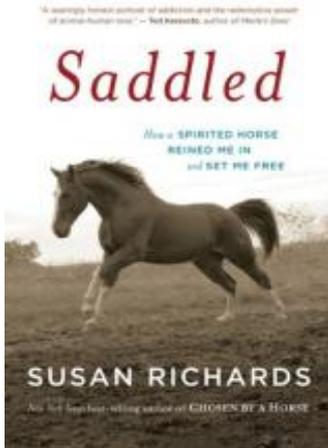


Saddled: How a Spirited Horse Reined Me in and Set Me Free

by Susan Richards



About the Book

One day, at the age of 31, Susan Richards realized that she was an alcoholic. She wrote it down in her journal, struck by the fact that it had taken nine years of waking up hung-over to name her illness. What had changed?

Susan had a new horse, a spirited Morgan named Georgia, the kind of horse who doesn't go in for indecision, who doesn't apologize for her opinions, and who isn't afraid to be herself. In Georgia, Susan finds something to draw her back to herself, but also something to keep her steady and focused, to teach her about stepping carefully in unknown territory, to help her learn again about balance.

This is a memoir about the power of animals to carry us through the toughest times of our lives --- about the importance of constancy, the beauty of quiet, steadfast love, the way loving a good (and sometimes bad!) animal can keep you going. It's a wonderful story for Susan's (and Georgia's) fans, and for anyone who has ever loved an animal enough to keep on living.

Discussion Guide

1. What makes Susan and Georgia a good pair? How do their differences contribute to their compatibility?
2. What attracted Susan to Stuart? What gave her the courage to leave? During the divorce, was it wise for her to ignore money and instead fight for ?custody? of Georgia?

- 3.** Now an accomplished writer, editor, and therapist, Susan has achieved much in her life. As she described her childhood struggles with school, what did you learn about a child's capacity to learn? What did her poor grades really indicate?
- 4.** One of Susan's clearest childhood memories is of her frightful first night at her grandmother's house. In an angry outburst, Franz called Susan a prima donna. As she grew up, did affluence hurt Susan's opinion of herself? What role can wealth contribute to a family's emotional world?
- 5.** How did caring for animals give Susan a clear sense of the world? How did horseback riding help her stay sober? Why was the cantankerous Georgia a better horse for this mission than a docile creature, like Hotshot?
- 6.** Susan writes that she was surprised to receive an inheritance from her grandmother. Why do you suppose Susan was made an heir? Was it a sign of love and approval? Which of the adults (not necessarily relatives) entrusted with caring for Susan gave her the best glimpse of love?
- 7.** How did Susan's relationship with her brother, Lloyd, compare with your relationship with your siblings? Were girls treated very differently from boys in Susan's family?
- 8.** How did life without a mother affect Susan's paths to womanhood? What parenting skills did Georgia exhibit in mothering her foal? What is the source of Susan's abundant "parenting" skills as a therapist and as a caregiver to animals?
- 9.** Discuss your own ride through life: Where were the safe havens in your childhood? Which people tried to topple your sense of self-worth? Which beloved creatures (human or not) taught you otherwise?
- 10.** Words and language formed one component of Susan's healing. How did it help her to have diagnoses for the disorders that had plagued her family? How did her work as an editor help her find her path as a writer?
- 11.** How did you react when Susan revealed Tim's double life? Can you imagine what might motivate a person to be so seemingly helpful and yet so hurtful?
- 12.** Discuss the book's title. How does it reflect Susan's emotional burdens, as well as the tools she used to escape them?
- 13.** As Susan makes peace with her father, what does she discover about the nature of his lifelong suffering? How is she healed through this understanding? Why are some people able to show affection only when they are near the end of life?
- 14.** The memoir contains many images of houses. What did it take for Susan to call a house a home, from summer camp to her own farmhouse?

15. In her best-selling **Chosen by a Horse**, Susan blames herself for Georgia's behavior, fearing that she spoiled her. How have her feelings about Georgia changed since she wrote her debut memoir? Susan's second book, **Chosen Forever**, captures the anxiety of being an author on tour --- though book tours brought her to Dennis Stock, the photojournalist with whom she ultimately felt destined to have a happy marriage. How does **Saddled** enhance your understanding of the previous chapters in her life?

Author Bio

Susan Richards has a B.A. in English from the University of Colorado and a master's degree in social work from Adelphi University. She lives with her husband Dennis Stock and their beloved gang of four dogs and one Siamese cat. She is the author of the best-selling memoir *Chosen by a Horse*. Visit her website, www.susan-richards.com.

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