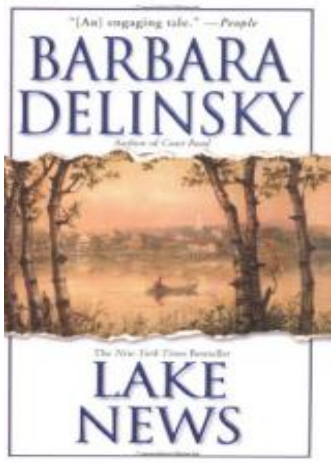
# Lake News: A Novel

by Barbara Delinsky




## About the Book

Lily Blake is just getting by as a songstress in Boston when her friendship with a newly-appointed Cardinal is mistakenly - perhaps purposefully - cited as illicit in the newspaper. Hounded by the press, fired from her job, and robbed of all freedom of movement, she has no choice but to flee to the small town of Lake Henry, New Hampshire, where she grew up. There she deals with the hostility of her mother, with a driving need to exact justice against the media that forever changed her life, and with John Kipling, also born and raised in Lake Henry. After a disastrous stint with the big-city press, John is now back publishing the local newspaper, and fighting his own battles in his quest for his father's approval and his dreams of writing a book. Lily and John form an uneasy alliance as they give reporters a taste of their own medicine. **Lake News** is a story of revenge, reconciliation, and trust.

## Discussion Guide

**1.** Compare and contrast Lily Blake's life in Boston and her life in Lake Henry. What does each locale offer her? How does Delinsky use setting to reveal character? Discuss how Lily's relationships in each place differ. Compare, for example, the reaction of her Essex Club boss after the scandal breaks to her reception at Charlie's in Lake Henry. What does the novel reveal about the rewards and sacrifices inherent in both urban and small-town living? What does it suggest about the meaning and importance of community?

**2.** When Terry Sullivan accuses John Kipling of "hiding out" in Lake Henry, John says, "Not hiding. I'm totally visible." Police Chief Willie Jake says of Lake Henry residents: "We all know what we're all doin', but we don't use it against each other." Small towns -- where neighbors know the details of each other's business, families, and pasts -- are notorious for gossip. Yet when Lily returns to Lake Henry, she finds the townspeople accepting and protective of her. Discuss this paradox.

**3.** In the course of the novel, Delinsky introduces her readers to a host of Lake Henry residents, from the Blake sisters to

the general store owner to the police chief. How do these individual portraits enhance Delinsky's conjuring of Lake Henry as a tightly knit community? Which "minor" or "supporting" character did you find the most intriguing and why? Could it be argued that there are no "minor" residents in a town as small as Lake Henry?

**4.** Discuss the novel's treatment of privacy issues. How difficult is it to safeguard personal information in today's society? To what degree are people entitled to keep their relationships and histories private? How much do people have a right to know about each other? Maida says to Lily: "You wanted to be an entertainer. But scandal comes with that kind of life. You're fair game for gossipmongers. You set yourself up for it." Are people in the public eye less entitled to privacy? Where should the lines be drawn?

**5.** Compare the fictional Lily Blake debacle to recent scandals in which real people's reputations and careers are on the line. Does Lily's story make you more sympathetic to victims of sensationalism? If the character of Lily Blake were a man -- a male entertainer, for example, accused of having an affair with a nun -- how might the press cover the story differently? Would the reports be as damaging to him, personally or professionally, as they are to Lily?

**6.** How often do you think the media release questionable or poorly researched stories? Who should be held most accountable for what appears on the nightly news and in the daily paper? How skeptical are you of what you read in the newspapers? John reflects about the mainstream media: "Mistakes were rarely admitted; retractions were issued only under duress." What do you think a newspaper's responsibility should be to the people it harms when a story is disproven?

**7.** There are several family secrets revealed in **Lake News**, most notably Maida's past affair with her uncle. In this case, divulging a dark secret helps to mend a strained mother-daughter relationship. Does the book as a whole support the idea that family secrets are damaging when left to fester? Do parents do a disservice to their kids by hiding past mistakes? What kinds of secrets are parents justified in keeping from their children?

**8.** **Lake News** portrays several troubled parent-child relationships. Compare and contrast the dysfunctional dynamics between Lily and Maida, John and Gus, and Hannah and Rose. Discuss the psychological implications of each relationship, and to what degree each is improved by the end of the book. Does the book suggest that there are differences between mother-daughter and father-son relationships? Do you think that many parents project their own fears, insecurities, and disappointments onto their children? To what degree does parental disapproval affect a person's choices, personality, and worldview even into adulthood?

**9.** How does Delinsky use the lake's loons as symbols of larger themes throughout the book? A loon's life, John Kipling reflects, is "an honest life, devoid of pretense, ambition, and cruelty." Do the events of the book support the idea that ambition is dishonest or harmful? To what degree does personal ambition require selfishness, aggression, or disregard for others? Discuss John's grappling with the implications of his desire to write a book about Lily's story. In what ways do his misgivings represent larger conflicts between personal and professional goals?

**10.** Why does running a small-town paper allow John to adhere to a higher ethical standard? Could he have returned to a city newspaper and practiced journalism in a responsible way? How does his relationship with *Lake News*'s publisher Armand Bayne differ from the dealings he likely had with editors and publishers at the *Boston Post*?

**11.** At the press conference John convenes toward the end of the book, he is criticized for fighting fire with fire -- for

using Terry Sullivan's own unseemly methods against him. John, however, fiercely defends his investigation into Terry's past and motives. Do you think John's public humiliation of Terry is justified? At one point in the book, John and Lily discuss whether they are seeking revenge or justice, and John says, "They're pretty much the same thing." Do you agree? How fine a line is there between the two? Can justice be achieved without revenge?

## Author Bio

Barbara Delinsky is the author of more than 20 *New York Times* bestselling books, including BEFORE AND AGAIN, THE SCENT OF JASMINE and LOVE SONGS. She has been published in 28 languages worldwide. A lifelong New Englander, Delinsky earned a B.A. in psychology at Tufts University and an M.A. in sociology at Boston College. She lives in Massachusetts with her husband, more books than she'll ever be able to read, two tennis racquets, and enough electronic devices to keep in close touch with her children and their families.

## Critical Praise

"Filled with romance, intrigue, revenge, and salvation, **Lake News** is a gripping tale sure to please [Delinsky's] legions of loyal fans and earn her quite a few new ones."

---


**Lake News: A Novel**

by Barbara Delinsky

**Publication Date:** May 1, 2000
**Mass Market Paperback:** 544 pages
**Publisher:** Pocket
**ISBN-10:** 067103619X
**ISBN-13:** 9780671036195