

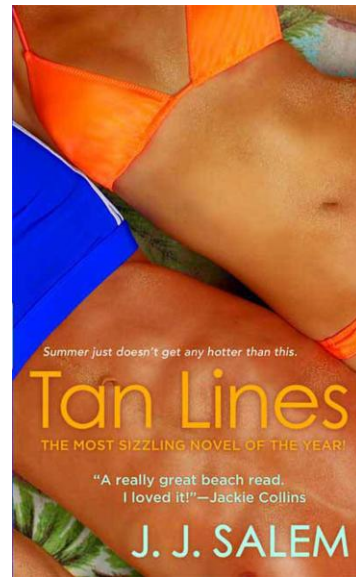
READING GROUP GUIDE

Tan Lines

By J.J. Salem

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About this Guide

The following author biography and list of questions about *Tan Lines* 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 *Tan Lines*.

About the Book

During one unforgettable season at a Hamptons summer share, three women's journeys unfold—thrill by thrill and shock by shock, in this addictive story about the illusions of glamour, the dark side of success and the elusiveness of love.

Liza Pike--She's the It Girl for topical feminist spin--beautiful, successful, and ferociously fearless. But as the media props her up to be the millennium's new Gloria Steinem, she's falling into all the old traps she cautions other women to avoid...

Kellyanne Downey--She's been holding out for her big break as an actress while enduring a series of dead end jobs and playing mistress to a rich developer. But now she's wondering why the phenomenal looks that were supposed to take her all the way are leading her to the edge of nowhere...

Billie Shelton--She's the indie-rock bitch goddess with an appetite for self-destruction. Men are candy, drugs are fuel, girlfriends are disposable commodities, and in her world, looking out for number one is the only way to live...

Tan Lines portrays the passions, triumphs, and heartbreaks of modern women with a sly intelligence and wickedly sharp prose that will hook you to the last page.



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About the Author

J.J. Salem is a *USA Today* bestselling author whose work has been published in several languages. He lives in the Southeast.

Discussion Questions

- 1) A major theme in *Tan Lines* is the dichotomy of public faces/private selves. Discuss this in relation to the characters, particularly Billie, Liza, Kellyanne, March, and Justin.
- 2) Billie's first album, *Dick Magnet*, was a collection of sexually charged anti-love songs that spoke to twenty-something men and women of her generation, many of them college-aged. Can you name a particular song or album that had significant impact on you during your college years?
- 3) Consider Liza's decision to go against type and marry Justin in the aftermath of 9/11. During this period, numbers of high-achieving New York women sought out men who were physically strong and stereotyped protectors but not necessarily intellectual and economic equals. Do you understand that impulse? And do you think those kind of pairings can last long-term?
- 4) How did you feel about Kellyanne's role as the proverbial kept woman? When you discovered what had happened to her in Hollywood, did this knowledge alter your feelings?
- 5) During her first dinner with Harrison, Liza shares details about her second book, *Stupid Girls*, and she remarks that the most personal things are almost always universal. Do you agree with that sentiment? And what choices in your own life do you consider stupid today and secretly wish you could do over?
- 6) Although Liza fights the good fight, she still readily admits that feminism no longer exists as an organized social movement. Instead, it is now played out within personal and professional relationships. Do you consider yourself a feminist? Why or why not?
- 7) There are key scenes in *Tan Lines* showcasing Liza and March in fierce debate about sexist media depictions of women in horror films, reality television, etc. Do you agree with her positions? Why or why not?
- 8) Just when Billie appears to be getting on the right track, she ultimately yields to her inner demons and derails once again. Do you think self-destruction can be an addiction all its own?



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9) The friendship bond among Liza, Kellyanne, and Billie is fraught with ambivalence, malignant envy, and superior attitudes—a stark contrast to the emotional anchor model that made the Sex and the City clique such a cultural touchstone. In today’s society, do you find it difficult to maintain a friendship circle that goes as deep and as involving as the one enjoyed by those iconic characters from the HBO series and movie?

10) How do you feel about Kellyanne’s decision to go see Walter in secret as a way to protect Tucker’s finances from medical debt? Even if Tucker never discovers this betrayal, do you think it will imperil the future of their relationship?

11) Do you feel like Liza and Kellyanne did enough to try to rescue Billie from her self-destructive path? Faced with the same circumstances, would you have done anything differently?

12) Among Billie, Liza, and Kellyanne, which character grows the most during the course of *Tan Lines*? And in what way?

13) At the end of *Tan Lines*, Billie remains in a downward spiral on both personal and professional fronts. What do you think her life will be like in ten years?

14) Discuss the fate of the murdered character at the end of *Tan Lines*. Were you shocked by the incident? How do you feel the man she left behind will cope with the loss and the circumstances that were directly linked to him?

15) This is the female version of the often-asked male fantasy Ginger or Mary Ann question: March or Tucker?

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