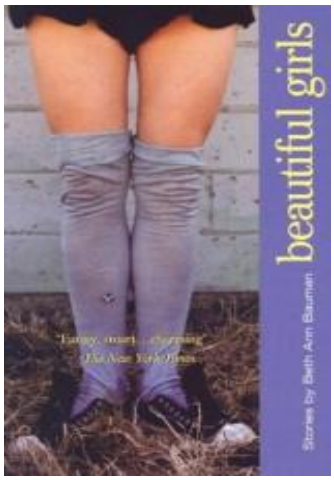
Beautiful Girls

by Beth Ann Bauman



About the Book

At once magical, tender, and wise, this dazzling collection about the secret lives of girls and women established Beth Ann Bauman as a bold new literary voice. *The New York Times* deemed these "stories about funny, smart women?charming and accessible." The South Florida Sun-Sentinel said, "**Beautiful Girls** is a beautiful collection?. These stories are wonderfully crafted." Now in paperback, **Beautiful Girls** is sure to win the hearts of even more readers with its irresistible humor and grace.

Discussion Guide

1. Some of the women and girls in these stories are the timid, the not-quite-fabulous, the public school Ophelias, who are longing for things just out of reach. Though the characters' plans are sometimes thwarted and their wishes don't always come true, do the situations demonstrate hope? Does the humor in the stories contribute to a hopeful vision? If so, how?

2. A line in the Rilke poem at the beginning of the book reads, "you wait, await the one thing that will infinitely increase your life." What are the characters in the different stories awaiting, and how do you think they imagine their lives could change?

3. One reviewer said, "Bauman writes about young girls, teenagers and older women, managing to find the beauty in their hurts and their resilience whether they are outwardly beautiful or not." How does this description apply to some of your favorite characters?

The Middle of the Night

4. How does the middle of the night enchant Allie?

5. What does she seem to be looking for as she roams the neighborhood?

6. Do you think Allie feels loved?

Wash, Rinse, Spin

7. How would you describe Libby's relationship with her father?

8. What do Libby's clothes - both what we see her wearing and her laundry debacles - suggest about the state of her world?

9. What do you make of Libby's unlikely exchange of coats with Bilox?

10. In the laundromat, Libby "doesn't wish for anything in particular, just that things remain as they are a while longer; she simply needs to be suspended in the moment. Time, she believes, is a kind of hope." What does she seem to want and/or need?

Beautiful Girls

11. The girls in the story eat a lot of meat - in what other ways are they carnivorous?

12. Why is the Miss Merry Christmas contest so important to Dani and Daffodil?

13. What role(s) does Dani play in her family?

14. What does Inggy seem to possess that Dani doesn't?

15. What's the bigger loss for Dani - Ben or Connie?

Eden

16. What effect do you think naming the characters Adam and Eve has on your sense of their relationship and on the story as a whole?

17. How does the tropical locale fan the flames of Eve's crush on Adam?

18. What significance does the word "might" have in the story's final sentence?

Stew

19. In what ways do Annabel and Sophia find J.D. perfect just the way he is?

20. Annabel shouts "Act!" to Sophia during the games; how does the word "act" work on different levels in the story?

21. At the dinner party, Mrs. Martinelli says, "You know how those years can be. It can feel like being on the outside

looking in, waiting for something to happen." In what ways is the story about this feeling, and which characters seem to embody it?

22. How do you imagine J.D. feels about himself and about Dawn by the end of the night?

True

23. How would you describe the power Janet holds over Robin at the beginning of the story?

24. Why are the anti-drug pamphlets baffling yet intriguing to Robin?

25. Robin thinks, "It wasn't so much that she wanted to be with Nolan, though she thought she might; rather, she wanted to be like him." Why?

26. How do your feelings about Robin and Janet change over the course of the story?

Safeway

16. In what ways do Georgeann's observations about the produce and other grocery items in Safeway trigger certain thoughts and memories?

17. In the bathroom, Georgeann realizes she is, "a woman who wishes she'd lived a little better." In what ways? How might she still live better?

18. At what points in the story do you feel Georgann's anger, remorse, sense of loss, longing, sense of wonder and hope?

Wildlife of Ameica

11. Frankie says, "Coming to New Jersey was like taking a bath. At least I felt clean." What do you make of these statements?

12. How are Fiona and Frankie alike? What has contributed to their differences?

13. What does Fiona learn about her brother-in-law that enables her to let go of some of her anger and return to New York?

14. Why do you think this story is called "Wildlife of America"?

15. Does the last line of the story - "It was time to get a move on" - apply to any other stories in the collection?

Author Bio

Beth Ann Bauman is the author of BEAUTIFUL GIRLS, a short story collection for adults, ROSIE AND SKATE and is the recipient of a New York Foundaton for the Arts Fellowship. Growing up, she spent summers on the Jersey shore. She lives in New York City.

Critical Praise

"These stories are wonderfully crafted. The tight prose cuts like a surgical knife into the lives of the characters and gives us an anatomy lesson in the human heart. The endings are especially strong and, like the last lines of great poems, shine a light that illuminates the whole of the stories. **Beautiful Girls** is a beautiful collection."

Beautiful Girls
by Beth Ann Bauman

Publication Date: January 18, 2013
Paperback: 186 pages
Publisher: MacAdam/Cage Publishing
ISBN-10: 1931561664
ISBN-13: 9781931561662