Meet Me at the Museum
Reading Group Guide

Welcome to the Reading Group Guide for *Meet Me at the Museum*. Please note: In order to provide reading groups with the most informed and thought-provoking questions possible, it is necessary to reveal important aspects of the plot of this novel—as well as the ending. If you have not finished reading *Meet Me at the Museum*, we respectfully suggest that you may want to wait before reviewing this guide.

1. *Meet Me at the Museum* is an epistolary novel, meaning it is written entirely in letters. How is reading an epistolary novel different than reading more traditional first-person narration? What is lost and gained in this form?

2. Is there anyone in your life with whom you regularly correspond, rather than meeting in person or talking on the phone? Discuss the differences between those types of interactions.

3. In her first letter, Tina writes, “I am writing to you to see if you can help me make sense of some of the thoughts that occur to me. Or maybe I am hoping that just writing will make sense of them.” Later, she tells Anders, “I have become clearer to myself as I made myself clear to you.” How does writing to one another change the way the characters approach their lives and identities?

4. Tina and her best friend, Bella, always planned to go to Denmark together to visit the Tollund Man, but they never made it. Is there something you’ve always meant to do yet keep putting off? What has stopped you?

5. The Tollund Man provides the initial reason for Tina and Anders’ correspondence, and he frequently comes up in their letters. What does he represent for Tina? For Anders?

6. Anders tells Tina about a debate he has at work about making up names for the bog people in the museum (i.e., naming the Tollund Man “Knut”): “To give them names, said the marketing people, would make them seem more human. But, I said (and not only me, fortunately), to give them names would make them only human, rob them of their mystery.” What do you think he means? Do you agree? Have you had a particularly memorable, powerful experience at a natural history or archaeology museum?

7. Anders argues: “Superstition is such a scornful word, applied by rational people to anything that appears not to be a rational belief, not seeing there is beauty and
meaning and purpose in putting aside everything that can be explained and imagining something quite miraculous in, for example, an unfurling fern frond.” Do you agree? Discuss the importance of superstition, myth, and ritual in this novel. How does the natural world (i.e., a fern) play into that?

8. Tina describes a main difference between her lifestyle and Anders’ as “mine in the midst of the landscape and change, yours caught up with objects fixed by time.” How does that difference affect their outlooks? Which is more similar to your own lifestyle?

9. Tina tells Anders: “Whenever I pick raspberries, I go as carefully as possible down the row, looking for every ripe fruit. But however careful I am, when I turn round to go back the other way, I find fruit I had not seen approaching the plants from the opposite direction. Another life, I thought, might be like a second pass down the row of raspberry canes; there would be good things I had not come across in my first life, but I suspect I would find much of the fruit was already in my basket.” What does she mean? How does this analogy resonate throughout the novel? What are the metaphorical raspberries in your own life that you would like to pick on a second pass?

10. Anders and Tina often discuss their adult children. Anders writes: “I am ashamed to say I don’t remember ever having understood it was my job to make my children happy.” Tina agrees, and takes it further: “We should look inside ourselves for fulfillment. It is not fair to burden children or grandchildren with the obligation to make us whole. Our obligation to them is to make them safe and provide them with an education.” Do you agree with this approach to parenting? Why or why not?

11. We aren’t told how old Anders and Tina are, but they are both grandparents. Anders tells Tina: “Our letters have meant so much to us because we have both arrived at the same point in our lives. More behind us than ahead of us. Paths chosen that define us. Enough time left to change.” How does age affect the way these characters approach their relationship? How would their story differ if they were in their twenties, for instance? Discuss the ways in which Anders and Tina change over the course of the novel.

12. Discuss Anders and Tina’s first marriages. Why do they stay with their spouses, when Birgitt was so difficult to live with and Edward has so little in common with Tina? Was staying the right thing to do?

13. Do you think there is any similarity between Tina’s friendship with Anders and her husband Edward’s affair with Daphne Trigg? Why or why not? Did you feel any sympathy for Edward or Daphne?

14. The ending of the novel is left ambiguous: we never see Tina and Anders actually meet. Do you believe they will? What do you imagine their lives looking like in a year? In five years?