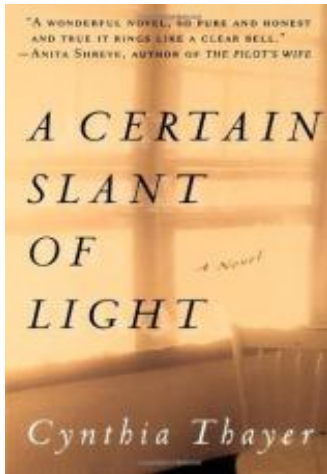


# A Certain Slant of Light: A Novel

by Cynthia Thayer

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## About the Book

At the heart of Cynthia Thayer's debut novel, **Strong for Potatoes**, was the tender relationship between a girl and her grandfather, evolving as their lives grew and changed. Now, Thayer tackles another kind of relationship, one born out of a meeting between strangers but forged in the need for survival.

Peter lost his wife and children in a fire years ago, yet the wound is fresh, painful. He's become something of a hermit on the coast of Maine, shearing sheep and gardening to live, an old Passamaquoddy woman his only friend and bagpiping his only passion. Elaine is eight months pregnant and on the run from her husband, a hard man more interested in control than love. Fear is simply part of her life, fear for herself and her unborn child.

When Elaine turns up outside Peter's cabin during a terrible winter storm, Peter can't turn her away into the ice. The two lonely adults clash, then slowly discover that friendship, support, and healing grow in the unlikeliest places.

## Discussion Guide

1. What kind of role does religion play in the novel? What about faith, in any form? How has the characters' faith and religion changed over the course of the story? Is there one message to be gained about faith or religion from the novel?
2. Compare and contrast the images of pregnancy and birth with those of aging and death in the novel. How does the author use such images to tell or enhance her narrative?
3. How important to the story is the novel's setting: the landscape, the weather, the wilderness, the water? How does the author make use of these physical details?

4. What is the role of music and song in the book?
5. What is the nature of guilt and responsibility, according to Peter? According to Elaine? Should either of them feel responsibility for their personal tragedies?
6. Peter has held onto his daughter's dollhouse as an embodiment of his grief over the fire. What role do such objects play in the cycle of grieving and healing, in the novel and in life? Was his decision to burn the dollhouse a method of moving on, or a form of celebration? Does his grieving seem self-indulgent? Healthy? Understandable?
7. Discuss the role of fate in Peter and Elaine's lives, before their meeting and after.
8. If you were the author of **A Certain Slant of Light** , would you change the end of the novel in any way?
9. Why do you think Elaine makes the decision that she does about her marriage?

## Author Bio

Cynthia Thayer was born in New York City but moved with her family to Nova Scotia when she was seven years old. After earning a college degree in English and theater, Cynthia became a teacher of both subjects, but for more than twenty years now she has owned and operated a diversified organic farm in Goulds-boro, Maine, with her husband.

When she was 48, she began writing, and of her "new" career, she says, "I guess you could say that I am a late bloomer." Writing has become part of the "new me."

## Critical Praise

"Cynthia Thayer talks with the power of a fine writer directly to her readers."

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### **A Certain Slant of Light: A Novel**

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