

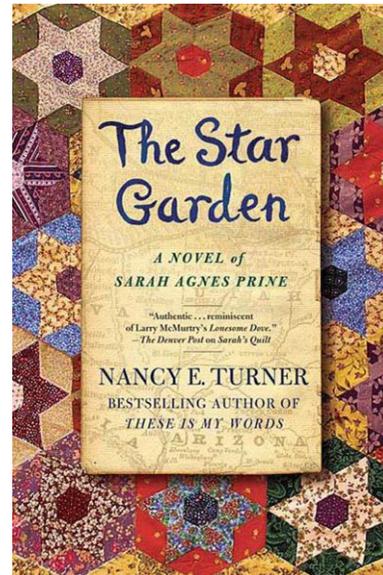
READING GROUP GUIDE

The Star Garden

By Nancy E. Turner

ISBN 13: 978-1-4299-4357-4

ISBN 10: 1-4299-4357-2



About this Guide

The following author biography and list of questions about *The Star Garden* 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 Star Garden*.

About the Book

From the bestselling author of *These Is My Words* comes this exhilarating follow-up to the beloved *Sarah's Quilt*. In the latest diary entries of pioneer woman Sarah Agnes Prine, Nancy E. Turner continues Sarah's extraordinary story as she struggles to make a home in the Arizona Territory.

It is winter 1906, and nearing bankruptcy after surviving drought, storms, and the rustling of her cattle, Sarah remains a stalwart pillar to her extended family. Then a stagecoach accident puts in her path three strangers who will change her life.

In sickness and in health, neighbor Udell Hanna remains a trusted friend, pressing for Sarah to marry. When he reveals a plan to grant Sarah her dearest wish, she is overwhelmed with passion and excitement. She soon discovers, however, that there is more to a formal education than she bargained for.

Behind the scenes, Sarah's old friend Maldonado has struck a deal with the very men who will become linchpins of the Mexican Revolution. Maldonado plots to coerce Sarah into partnership, but when she refuses, he devises a murderous plan to gain her land for building a railroad straight to Mexico. When Sarah's son Charlie unexpectedly returns from town with a new bride, the plot turns into an all-out range war between the two families.



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Finally putting an end to Udell's constant kindnesses, Sarah describes herself as "an iron-boned woman." She wants more than to be merely a comfortable fill-in for his dead wife. It is only through a chance encounter that she discovers his true feelings, and only then can she believe that a selfless love has at last reached out to her. . .

About the Author

Nancy E. Turner was born in Dallas, Texas, and currently lives with her husband, John, in Tucson, Arizona. She started college when her children were grown and completed a bachelor's degree in fine arts at the University of Arizona. *The Star Garden* is her third novel in the Sarah Agnes Prine series, which is based on family stories about Nancy's own great-grandmother; previous titles include *Sarah's Quilt* and the bestselling *These Is My Words*.

Discussion Questions

- 1.) Why does Sarah feel so responsible for all the people in her life, even Rudolfo Maldonado? What changes with each one?
- 2.) In what ways does finally achieving her dream of formal education change who Sarah is?
- 3.) Why did Savannah plant the flower bulbs?
- 4.) What did Sarah really learn from her classes?
- 5.) Why did Sarah feel as if she "disappeared into her own shoes" when going through Udell's house?
- 6.) Discuss the evolution and meaning of Sarah's freshman English essay "What I Want."
- 7.) In what ways does the symbolism of gift giving run through the novel?
- 8.) How do Sarah's struggles relate to modern life?
- 9.) Throughout the novel, illness sweeps through the town of Tucson in waves. Children died of dysentery, Gilbert's gunshot wound was treated with sulfur and vanilla. Can you picture a world without modern medicine, vaccines, and antibiotics?
- 10.) What role does Blessing play in the novel?
- 11.) What do you sense when Sarah, grieving over Blessing, wishes for Udell's coat?



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12.) Within a year of the end of the story, the men around Rudolfo's Christmas dinner table will put in motion a plot to overthrow the hold of Porfirio Díaz on the Mexican government, a war that will last 20 years. Madera is the first to be assassinated. How does the looming danger that Sarah knows but can't define affect the tension of the idyllic last scene?

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