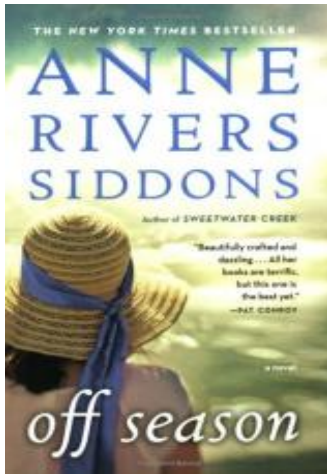


Off Season

by Anne Rivers Siddons



About the Book

Acclaimed novelist Anne Rivers Siddons's new novel is a stunning tale of love and loss.

For as long as she can remember, they were Cam and Lilly --- happily married, totally in love with each other, parents of a beautiful family, and partners in life. Then, after decades of marriage, it ended as every great love story does... in loss. After Cam's death, Lilly takes a lone road trip to her and Cam's favorite spot on the remote coast of Maine, the place where they fell in love over and over again, where their ghosts still dance. There, she looks hard to her past --- to a first love that ended in tragedy; to falling in love with Cam; to a marriage filled with exuberance, sheer life, and safety --- to try to figure out her future.

It is a journey begun with tender memories and culminating in a revelation that will make Lilly re-evaluate everything she thought was true about her husband and her marriage.

Discussion Guide

1. What is your first impression of Elizabeth, Lilly's mother? Does your opinion of her change throughout the course of the novel? How so? Discuss how Lilly's discovery of her mother and Brooks Burns during the summer of 1962 changes Lilly's view of her mother? How does it change Lilly?
2. The epigraph that opens the book quotes Dylan Thomas: "After the first death, there is no other." How do you understand this quote? Does this quote apply in any way to your own life?

3. Lilly narrates the book as an adult, looking back at her life. The novel is, in part, about adolescence and the ways in which that period of our lives is so defining. How does Lilly change and grow as a character throughout the book? How does she stay the same?
4. Siddons writes, "It was the full flowering of Camelot, the New Frontier, and the glamour and rigor of the young Kennedy administration brought with it strong feelings...It was, too, a time of exploration and flaming new cultural concepts, and the sound of tumbling mores was loud in the land." How does the historical and social context manifest itself throughout the novel? Is it meaningful that Siddons chose to set this book during the 1960s? Why or why not?
5. Lilly's mother believes that "magic is just as necessary for human beings as food and shelter, but most of us have forgotten it." It can be said that there are moments of magic in this book, and Edgewater, in particular, seems to be a magical place for many of the characters. Do you agree that magic is a 'necessary' part of life? What do you think Siddons means by this?
6. Midway through the novel Lilly says, "Never think that the very young cannot love. Never think that. They love with a fierce, direct love." Jon and Lilly have a very mature relationship for such young people. Do you think it's possible for the 'very young' to experience mature and enduring love?
7. What do you make of Peaches? Is Lilly too hard on her when they are younger?
8. It can be said that Edgewater is its own 'character' in **Off Season** and early in the novel Lilly tells Cam that she was a different person at Edgewater, "a creature of water and wind and tides and rock." What role does Edgewater play in Lilly's life? Do you agree with Lilly that certain places have the power to completely change a person?
9. Is Lilly's father too protective of Lilly after her mother dies? Do you think he is a good parent to Lilly? How does Lilly's relationship with her father affect her relationship with Cam?
10. Lilly falls in love with Cam instantly. Is their love believable? Do you believe that love at first sight is possible?
11. Why doesn't Lilly tell Cam about Jon? Why doesn't Cam tell Lilly about his sister? Do you think it's sometimes necessary keep childhood secrets even from those closest to you in adulthood?
12. The characters in this novel love very deeply. What price do they pay for this love? Does the novel suggest that it is important to love this deeply despite the risks involved in doing so?
13. When Lilly begins dating Cam she thinks, "Love and safety. Love and safety forever. I had never dreamed I could find both outside [my father's] house." What role does 'safety' play in Lilly's marriage to Cam? Why does Lilly place so much value on safety?
14. The novel has a surprising ending. Discuss what happens in the final chapters and what the ending means for Lilly, her life, and her marriage.

Author Bio

THE GIRLS OF AUGUST is Anne Rivers Siddons's 19th novel. Her previous bestselling novels include BURNT MOUNTAIN, OFF SEASON, SWEETWATER CREEK, ISLANDS, NORA NORA, LOW COUNTRY, UP ISLAND, FAULT LINES, DOWNTOWN, HILL TOWNS, COLONY, OUTER BANKS, KING'S OAK, PEACHTREE ROAD, HOMEPLACE, FOX'S EARTH, THE HOUSE NEXT DOOR and HEARTBREAK HOTEL. She is also the author of a work of nonfiction, JOHN CHANCELLOR MAKES ME CRY. She and her husband, Heyward, split their time between their home in Charleston, SC and Brooklin, ME.

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