ReadingGroupGuides
The online community for reading groups

Pieces of Blue

by Holly Goldberg Sloan



About the Book

From *New York Times* bestselling author Holly Goldberg Sloan, a compelling and heartfelt novel for fans of Maria Semple and Emma Straub about a family trying to restore a ramshackle beachside motel --- and their own lives.

What good was thinking the future only held cloudy skies? Wasn?t the reality that pieces of blue were always there, waiting to break through?

When Paul Hill drowns in a surfing accident, his broken-hearted wife, Lindsey, and their three children are left in huge financial trouble. Once Paul?s life insurance finally comes through, Lindsey impulsively uses the money to buy a charmingly ramshackle motel in Hawaii, hoping for a fresh start. Teenage Olivia quickly develops a crush on a handsome but monosyllabic skateboarder. Twelve-year-old Carlos reinvents himself as a popular kid named Carl. And Sena, the youngest, will do whatever it takes to protect her beloved motel chickens.

But while the kids adjust, Lindsey is flailing, trying to pretend she knows how to bring a motel --- and herself --- back to life. Then a handsome stranger rolls into the motel parking lot, and she?s surprised to feel a long-dormant part of herself stirring. She accepts his offer to help, unaware that he may have secrets of his own. And all the while, out in the Pacific, the trade winds are fiercely blowing.

Funny and tender, full of twists and turns, and heart, PIECES OF BLUE is a portrait of an irresistible family learning to start over.

Discussion Guide

1. The novel?s title comes from one of Olivia?s reflections: ?What good was thinking the future only held cloudy skies?

Wasn?t the reality that pieces of blue were always there, waiting to break through?? (p. 172). What does the title mean to you? How does it echo through the story?

2. In each chapter, we move among the perspectives of the Hills. How are their worldviews different? Why do you think the author chose to include, later in the novel, perspective chapters from Paul and Chris? What effect did that have on your reading experience? Did you sympathize more with the men after reading their chapters?

3. Did you have a favorite character? If so, why were you particularly drawn to them?

4. When we meet Lindsey, Carlos, Sena, and Olivia, they are grieving Paul. How do they each react to Paul?s death?

5. How is life different for the Hills in Hawai?i than it was in Oregon? How does the culture of their new town, especially at school, surprise them? How do they each adjust to the major changes in their lives?

6. Why do you think Lindsey makes the decision to buy the Mau Loa Motel? Do you agree that it was ?brilliant idea? (p. 52) for her family?

7. Olivia is alternately drawn to Haku and Koa over the course of the story. Discuss her different relationships with each brother. How does Haku help draw her out of her shell?

8. On his first day of school in Kahuku, Carlos announces that he wants to be called Carl from now on. Why does he make that decision? Are there other ways in which the Hills try to reinvent themselves in Hawai?i? Discuss.

9. Sena often seems wise beyond her years. What does she understand about their new life and home that the rest of her family doesn?t?

10. What effect does Paul?s enormous success have on the family? How do their lives and relationships change when they suddenly become much more wealthy? Are there lingering effects even after Paul loses everything?

11. Do you sympathize at all with Paul?s decision to fake his own death and disappear? Why or why not? What other choices might he have made after his company collapsed? Does his heroism the night of the storm help make up for some of his failures as a husband and a father, in your eyes?

12. Why are Lindsey and Chris drawn to each other? Do you think Chris was right to withhold the truth about his job from the Hills? Were you, like Sena and Olivia, at all suspicious of his motivations as you were reading? What role does he ultimately play in the Hills? lives?

13. How is Hawai?i portrayed in the novel? Did it surprise you at all, based on your own experiences or preconceptions of the state? If so, how?

14. In the wake of the hurricane, the Hills feel ?a sense of belonging. Survivors have a bond, and the Hill kids were on the inside after Hurricane Neville? (p. 252). Have you ever experienced something similar in your life? What impact does the hurricane have on the Hill family and their community?

15. Discuss the novel?s last line: ?No body was ever found? (p. 254). Do you think Paul will reemerge in the Hills?

lives? What do you think the future holds for these characters?

Author Bio

Holly Goldberg Sloan is the author of seven books for young readers, which have been translated into 27 languages. Her novel COUNTING BY 7s was an E.B. White Honor book and has sold over a million copies. Also a noted feature film writer, Holly wrote the Disney blockbuster *Angels in the Outfield*, and she was the first woman to direct a live action film for Disney when she wrote and directed *The Big Green*. The mother of two sons, Holly lives with her husband in Santa Monica, California. PIECES OF BLUE is her debut novel for adults.

Pieces of Blue

by Holly Goldberg Sloan

Publication Date: August 6, 2024
Genres: Fiction, Women's Fiction
Paperback: 272 pages
Publisher: Flatiron Books
ISBN-10: 1250847311
ISBN-13: 9781250847317