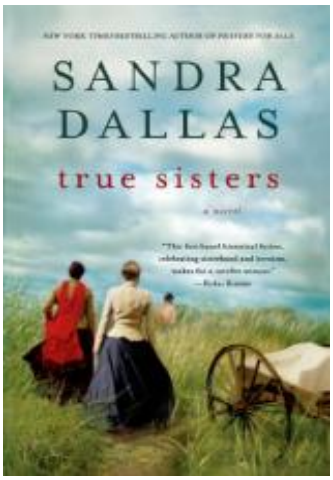
True Sisters

by Sandra Dallas



About the Book

Book description: In order to encourage Mormon converts to emigrate to the promised land (Salt Lake City), a plan was implemented by Brigham Young himself: emigrants were outfitted with two-wheeled handcarts. The settlers were then expected to walk, pushing the handcarts, for the 1,300 mile journey from Iowa City. Several ?companies,? as they were called, completed this perilous trek and successfully reached Salt Lake City. But for the Martin Company, one of the very last groups to leave from Iowa City that year, the trip proved disastrous. *True Sisters* tells the story of four women, brought together on the harrowing journey of the Martin Handcart Company, and united by the promises of prosperity and salvation in a new land. Through the ties of female friendships and the strength born from suffering, each one tests the boundaries of her faith and learns the real meaning of survival along the way.

Discussion Guide

1. What were the driving reasons for Nannie to give up her career to convert to Mormonism? Would you have given up what she had?

2. Is it truly a renouncement of faith for Louisa's family to stay in New York over the winter? Was Thales' reaction unreasonable? What was he trying to prove?

3. Why did Robert and Maud decide to make the trek against their friends? advice?

4. The Saints excommunicate a woman for adultery without a trail, which upsets some of the sisters. Is this a fair verdict? What does this show about how women are treated in the church of Jesus Christ of the Latter-Day Saints?

5. Why does the Old Absalom oppose making the trek in the winter when he knows it is against the wishes of the other leaders? Is this indicative of cracks within the group?

6. Is it right for the other saints to profit from Emeline?s father when the cart is overturned? Should their need supersede the Mormon value of respect for the grieving?

7. What effect do you think Emeline had on Ephraim? Would he have survived the journey without her?

8. Does Thales have a revelation after he causes his nephew Jimmy?s death, or was the humility he shows always a part of his character?

9. What does Anne represent for the other Mormon women? Do they ultimately accept her?

10. At what point would your faith have been shaken?

11. Polygamy is a constant source of stress for the female characters in *True Sisters*, coming to a head when they arrive in Zion. Do you agree that it was the right decision for Andrew to offer to take Nannie as a second wife, and for her to accept?

12. The journey begins with a large group of travelers, but only 104 wagons arrive in Zion, making the journey of the Martin Handcart company a large scale catastrophe. Had you ever heard of this event? If not, why?

13. Do you feel that *True Sisters* gave you a good insight into what made Mormonism compelling to the converts? Did they make the right choice to leave their lives in the United Kingdom and make the pilgrimage to Zion?

Author Bio

Sandra Dallas is a *New York Times* bestselling author of 20 adult novels, several children's novels, and numerous works of nonfiction about Western subjects. Her work has won numerous awards and prizes, including the Colorado Book Award, and, in 2021, she was inducted into the Colorado Authors' Hall of Fame. A former bureau chief for *Business Week* magazine, Sandra lives in Denver and Georgetown, Colorado, with her husband.

Critical Praise

"[A] focus?on strong women and the beautiful relationships they can create even in impossible circumstances. As such, this is a memorable story."

- *Publishers Weekly*

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