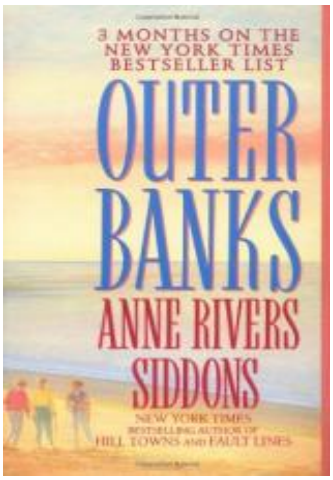
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Outer Banks

by Anne Rivers Siddons



About the Book

On a Southern campus in the 1960's, four young, disparate women come together as sorority suite-mates and share a rare, powerful early friendship. There is Kate, with her elegance and grace; Cecie, the sensitive and sensible one; Ginger, the gorgeous, unbelievably rich girl who refuses to grow up; and Fig, the doting, diminutive, misshapen girl with the brilliant mind. As Fig watches from a distance, carefully noting everything down in her diary, Ginger embarks on a wild, scandalous life, and the bond between Kate and Cecie deepens. That bond is tested with the arrival on campus of Paul Sibley, a sexy and brilliant, half-Seminole architecture student. Kate and Paul fall hopelessly in love and begin planning for their future by designing their dream house; she doing the interior designing, and he the architecture. But when Kate moves to New York to begin their joint career, Paul writes to inform her that he is marrying Ginger instead. Plunged into agonizing despair, Kate rebounds into the arms of an affable Jewish architect, Alan Abrams, and, in her pain, breaks off all contact with her old sorority sisters. Twenty-eight years later, Fig plans a reunion of the four women at Ginger's home at Nags Head, North Carolina, the beautiful, weather-beaten house in which they all shared two idyllic spring breaks. Now the women return to recapture the exquisite magic of those early years and to share again the love, enthusiasm, passion and cruel betrayal that shaped them from girls into women. What they don't realize is that Fig, now a wildly successful novelist, has planned a very special surprise for her sisters; one that will irrevocably alter the rest of their lives.

Discussion Guide

1. According to Ginger, "whenever a ship is going to go down you can hear something like singing in the wind. Bankers say it's mermaids calling the sailors . . . they say when you hear it, you have no choice but to follow it, and you end up on the shoals." What is the significance of this myth for Siddons' characters? Did any of them hear the mermaids singing, yet not "end up on the shoals?" If so, what saved them? Who are the mermaids in Kate's life?

2. Kate can't help but imagine her cancer cells as microscopic "Pacmen." How might this metaphor help her? How does

it harm her? What is it that finally enables her to no longer fear the Pacmen? What does she mean when she thinks the Pacmen, "went with that other Kate, when she died on the Outer Banks?"

3. What does Kate mean when she refers to herself as an "abyss walker?" What is her abyss? Do you consider yourself one of the "non-abyss-people?" What role does her father's suicide play in Kate's understanding of her own abyss?

4. Kate muses, "how truly terrible, that it is easier to live a total lie, become a lie yourself, than assimilate to the hated truth." Which characters weave fictitious lives for themselves? And why? What is it that forces each of them to confront reality?

5. How are the four grown women who return to the Outer Banks different from the young sorority sisters they were 28 years ago? Which of them have been "battered, beaten up, kicked" by life the most? How so?

6. How would you characterize the different kinds of friendships and loves explored in Outer Banks? Which have the capacity to heal, and which to harm? Is it possible to have one without the other?

7. Why do you think this novel was set on the Outer Banks? What role does the sea play in these characters' lives? Why are they all drawn to the ocean? How relevant are the pirate and mermaid myths for these characters?

8. What is it about Dorothy Parker's poetry that so captivates the young Kate and Cecie? What is their relationship to her acerbic lines as they get older? Why do you think it changes?

Author Bio

THE GIRLS OF AUGUST is Anne Rivers Siddons's 19th novel. Her previous bestselling novels include BURNT MOUNTAIN, OFF SEASON, SWEETWATER CREEK, ISLANDS, NORA NORA, LOW COUNTRY, UP ISLAND, FAULT LINES, DOWNTOWN, HILL TOWNS, COLONY, OUTER BANKS, KING'S OAK, PEACHTREE ROAD, HOMEPLACE, FOX'S EARTH, THE HOUSE NEXT DOOR and HEARTBREAK HOTEL. She is also the author of a work of nonfiction, JOHN CHANCELLOR MAKES ME CRY. She and her husband, Heyward, split their time between their home in Charleston, SC and Brooklin, ME.

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