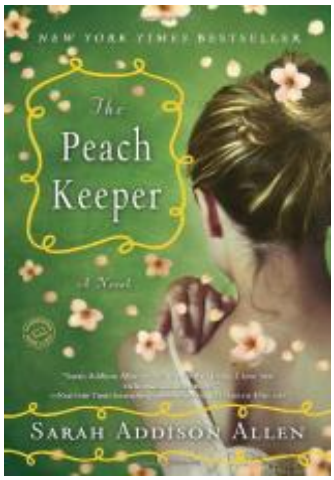
ReadingGroupGuides
The online community for reading groups

The Peach Keeper

by Sarah Addison Allen



About the Book

It?s the dubious distinction of 30-year-old Willa Jackson to hail from a fine old Southern family of means that met with financial ruin generations ago. The Blue Ridge Madam --- built by Willa?s great-great-grandfather and once the finest home in Walls of Water, North Carolina --- has stood for years as a monument to misfortune and scandal. Willa has lately learned that an old classmate --- socialite Paxton Osgood --- has restored the house to its former glory, with plans to turn it into a top-flight inn. But when a skeleton is found buried beneath the property?s lone peach tree, long-kept secrets come to light, accompanied by a spate of strange occurrences throughout the town. Thrust together in an unlikely friendship, united by a full-blooded mystery, Willa and Paxton must confront the passions and betrayals that once bound their families --- and uncover the truths that have transcended time to touch the hearts of the living.

Discussion Guide

1. What do you think the title **The Peach Keeper** means? Who is the peach keeper in the story?

2. Superstitions played a big part in Willa's grandmother's life, and in Willa's life, by extension. What superstitions did you grow up with? Why do you think superstitions exist?

3. Several of the characters in **The Peach Keeper** struggle with how people used to see them as opposed to who they are now. Who were you in high school? Do you miss that person? Or are you glad to leave that time in your life behind?

4. The characters in **The Peach Keeper** live in an extraordinarily beautiful area, one surrounded by waterfalls. Yet Willa once remarks, "When you see it every day, sometimes you wonder what the big deal is." Do you think you get so used to beauty that you stop seeing it? What are some natural wonders in your area? Does Willa's comment also refer to people?

5. There's a wisp of something supernatural following the characters in the story, seemingly brought into their lives by

the discovery of buried bones under a peach tree. What are your thoughts on the supernatural? Do you think disturbing a grave upsets the spiritual side of things? Have you ever had a paranormal experience?

6. One of the prevailing themes in **The Peach Keeper** is friendship. Agatha and Georgie are elderly, and have been friends all their lives. Paxton and Willa have a newly formed friendship. The book posits that friendship is "a living breathing thing, something that comes to life the moment it happens and doesn't just go away when it's no longer acknowledged." If there is no big break-up, just a gradual separation, do you think the friendship still exists? Do you think once you are a friend, are you always a friend? Have you ever reconnected with an old friend and found that you still share a bond with them?

7. Sarah Addison Allen's books usually have themes of forgiveness and food. Have you read Sarah's other books? How is **The Peach Keeper** similar? How is it a departure? Did you recognize the reference to the main characters in her debut novel, **Garden Spells**?

8. Paxton, Willa, and even Willa's father, deal with parental expectation. Do you think that who we become in life is due in part to what our parents wanted us to be, or who are parents were? If you have children, how do they fit the pattern?

9. How do you take your coffee? Do you think that says something about you? Do you believe, like Rachel, that how someone takes their coffee says something about their personality?

10. In the end, Agatha keeps a secret she promised to keep seventy-five years ago. In this information age, we are not a private society. How hard is it to keep secrets? Would you be capable of keeping a secret that long?

11. The theme of roots runs through the novel --- from the peach tree, to Colin's work, to the characters struggling with their place in Walls of Water. What about the town and its history draws people to it and entices them to put down roots? On the flip side, what about it causes others to deny their roots and move away? Have you had a similar experience with your home town?

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

Easy to devour in one sitting.

The Peach Keeper

by Sarah Addison Allen

Publication Date: January 10, 2012
Genres: Fiction
Paperback: 304 pages
Publisher: Bantam
ISBN-10: 0553385607
ISBN-13: 9780553385601