Snow in July: A Novel

by Heather Barbieri



About the Book

Erin is the youngest sister who all her life has been eclipsed by daring, clever Meghan. Now Meghan has returned to Butte, Montana, a single mother with two daughters of her own and a drug habit. Erin and her mother have to decide how much they can sacrifice out of familial duty and love.

Discussion Guide

1. Shifting alliances occur in many families. How do the alliances change between Erin, Meghan, and Fi? Who feels alienated? When? Why? Do Erin and Fi react differently to Meghan's return?

2. How has the sister's relationship changed over the years? What are some of the mains events that influenced and shaped them, both as individuals and sisters? How do each of them change or grow during the course of the novel?

3. How did Patrick Mulcahy's death affect Erin, Meghan and Fi? Who has been most damaged by the loss? Why? How does family history continue to affect them?

4. Snow in July has a rich cast of minor characters. How does each contribute to the overall flavor of the novel?

5. What is the role of humor in this novel? Discuss how the author mixes comedy and pathos in different scenes. What tone results from this combination? Does Erin's occasionally irreverent take on her sister's problems minimize or accentuate the trials the family faces?

6. The town of Butte, Montana is a character in its own right. What is the significance of the setting and how does this backdrop affect each character? Is the town a metaphor for the characters? What does it represent? How is the setting important to the themes of the book?

7. What are the characters' attitudes toward faith and religion? How is religion, specifically Catholicism, treated in the novel? How do the characters view their Irish history? What role does it play in their lives? What social issues does the book address? How are subcultures portrayed?

8. Small town life can be a curse for some people, a gift to others. How do Erin's feelings about Butte change over the course of the book?

9. What are the roots of Meghan's addiction? What is she running from? What emptiness is she trying to fill with her behavior?

10. Both Erin and Fi have put their personal lives on hold and yet both have the opportunity for relationships with new men in their lives, who, on the surface, are quite different from them. What do both women gain from the relationships? Have they reached a stage in their lives where they are willing to risk intimacy again?

11. Where could the story go after the book ends? What is the characters' future?

Author Bio

The author of THE COTTAGE AT GLASS BEACH, THE LACEMAKERS OF GLENMARA and SNOW IN JULY, Heather Barbieri has won international prizes for her short fiction. She lives in Seattle with her husband and three children.

Critical Praise

"Powerful."

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