

discussion questions

Still Waters

- ❖ A major theme in the story is Cora Anne's inability to forgive herself for causing Patrick's drowning. Do you think this a common occurrence—that we may allow others to forgive our transgressions but we continue to hurt ourselves?
- ❖ For Cora Anne, this lack of forgiveness manifests in her desire to be in control. How does this contrast with other characters like Annie, Grace, or Lou? How does each woman handle the unplanned avenues of her life?
- ❖ Edisto is a special place for this family (and for my own real life family). Do you have a special place? Where and why?
- ❖ Tennessee reminds Cora Anne about when they were kids and he taught her to ride the waves. He says, "You have to let the wave do the work." What do you think this really means?
- ❖ Another time, Tennessee remarks, "Sometimes a storm's what we need to clear out the junk, so we can better deal with what's left standing." This book released—ironically—in the midst of the catastrophic 2017 hurricane season. Edisto Island was among the devastation. What do you think? Do we need a storm—literally or figuratively—every now and then?
- ❖ Often, food is significant to any family gathering. Do you think the dishes mentioned in the story signify more than sustenance?
- ❖ While at Botany Bay, Cora Anne references an Edisto superstition: "If one washed in the ebbing tide, your sins were carried out as far and wide as the sea." What do you think of this metaphor—and what does it tell you about the culture of this place?
- ❖ Another superstition most people do not know is the "haint blue" ceilings on porches and homes in the Lowcountry. Were you familiar with this cultural quirk? What do you think of it?
- ❖ Cora Anne is not the only person harboring a secret in this story. What do you think about Tennessee and Annie's secrets? Do you think they were right to not tell her immediately?
- ❖ Do you know family relationships that have undergone hard times? Do you sympathize with Cora Anne, as the daughter who felt overlooked, or with Lou, as the mother who felt overwhelmed?
- ❖ Whose story feels unfinished? Which characters would you like to learn more about?
- ❖ As a book, *Still Waters*, falls into several genre categories: romance, women's fiction, and southern fiction. Do you choose books based on genre? How would you categorize this story?

