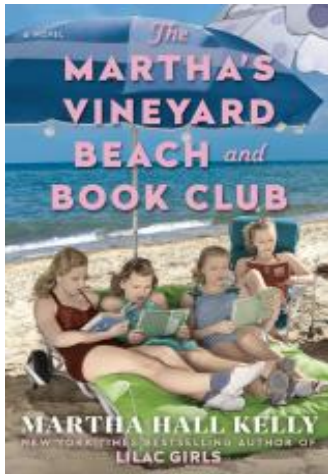


The Martha's Vineyard Beach and Book Club

by Martha Hall Kelly



About the Book

Two sisters living on Martha's Vineyard during World War II find hope in the power of storytelling when they start a wartime book club for women in this spectacular novel inspired by true events, from the *New York Times* bestselling author of *LILAC GIRLS*.

2016: Thirty-four-year-old Mari Starwood is still grieving after her mother's death as she travels to the storied island of Martha's Vineyard, off the coast of Massachusetts. She's come all the way from California with nothing but a name on a piece of paper: Elizabeth Devereaux, the famous but reclusive Vineyard painter. When Mari makes it to Mrs. Devereaux's stunning waterfront farm under the guise of taking a painting class with her, Mrs. Devereaux begins to tell her the story of the Smith sisters, who once lived there. As the tale unfolds, Mari is shocked to learn that her relationship to this island runs deeper than she ever thought possible.

1942: The Smith girls --- 19-year-old aspiring writer Cadence and 16-year-old war-obsessed Briar --- are faced with the impossible task of holding their failing family farm together during World War II as the U.S. Army arrives on Martha's Vineyard. When Briar spots German U-boats lurking off the island's shores and Cadence falls into an unlikely romance with a sworn enemy, their quiet lives are officially upended. In an attempt at normalcy, Cadence and her best friend, Bess, start a book club, which grows both in members and influence as they connect with a fabulous New York publisher who could make all of Cadence's dreams come true.

But all that is put at risk by a mysterious man who washes ashore --- and whispers of a spy in their midst. Who in their tight-knit island community can they trust? Could this little book club change the course of the war...before it's too late?

Discussion Guide

1. THE MARTHA'S VINEYARD BEACH AND BOOK CLUB has a contemporary storyline --- set in 2016 --- framing

the story, but the majority of the novel follows the Smith sisters during World War II. Why do you think Martha Hall Kelly chose to add a contemporary thread to the novel? Were you surprised by how the two storylines came together in the end?

2. Many historical fiction novels set during World War II are set in Europe. But *THE MARTHA'S VINEYARD BEACH AND BOOK CLUB* is set on US shores. Were you aware of war efforts happening off the coast of Martha's Vineyard? Did it change your understanding of American soldiers during this specific time in history?

3. Kelly populates the book with very strong female characters. Which character's journey resonated with you the most? Why?

4. The inspiring power of book clubs and storytelling is a big theme in the narrative. What other overarching themes did you notice?

5. How did the wartime book club that Cadence and Bess prompt change for women in their community? How do you think the books they chose to read influenced these changes?

6. Bess, Cadence's best friend and her brother Tom's girlfriend, comes from a wealthy family but left that life of privilege behind to work the land and live with the Smith sisters and Gram. Why do you think she did that? What did she learn?

7. How does the arrival of the U.S. Army shake things up for the Smith sisters and their neighbors on the island? What are the consequences of the Smith family hiding the mysterious soldier who washes up on their shores?

8. Cadence's love interest in the novel is a British serviceman, Major Gilbert. What secrets are they both hiding from each other, and how did you feel their story was resolved?

9. Briar has a great interest in submarines and is convinced that she's seeing them offshore, even though no one believes her. How does her interest in the war shape her actions and decisions?

10. What are some key moments of growth for the main characters? How do they change throughout the novel?

11. What does the setting of Martha's Vineyard symbolize for the characters in both time periods? How does the island setting influence the story?

12. What message do you think the author is trying to impart about female friendships and family?

13. If you've read Martha Hall Kelly's historical fiction previously, how did this novel compare to her others?

Author Bio

Martha Hall Kelly is the *New York Times* bestselling author of *LILAC GIRLS*, *LOST ROSES*, and *SUNFLOWER*

SISTERS, THE GOLDEN DOVES and THE MARTHA'S VINEYARD BEACH AND BOOK CLUB. Born and raised in Massachusetts, she was inspired to write this novel by her mother's family, the Smiths, who settled on Martha's Vineyard in 1891. She received journalism degrees from both Syracuse and Northwestern universities and worked as an advertising copywriter for many years before becoming a novelist. With more than two million copies of her books sold and translated in 50 countries, Martha Hall Kelly lives in Litchfield, Connecticut, and Hobe Sound, Florida.

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