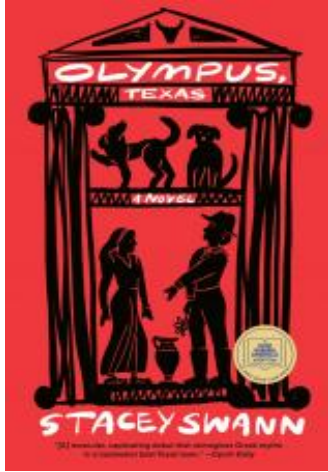


Olympus, Texas

by Stacey Swann



About the Book

A bighearted debut with technicolor characters, plenty of Texas swagger, and a powder keg of a plot in which marriages struggle, rivalries flare and secrets explode, all with a clever wink toward classical mythology.

The Briscoe family is once again the talk of their small town when March returns to East Texas two years after he was caught having an affair with his brother's wife. His mother, June, hardly welcomes him back with open arms. Her husband's own past affairs have made her tired of being the long-suffering spouse. Is it, perhaps, time for a change? Within days of March's arrival, someone is dead, marriages are upended, and even the strongest of alliances are shattered. In the end, the ties that hold them together might be exactly what drag them all down.

An expansive tour de force, *OLYMPUS, TEXAS* cleverly weaves elements of classical mythology into a thoroughly modern family saga, rich in drama and psychological complexity. After all, at some point, don't we all wonder: What good is this destructive force we call love?

Discussion Guide

1. In the novel, June and Peter's children all have different reactions to the small-town nature of the place where they grew up: Thea and Arlo feel more at home elsewhere, while March and Artie prefer it to any other place. Which character do you most relate to on this topic? How do you feel about your own hometown?
2. The novel has multiple points of view, letting us inside the heads of most of the family members. How did this choice impact your engagement with the book? Did you have a favorite point of view, a person you most enjoyed experiencing the novel with?
3. Each of the main characters (aside from Cole!) have a counterpart in classical mythology, a god or goddess they

resemble. Did you think about these counterparts as you read? What did that add to your reading experience?

4. The Briscoes are a blended family, with complex relationships between the siblings and half-siblings, as well as between Peter and June and the children. Did these relationships feel authentic to you? Did they remind you of any of your own family relationships?

5. Though the book is filled with ways the Briscoe family has failed one another, it also explores their attempts to forgive one another. Which of these paths to forgiveness seem the most promising among the characters? What components do you think are necessary for true forgiveness?

6. After March comes home and promptly gets himself in trouble again, he decides to truly try to change so he can stay in Olympus. By the end of the novel, do you think March has succeeded? Are you hopeful for his future within the family?

7. What other books, movies or TV shows did OLYMPUS, TEXAS remind you of?

8. At several points in the book, June is critical of both her own and Peter's parenting skills. How do you feel about June as a mother? About Peter as a father? Is there any good mixed in with the failings?

9. Arlo is one of the most contentious characters in the book. How do you feel about Arlo? Does he expect too much from Artie? By the end of the book, do you think he has earned a chance at her forgiveness?

10. Hap is shocked when he finds out why Vera felt so betrayed by him that she decided to destroy their marriage. Do you agree with Vera, that Hap's view of her behavior was a huge betrayal, something that could make their marriage untenable?

11. Two marriages are at the heart of the book: June and Peter's, as well as Hap and Vera's. What do you see in the futures of each of these marriages?

Author Bio

Stacey Swann holds an M.F.A. from Texas State University and was a Stegner Fellow at Stanford University. Her fiction has appeared in *Epoch*, *Memorious*, *Versal* and other journals, and she is a contributing editor of *American Short Fiction*. She is a native Texan.

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