



CHRISTINE LEMMON

READING GROUP GUIDE

Portion of the Sea Guide

1. Marlana believes girls should be challenged to look ahead and imagine who it is they want to become and what sort of life they'd like for themselves. She says most girls don't give this any thought until they're grown up and are disliking their lives. Do you agree? She also said if women could look back to when they were younger and recall the things they loved to do, they might get ideas for change. Is this true?

2. Society & Roles. A va and Lydia were from two different historical periods—A va, the late 1800s and Lydia, the fifties—yet they had much in common and would probably be friends had they the chance. What similar struggles did they both face with regard to society's expectation of women? What pressures did A va get from her mother? What about Lydia from her father, as well as her civics teacher? Are men still that way today? Tootie tells A va's mother that outspokenness will serve A va well, that girls are trained to be perfect little ladies and then enter the real world and don't know how to stand up for themselves or be rude to a rude person or strong in a bad situation. Do you agree? How did each woman rebel?

3. Marlana tells the young Lydia that she believes in her and one day she will become a success. How can such words influence a girl's life?

4. Geography & Outlook On Life. How does living in Kentucky in the winter affect A va's internal weather? How does moving to Sanibel affect A va's spirits? How can geography influence people's moods, dispositions, and outlooks?

5. Wisdom. A va wants her own wisdom to pick up where her grandmother's left off, but senility has grown roots around Dahlia's wisdom, strangling it. And her mother always shuts the grandmother up just as she's about to say something wise. Is wisdom something women admire and want for themselves today? Is it something younger women can possess, or is wisdom something that belongs to older women only? What use does wisdom have? Is it recognized and appreciated within families? How does one attain wisdom?

6. Tootie tells A va to keep reading and writing because those things can change a girl's world. A va wants a new world for herself. How does the world that A va wants compare to that which Lydia wants? What sort of world do women want for themselves today?

7. The dreams a woman has for her life. A va lies in bed thinking maybe there's an oasis of hidden beauty deep within her own self, waiting to be discovered. She then tells her grandmother that she one day wants to be a writer. Dahlia tells her: You sound like your mother. She said that once, too. She also said she wanted to be a ballerina. Look at her now. She married your father and that was the end of that. But A va's ambitions are gusty strong and they're not going to be blown over by negative words. How can every day life get in the way of accomplishing our dreams? What does A va do right after her grandmother discourages her?

8. Joy. Dahlia believes joy is an abundant and limitless natural resource within every woman and that whenever it feels scarce, all she must do is tap into it. A va believes joy is found outdoors and she hopes to collect some as she leaves behind her chores for the day and voyages out alone. Did she find any? Where do you believe joy is found?

9. The glistening steps a woman takes for herself. The novel makes frequent references to glistening water and glistening pathways. What do these glistening pathways represent in relation to the character's steps they must take to live their own lives? What sorts of glistening steps have you taken, or are you thinking of taking for yourself?

10. A Strong Woman. If you asked Lydia what it meant to be a strong woman, what do you think she'd say? Does Lydia take the idea of being a strong woman too far when she wouldn't let Ethan know of her financial struggles? Is asking a man or God for help a sign of weakness? Is surrendering the stronger thing to do?

11. Heartache. According to Ava, what happens when a woman loses her heart? What happened to Lydia when she lost her heart?

12. Parallel Lives. How does Lydia's life parallel Ava's? How did you respond to reading the parallel lives? Did you at times get confused between the two characters? Did you like the overlap?

13. Legacies. What can mothers pass on to their children? Or women pass on to the next generation?

14. Rowing out to your own portion of the sea. What do you think it means for a woman to pick up her paddles and row out to her very own portion of the sea?