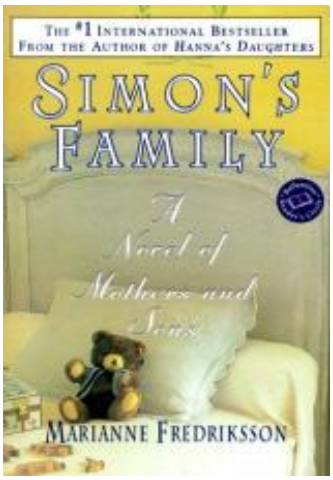
ReadingGroupGuides
The online community for reading groups

Simon's Family

by Marianne Fredriksson



About the Book

In her #1 international bestseller Hanna's Daughters, Marianne Fredriksson brilliantly evoked three generations of mothers, daughters, and the men in their lives. Now, in her haunting new novel, she traces the extraordinary relationship between a mother and son and the remarkable family they inhabit. The search for who we are and where we came from . . . the yearning for reconciliation between parent and child . . . the ever-shifting nature of what makes a family--Marianne Fredriksson weaves these elements into a powerful story of survival and transcendence, sacrifice and forgiveness, showing how even the most damaged heart can heal in the most unexpected ways. . . .

Discussion Guide

1. This novel is so richly textured with various themes and ideas about life, spirituality and art. What, in particular, touched or interested you the most? Why?

2. What do you think is the most significant, overt theme of this novel?

3. Simon is an extraordinarily complex character. If you had to describe the essence of him, how would you do this? If Simon's Family were to become a movie, which actor could you envision playing the role of Simon?

4. Why do you think Simon had such a drive for self-punishment in relation to women?

5. What are your feelings about Karin? Is she authentic in your eyes? Or was she, like Klara, simply forcing an image of herself as the good mother?

6. How did the mystical aspects of the novel--the personified oak trees, the visions, the uncanny intuitions--affect your reading experience? Have you read other novels of this style before?

7. We might call Simon's experience listening to music an "out-of-body" one. Has there ever been a time in your life when you felt that you transcended your conventional perception or state of reality?

8. Simon talks about a desire for evil to "make him real." Do you understand--or can you relate to--this notion?

9. The novel touches on various psychological terms related to the Holocaust--persecution mania, survivor guilt. Have you ever heard of these conditions or do you know of people who have dealt with them?

10. Ms. Fredriksson states that most people do not "dare to open up the magic/mythical dimension that is part of our legacy." Do you agree with that statement? In your opinion, what does opening up to magic and myth entail?

11. Karin's memory of the waxwings helps her through difficult times in her life. Is there a particular memory or symbol that you turn to for solace?

12. If you had to choose just one passage from this novel to entice a friend to read it, which would it be?

Author Bio

Marianne Fredriksson's novels have sold more than two million copies in her native Sweden. She is the bestselling author of **Hanna's Daughters** and**Simon's Family**.

Critical Praise

"Fredriksson depicts the psychological aftermath of cruelty through the ebb and flow of interior monologues, adhering to time-honored parallels between the characters' harsh longings and the stark beauty of the remote Swedish seascape. . . . The novel contrasts the human capacity for suffering with a heartfelt optimism. "

Simon's Family
by Marianne Fredriksson

Publication Date: April 4, 2000
Paperback: 347 pages
Publisher: Ballantine Books
ISBN-10: 034543630X
ISBN-13: 9780345436306