Summer Sisters
by Judy Blume

About the Book

No writer captures the seasons of our lives better than Judy Blume. Now, from the New York Times bestselling author of Wifey and Smart Women, comes an extraordinary novel of reminiscence and awakening--an unforgettable story of two women, two families, and the friendships that shape a lifetime.

When Victoria Leonard answers the phone in her Manhattan office, Caitlin's voice catches her by surprise. Vix hasn't talked to her oldest friend in months. Caitlin's news takes her breath away--and Vix is transported back in time, back to the moment she and Caitlin Somers first met, back to the casual betrayals and whispered confessions of their long, complicated friendship, back to the magical island where two friends became summer sisters.

Caitlin dazzled Vix from the start, sweeping her into the heart of the unruly Somers family, into a world of privilege, adventure, and sexual daring. Vix's bond with her summer family forever reshapes her ties to her own, opening doors to opportunities she had never imagined--until the summer she falls passionately in love. Then, in one shattering moment on a moonswept Vineyard beach, everything changes, exposing a dark undercurrent in her extraordinary friendship with Caitlin that will haunt them through the years.

As their story carries us from Santa Fe to Martha's Vineyard, from New York to Venice, we come to know the men and women who shape their lives. And as we follow the two women on the paths they each choose, we wait for the inevitable reckoning to be made in the fine spaces between friendship and betrayal, between love and freedom.

Summer Sisters is a riveting exploration of the choices that define our lives, of friendship and love, of the families we are born into and those we struggle to create. For every woman who has ever had a friend too dangerous to forgive and too essential to forget, Summer Sisters will glue you to every page, reading and remembering.

Judy Blume's twenty-one books have sold over sixty-five million copies worldwide and have been translated into twenty
languages. She spends summers on Martha's Vineyard with her family.

**Discussion Guide**

1. Do you see more of your personality in the character of Victoria ("Vix") or Caitlin? Why? Do you see parallels in your relationships with your friends? Have you ever known a "Caitlin? You might start by remembering best friends and what they've meant to you.

2. What is it about Vix that leads Caitlin to befriend her in the first place? That allows the friendship to flourish? What does Vix get from her friendship with Caitlin? What does Caitlin get from Vix? And what do each of them give?

3. What do you see as the source of the lasting bond between Vix and Caitlin? Why and how do they remain so close even as they grow apart and lead different lives? How do their expectations of each other change? Do you see similarities in your own long-term friendships? In what ways have they changed over time?

4. After Caitlin talks to Vix about Phoebe, Vix thinks, "You weren't always born to the right parents. And parents didn't necessarily get the kids they were meant to raise" (p. 98). Do you think Vix was thinking of her own parents, or Caitlin's? What does this say about how she feels about both sets of parents? Do you agree?

5. How did Vix's relationship with Abby and Lamb affect her relationship with her own family? How much different would her life have been if she hadn't developed such a strong bond with Caitlin's family? Would Vix have broken away from her background on her own, without her friendship with Caitlin?

6. How much do you think their respective backgrounds shaped Vix and Caitlin? Do you think their essential characters would have been the same if their situations had been reversed? How do you think each would have operated in the world under reversed circumstances?

7. Could there ever have been a future for Vix and Bru? Was their breakup inevitable? Could she have married him and still fulfilled herself? Do you see any parallels between their relationship and your own first love?

8. Why does Caitlin pursue and marry Bru? What attracts her to the idea of settling down and having a child? Is this something you think she deliberately set out to do or did it just happen?

9. How can Vix forgive Caitlin for marrying Bru? When Caitlin abandons her daughter? When she disappears from their lives? Why doesn't Vix ask more questions about Caitlin's life away from her? Do you think she should have ended the friendship because of any of these events?

10. Judy Blume uses an unusual technique in her novel, allowing readers to get into the minds of many characters, yet she never allows us inside Caitlin. Why?

11. What drew you to each character? With which characters did you most sympathize? Which did you find less sympathetic? Why?

12. Was the ending inevitable or tragic? Are you able to agree on what really happened? How do you feel about the
ambiguity of the ending?

**Author Bio**

Judy Blume spent her childhood in Elizabeth, New Jersey, making up stories inside her head. She has spent her adult years in many places doing the same thing, only now she writes her stories down on paper. Adults as well as children will recognize such Blume titles as ARE YOU THERE GOD? IT'S ME, MARGARET; BLUBBER; JUST AS LONG AS WE'RE TOGETHER; and the five-book series about the irrepressible Fudge. She has also written three novels for adults, SUMMER SISTERS; SMART WOMEN; and WIFEY, all of them New York Times bestsellers. More than 80 million copies of her books have been sold, and her work has been translated into 31 languages. She receives thousands of letters a year from readers of all ages who share their feelings and concerns with her.

Judy received a B.S. in education from New York University in 1961, which named her a Distinguished Alumna in 1996, the same year the American Library Association honored her with the Margaret A. Edwards Award for Lifetime Achievement. In 2004 she received the National Book Foundation’s Medal for Distinguished Contribution to American Letters.

She is the founder and trustee of The Kids Fund, a charitable and educational foundation. She serves on the boards of the Author’s Guild; the Society of Children’s Book Writers and Illustrators; the Key West Literary Seminar; and the National Coalition Against Censorship.

Judy is a longtime advocate of intellectual freedom. Finding herself at the center of an organized book banning campaign in the 1980’s she began to reach out to other writers, as well as teachers and librarians, who were under fire. Since then, she has worked tirelessly with the National Coalition Against Censorship to protect the freedom to read. She is the editor of PLACES I NEVER MEANT TO BE: Original Stories by Censored Writers.

Judy recently completed the final book in a series of four books for young readers, illustrated by New Yorker cartoonist James Stevenson, which was published in May, 2009. The first, SOUPY SATURDAYS WITH THE PAIN & THE GREAT ONE, was published in September 2007. The second, COOL ZONE WITH THE PAIN & THE GREAT ONE, was issued in May, and GOING, GOING, GONE! WITH THE PAIN & THE GREAT ONE, her third book in this series, was published August 12, 2008.

Judy and her husband George Cooper live on islands up and down the east coast. They have three grown children and one grandchild.

**Critical Praise**

"An exceptionally moving story that can leave the reader laughing and crying ... sometimes at the same time.... Blume creates a rich tapestry of characters."
Summer Sisters
by Judy Blume

Publication Date: May 4, 1999
Mass Market Paperback: 399 pages
Publisher: Dell
ISBN-10: 0440226430