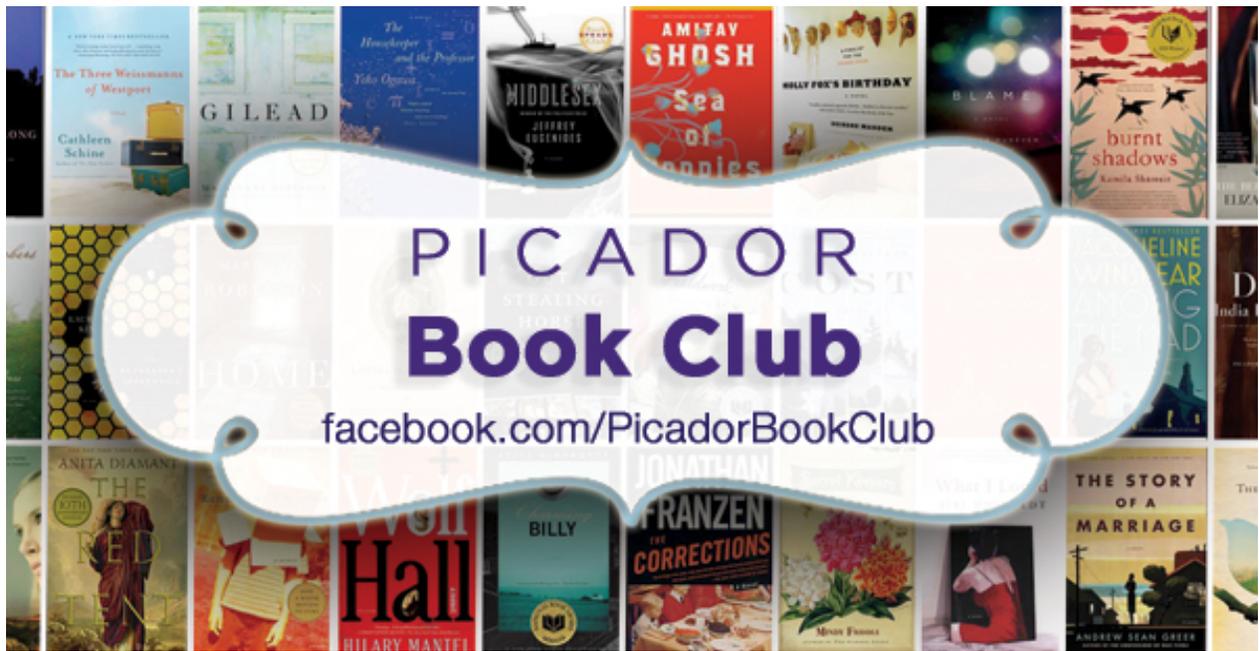
12. Peter insisted that he did not sexually abuse Ricky. How did you react to this? Regardless of those claims, what harm did Miguel and Ricky experience in Peter's household?

13. What did Margaux's parents teach her about the roles of men and women? Were any of their lessons accurate? Who were your most powerful role models? Did they teach you the truth about the world?

14. How does Margaux's voice shift in the epilogue, in which she is clear-eyed about the utter vulnerability of a child and the complete blame that belongs to an adult abuser? While reading the memoir, did you ever find yourself vulnerable to Peter's logic?

15. Now the mother of a little girl and the bearer of a PhD, Margaux Fragoso is living proof of the hope and healing that can emerge even after years of abuse. She credits her recovery to writing and therapy, including new techniques for trauma survivors. Do you know of someone who could benefit from these therapies? If so, how could you begin a conversation to put them on the road to recovery?

Reading group guide written by Amy Clements / Amy Root's Wordshop, Inc



Twitter.com/PicadorUSA • readinggroupguides@picadorusa.com • 646.307.5259

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