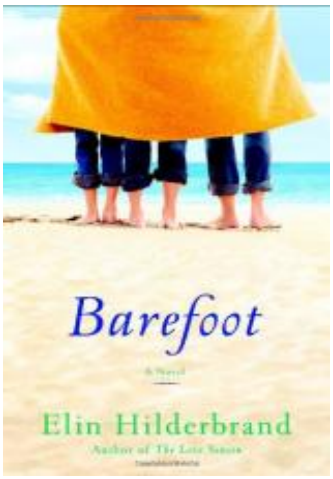
Barefoot

by Elin Hilderbrand



About the Book

It's summer on Nantucket, and as the season begins, three women arrive at the local airport, observed by Josh, a local boy, home from college. Burdened with small children, unwieldy straw hats, and some obvious emotional issues, the women --- two sisters and one friend --- make their way to the sisters' tiny cottage, inherited from an aunt.

They're all trying to escape from something: Melanie, after seven failed in-vitro attempts, discovered her husband's infidelity and then her own pregnancy; Brenda embarked on a passionate affair with an older student that got her fired from her prestigious job as a professor in New York; and her sister Vickie, mother to two small boys, has been diagnosed with cancer. Soon Josh is part of the chaotic household, acting as babysitter, confidant, and, eventually, something more, while the women confront their pasts and map out their futures.

Discussion Guide

1. Barefoot shifts in perspective between four primary characters: Brenda, Vicki, Melanie and Josh. Which character made the strongest first impression on you? Did you find that your favorite character shifted as the novel progressed?

2. The island of Nantucket plays a distinct and significant role in Elin Hilderbrand's novels. In Barefoot, how does Brenda, Vicki, Melanie's summer escape to the island allow them to more fully realize themselves?

3. Discuss the character of Josh's ex-girlfriend, Didi, in the novel. Ultimately, in what ways does she affect Josh's life and his outlook?

4. Initially Brenda resents Melanie's presence in their small 'Sconset cottage, in part due to Vicki's motivation to include her; as Brenda observes, "But it was also the case that Brenda's company alone had never been enough for Vicki." (pg. 4) How does Melanie's inclusion affect the group dynamic? How does it impact Brenda's relationship with her sister?

5. Josh encounters the advice "Be careful" several times throughout the novel. To what relationships do you think this warning most aptly applies in Barefoot? To what relationships does caution have no bearing?

6. Given that John Walsh is one year older than Brenda, do you feel that Champion University's response to their relationship is justified? Do you think the University's decision is ultimately productive for Brenda?

7. Discuss the role of fatherhood in the novel. Which fathe --- Tom Flynn, Peter Patchen, or Ted Stowe --- did you ultimately most admire? What does Josh learn about fatherhood by the summer's end?

8. Discuss Josh's employment as a babysitter and his role in Blaine and Porter's life. Why do you think Josh is so adept at taking care of Vicki's boys?

9. Throughout the novel, Vicki keeps a mental list entitled "Things That No Longer Matter." By the end of the novel, what have Brenda, Vicki and Melanie found matters most to each of them?

10. What does the future hold for Brenda, Vicki and Melanie after the novel's conclusion? How will the birth of Amber affect Melanie and Peter's relationship? How will Vickie cope with her recovery? Can Brenda undertake a new career? Finally, how influential will this summer on Nantucket prove to be in each of their lives?

Author Bio

Elin Hilderbrand is the beloved, bestselling author of over 30 novels, most based on Nantucket, an island 30 miles off the coast of Massachusetts, earning her the title ?Queen of the Beach Reads.? Elin grew up outside of Philadelphia, PA and is a graduate of the Johns Hopkins University and the University of Iowa Writers? Workshop.

Elin has lived year-round on Nantucket for more than 30 years. She enjoys reading and traveling, going to the beach and barre class, and cooking for her four adult children and many friends. She is also a grateful 10-year breast cancer survivor.

Elin?s 2018 *New York Times* bestselling novel, THE PERFECT COUPLE, was adapted by Netflix into a six-episode limited series starring Nicole Kidman and Liev Schrieber that set viewership and download records. Peacock?s 2026 adaptation of THE FIVE-STAR WEEKEND, starring Jennifer Garner, became their most-watched scripted series ever, and will receive a second season. Elin?s latest book, THE THOROUGHBREDS, concludes her two-book Academy series, set at a New England boarding school, and co-authored with her daughter, Shelby Cunningham.

She is also the co-host of the hit literary podcast ?Books, Beach, & Beyond? with the creator of Tim Talks Books, Tim Ehrenberg.

Critical Praise

"A wonderfully poignant behind-the-scenes journey into the world of high-end restaurants, island life, and the inner workings of the human heart. A great summer story."

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