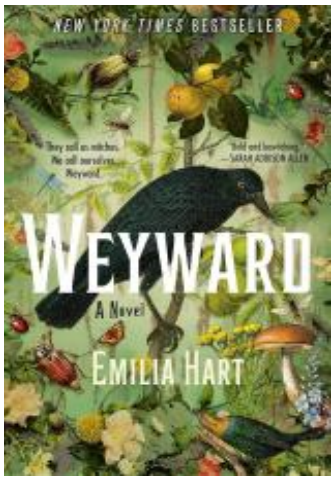
ReadingGroupGuides
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Weyward

by Emilia Hart



About the Book

I am a Weyward, and wild inside.

2019: Under cover of darkness, Kate flees London for ramshackle Weyward Cottage, inherited from a great-aunt she barely remembers. With its tumbling ivy and overgrown garden, the cottage is worlds away from the abusive partner who tormented Kate. But she begins to suspect that her great-aunt had a secret. One that lurks in the bones of the cottage, hidden ever since the witch-hunts of the 17th century.

1619: Altha is awaiting trial for the murder of a local farmer who was stampeded to death by his herd. As a girl, Altha?s mother taught her their magic, a kind not rooted in spell casting but in a deep knowledge of the natural world. But unusual women have always been deemed dangerous, and as the evidence for witchcraft is set out against Altha, she knows it will take all of her powers to maintain her freedom.

1942: As World War II rages, Violet is trapped in her family's grand, crumbling estate. Straitjacketed by societal convention, she longs for the robust education her brother receives --- and for her mother, long deceased, who was rumored to have gone mad before her death. The only traces Violet has of her are a locket bearing the initial *W* and the word *weyward* scratched into the baseboard of her bedroom.

Weaving together the stories of three extraordinary women across five centuries, Emilia Hart's WEYWARD is an enthralling novel of female resilience and the transformative power of the natural world.

Discussion Guide

1. Consider the evolution of the name ?Weyward? and the way women in this novel receive it. Why and how do the Weyward women grow to accept and proudly own this name? Why do you think more recent versions of MACBETH

have replaced ?Weyward? with ?Weird??

2. ?The Weyward women had lived safely in Crows Beck these last hundred years, and in that time had healed its people.... We could use our ability to heal without attracting too much suspicion. The people were grateful for this gift? (page 279). How does the knowledge of other Weyward women help Altha, Violet and Kate heal when they need to? What role does nature play in healing these three Weyward women?

3. Consider the ways that witchcraft shapes all three narrative threads. Who does society deem to be a witch, and what are the factors that fuel that kind of accusation?

4. Violet spends a lot of time and energy in search of information about her mother. Similarly, Kate seeks to understand who Violet was. Once they both find answers, how does this new knowledge affect Violet and Kate moving forward? Does it change the way they view themselves at all?

5. Though we never hear from her directly, Elizabeth?s actions have repercussions that trickle down to Violet and, eventually, Kate. What did you make of the choice to not include her narration? How do she and Altha shape the present narrative, even though they?re both long deceased?

6. We learn that Kate ?reread books she?d loved as a child? for the comfort of their familiarity (page 22). How did the themes from various works of Shakespeare, THE SECRET GARDEN and GRIMMS' FAIRY TALES make an impression on both Kate and Violet? Do you have a book that you?ve returned to over the years, and what about it makes you keep coming back? Can a familiar text also be read in new ways?

7. Describe Violet and Graham?s relationship and its evolution throughout the novel.

8. Why do you think Simon, Rupert, Frederick and John Milburn feel the need to establish dominance over the women in their lives? How do Graham, Henry and Adam Bainbridge differ from these men?

9. Compare and contrast how Kate, Violet and Grace feel about their pregnancies, which were a product of toxic relationships. Do you think Kate?s decision to keep her baby was affected by what she learned about the earlier Weyward women?

10. How do the traumas that Kate and Violet each experience affect how they view themselves? How do they work through this, and how do they arrive at new perspectives by the end of the novel? What role does forgiveness play in this evolution?

11. In Altha?s and Violet?s worlds, it is considered a ?sin? for a woman to deliberately end her pregnancy, and therefore, they can be punished by the law. Is this ideology still at work today? How do religious beliefs play a role in U.S. lawmaking regarding women?s bodily autonomy? What are your thoughts on how the concept of sin relates to our contemporary definitions of crime?

12. This novel follows the lives of three different women in three different time periods. How did the movement between these perspectives affect your reading experience? In what other ways were these women linked, aside from their familial ties?

13. Did you connect with one character more than the others? If so, why? What do the parallels in their stories say about the female experience and/or the degree to which society?s treatment of women has evolved?

14. In what ways does this novel nudge at the idea of a woman returning to her natural, most free state of being? What does it mean to you to utilize the gift of your inner wild?

Author Bio

Emilia Hart is the author of WEYWARD and THE SIRENS. She grew up in Australia and studied English Literature at university before training as a lawyer. She now lives in London.

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Publication Date: February 27, 2024
Genres: Fiction, Historical Fiction, Magical Realism
Paperback: 416 pages
Publisher: St. Martin's Griffin
ISBN-10: 1250842727
ISBN-13: 9781250842725