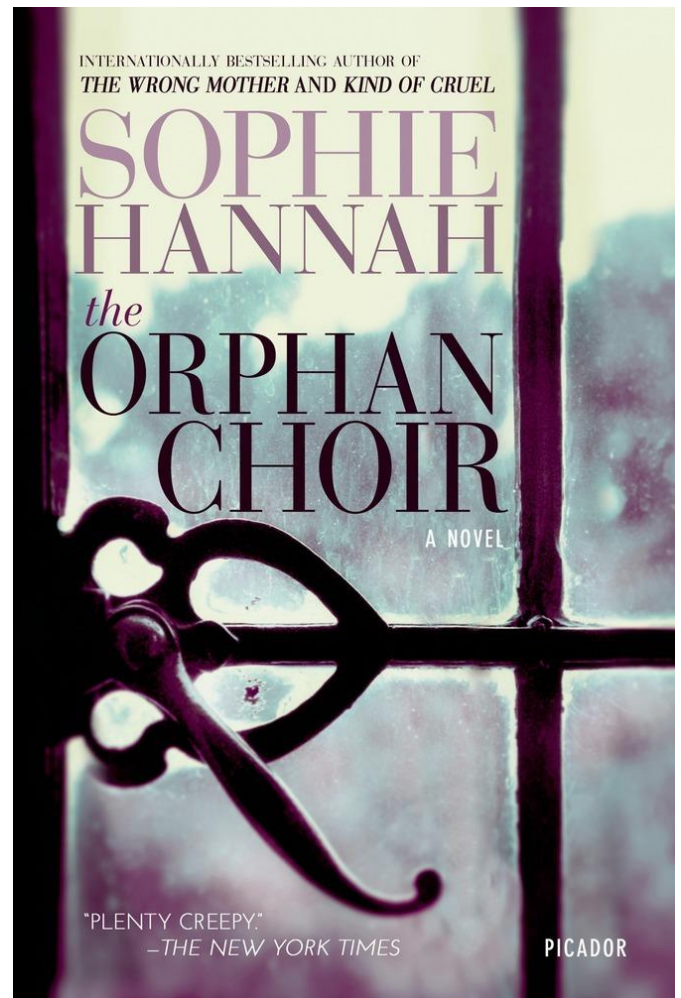


Reading Group Gold

The Orphan Choir

by Sophie Hannah

1. How much do you empathize with Louise in her argument with Mr. Fahrenheit? Is she a sympathetic character during any portion of the novel?
2. Louise is admittedly guilty of small lies in her interactions with Stuart, justifying them with the explanation that “my life flows more easily when I tell him as little as possible.” Why does she indulge this habit? Do you identify with her statement?
3. Louise acknowledges that Stuart is not a bad husband, but she is continually frustrated by him. What do you make of her wish that she could have two husbands, like the other choir mother Donna?
4. Is Stuart patient with Louise? Does he respond to her requests and fears in an appropriate way?
5. What does Louise’s noise diary reveal about her character? What is its effect on her credibility as a narrator?
6. Louise’s intuition becomes another character and entity unto itself: “It’s as if I’m receiving instructions from an authority that has nothing to do with me and isn’t even part of me — one I trust absolutely. I know what I need to do and that’s enough.” In which ways are Louise’s intuitions helpful, if any, and in which ways is she led astray?
7. Why does Louise become obsessed with the small amount marijuana she stole from Mr. Fahrenheit? Why is she unable to take action, either to consume the drugs or to dispose of them?
8. What about the idea of occupying two separate worlds is so comforting to Louise?
9. Louise’s allusions to acts of violence — that she may kill Mr. Fahrenheit, that he may kill her, that Stuart and Dr. Freeman have a hit on her, that she may poison Stuart to get out of going to the Christmas service — seem somewhat benign at first but then start to foreshadow a tragic end. Which character did you think was most capable of actually inflicting violence before the story’s conclusion?
10. What do you think is signified by the name of the house, “The Boundary”?



11. Were you surprised by Louise's response to her premonition of what happened to Joseph and Ed?
12. Does Louise ultimately put her own needs ahead of Joseph's well-being? Does the conclusion represent Louise's inner voice succeeding in its murky mission — to allow mother and son to escape everything, together?

About the Author

Sophie Hannah is an internationally bestselling author of psychological thrillers, poetry, and short fiction. Her work has been published in twenty-four countries, and her latest novel, *Kind of Cruel*, was shortlisted for the National Book Awards Crime Novel of the Year in 2012. Her poetry has been shortlisted for the T. S. Eliot Award, and is taught in schools throughout the United Kingdom. She lives with her husband and children in Cambridge.



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Reading group guide written by Heather Kirkpatrick