ReadingGroupGuides
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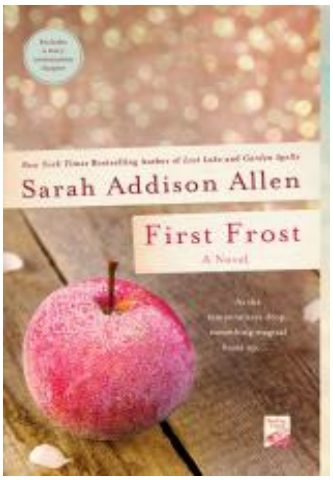
First Frost

by Sarah Addison Allen



About the Book

It's October in Bascom, North Carolina, and autumn will not go quietly. As temperatures drop and leaves begin to turn, the Waverley women are made restless by the whims of their mischievous apple tree...and all the magic that swirls around it. But this year, first frost has much more in store.

Claire Waverley has started a successful new venture, Waverley?s Candies. Though her handcrafted confections --- rose to recall lost love, lavender to promote happiness and lemon verbena to soothe throats and minds --- are singularly effective, the business of selling them is costing her the everyday joys of her family, and her belief in her own precious gifts.

Sydney Waverley, too, is losing her balance. With each passing day she longs more for a baby --- a namesake for her wonderful Henry. Yet the longer she tries, the more her desire becomes an unquenchable thirst, stealing the pleasure out of the life she already has.
Sydney?s daughter, Bay, has lost her heart to the boy she knows it belongs to?if only he could see it, too. But how can he, when he is so far outside her grasp that he appears to her as little more than a puff of smoke?

When a mysterious stranger shows up and challenges the very heart of their family, each of them must make choices they have never confronted before. And through it all, the Waverley sisters must search for a way to hold their family together through their troublesome season of change, waiting for that extraordinary event that is FIRST FROST.

Lose yourself in Sarah Addison Allen's enchanting world and fall for her charmed characters in this captivating story that proves that a happily-ever-after is never the real ending to a story. It?s where the real story begins.

Discussion Guide

1. Lush descriptions that involve all the senses, a trademark of Sarah Addison Allen?s writing, fill this novel. What are some of your favorite descriptions found in FIRST FROST? How do these descriptions help ground the world of FIRST FROST in reality, and at the same time create a sense of magic?

2. There are many different types of mother-daughter relationships in this novel. How did the absence of Claire and Sydney?s mother influence the choices they made, and the way they now parent their own children? In what ways do we see the relationship with their daughters change as Bay and Mariah grow up?

3. Henry and Tyler play important parts in the overall story. Being outsiders, as well as the only men in the Waverley family, they?ve formed a bond. How are each of their roles described throughout the novel? How are the dynamics of Claire and Tyler?s marriage both similar to and different from those of Sydney and Henry?s?

4. What do you think of the mysterious old magician? He disrupts the lives of many, but his backstory is a complicated one. Do you think he deserves a happy ending? What do you think about his comment about ?balancing on moral cusps??

5. The old magician seems to bring the colder weather with him when he arrives. How does the autumn season add to the atmosphere of the book? Why do you think the apple tree blooms in the fall, instead of losing its leaves like other trees? Do you think certain seasons bring about changes in us?

6. What do you think of the Waverleys? magical ?gifts? When Claire sets aside her candy-making in order to cook a feast for their traditional first frost party, she seems to be reclaiming her gift, realizing that it was hers whether she had Waverley blood in her or not. And Evanelle tells Fred that he now has her own gift of anticipation, even though Fred isn?t related to the Waverleys. What do you think this says about the idea of nature vs. nurture?

7. The Waverleys aren?t the only family in town with distinct characteristics. What other families in Bascom are known for certain things?

8. In her note to Josh, Bay says that ?we spend all our lives looking for puzzle pieces that will give us a clearer picture of ourselves, of where we?re supposed to go and who we?re supposed to be.? Identity and a sense of belonging are explored throughout the story. Which characters do we see struggle with identity and belonging? How do their journeys differ and how are they the same? What are puzzle pieces in your own life that create the picture of who you are?

9. How did you react to Sydney?s relationship with Violet? What drove Sydney to give Violet chance after chance? Were you surprised by what happened in the end?

10. Did you have any guesses as to what the story was behind Mariah?s friend, ?Em?? Were you surprised when the truth was revealed?

Author Bio

Sarah Addison Allen is the *New York Times* bestselling author of GARDEN SPELLS, THE SUGAR QUEEN, THE GIRL WHO CHASED THE MOON, THE PEACH KEEPER, LOST LAKE, FIRST FROST, OTHER BIRDS and PAPER GHOSTS. She was born and raised in Asheville, North Carolina.

Critical Praise

?Allen will bewitch fans of Alice Hoffman and Laura Esquivel.?

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