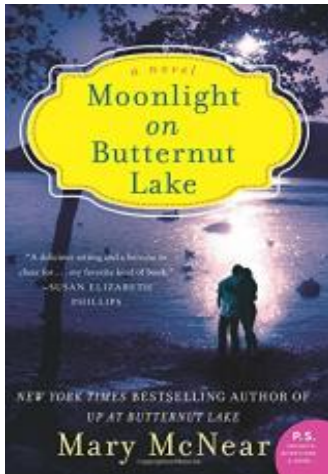


Moonlight on Butternut Lake

by Mary McNear



About the Book

Mila Jones has fled the big city seeking a safe haven on the serene shores of Butternut Lake. Her position looking after Reid Ford is more than a job. It's a chance at a fresh start. And although her sullen patient does everything he can to make her quit, Mila refuses to give up on him.

But Mila isn't the only one needing refuge. Haunted by the car accident that nearly killed him, Reid has hidden himself away. He wants Mila to just leave him alone. And he wishes the whole town would stop looking after his well-being.

Against all odds, Mila slowly draws Reid out. Soon they form a tentative, yet increasingly deeper bond with each other, as well as becoming part of the day-to-day fabric of Butternut Lake itself. But the world has a way of intruding, even in such a serene place...and when Mila's violent husband forces his way back into her life, she and Reid are compelled to face down the past.

Discussion Guide

1. Mila has always taken care of herself. As a child she got herself to school, made her own meals, and did her homework with little help from anyone. When she was a young adult, she got a job to help her mom pay the bills and paid her own way through community college. She becomes responsible, self-reliant and develops a strong work ethic --- all good qualities. But what's missing? What qualities must Mila embrace if she is to find happiness?

2. Throughout the novel, Mila expresses a longing for a childhood she did not have. She longed to live in a picturesque small town like Butternut instead of the "hardscrabble" neighborhood where she grew up. She longed to have a mother who did fun things with her, taught her to swim and took her to picnics and events. How is longing different than envy? How does Reid show Mila that it is not too late to have some of those things she longed for as a child?

3. Mila and Reid's relationship got off to a pretty rocky start. At what point did their relationship change direction? And what precipitated this change?

4. Buoyancy, or a lack of buoyancy, is a theme throughout the novel: Mila's feels "lighter without her wedding ring to weigh her down"; Mila imagines sinking "like a stone" to the bottom of the lake; Allie teaches Mila how to float in the water and she feels weightless and free; Mila feels "buoyed" the first time she flees Brandon; Reid feels "lightness" and weightlessness while watching Mila learn to swim. What does buoyancy represent for Mila?

5. Although Mila's mother is depicted as a disinterested and, somewhat, neglectful parent with an alcohol problem, Mila never condemns her. However, Mila's develops friendships with three women older than herself: Heather, Lonnie and Ms. Thompson. How are these women different than her mother? And what kind of relationship does Mila have with them?

6. Unlike Mila, Reid is bitter about his childhood. He's angry that his father wasn't there for him and he's jealous of his father's closeness to his half-sister, Chloe. How did this bitterness bring about Reid's accident and prolong his recovery? What allows Reid to finally overcome these feelings and move on?

7. Reid comes to the realization that his relentless drive to be successful in the boat yard business, largely inspired by a need to prove himself to his father, had eclipsed the pleasure he took in working with boats. Some people are driven by a desire to "show," or outdo, their own parents, or in some cases to "settle a score." Is this kind of motivation inherently destructive? Why was Reid unable to get any satisfaction from his success? How does Reid resolve to change things?

8. The closer Reid gets to Mila the more he sees her as radiating light: her skin is "lit from within"; her nightgown glows in the moonlight; her hands are translucent and like the "velvety touch of the moonlight itself": her skin glows faintly in the "near darkness"; Reid sees a "flicker of light" in her eyes. Why would Reid perceive Mila this way? Does this perception have anything to do with his own state of mind after the accident? And how is moonlight used to reveal both Reid's feelings about Mila and the development of Reid and Mila's relationship?

9. Brandon is controlling and abusive toward Mila. He sees her as a possession, not an independent person. In the course of their relationship he works to isolate her from her friends and prevents her from achieving her goal to be a nurse. In the novel, how does he rationalize his belief that Mila's feelings and choices are irrelevant? And are these characteristics common in abusive men?

10. Although Mila's initial interest in being a nurse may have been inspired by her childhood admiration for Heather, her interest does not wane as she grows older. Why is nursing a good career choice for Mila?

Author Bio

Mary McNear, *New York Times* and *USA Today* bestselling author of the *Butternut Lake* series, writes in a local doughnut shop, where she sips Diet Pepsi, observes the hubbub of neighborhood life, and tries to resist the constant temptation of freshly made doughnuts. Mary bases her novels on a lifetime of summers spent in a small town on a lake in the northern Midwest.

Critical Praise

“A delicious setting and a heroine to cheer for, MOONLIGHT ON BUTTERNUT LAKE is my favorite kind of book, one that treads that pleasurable line between romance and women’s fiction. Enjoy!”

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