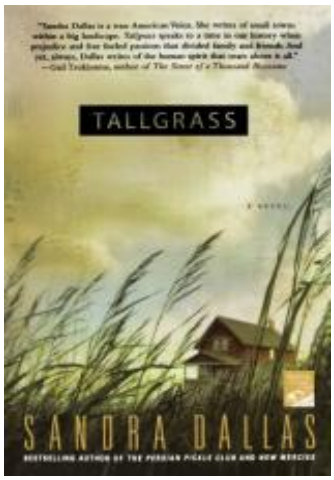
ReadingGroupGuides
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Tallgrass

by Sandra Dallas



About the Book

An essential American novel from Sandra Dallas, an unparalleled writer of our history, and our deepest emotions...

During World War II, a family finds life turned upside down when the government opens a Japanese internment camp in their small Colorado town. After a young girl is murdered, all eyes (and suspicions) turn to the newcomers, the interlopers, the strangers.

This is Tallgrass as Rennie Stroud has never seen it before. She has just turned thirteen and, until this time, life has pretty much been what her father told her it should be: predictable and fair. But now the winds of change are coming and, with them, a shift in her perspective. And Rennie will discover secrets that can destroy even the most sacred things.

Part thriller, part historical novel, TALLGRASS is a riveting exploration of the darkest --- and best --- parts of the human heart.

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Discussion Guide

1. Rennie?s parents caution her frequently not to lie. How well do they succeed in following their own advice? How akin is the way they keep large secrets (that Marthalice was pregnant, that Mary is very sick) to lying to their friends and daughter? Why do they draw the line against pretending Daisy was married before she got pregnant, but conspire with the Sheriff to dupe the town later?

2. *Tallgrass* shows Rennie dealing with tough issues: rape, murder, prejudice, and danger to her family. How much of her opinions seem to come from her parents, and how much from her own observations? What did you think of her still

being afraid of ?the Japs,? even after she got to know and respect the Japanese her family had hired?

3. What is the importance of community to men and women in this book? Mary has the courage of her convictions and the love of her family, so why does she still care what other people think? Do you think she?s right to care?

4. Mary Stroud didn?t want the inmates of **Tallgrass** working on her farm. Why did she change her mind?

5. There are two funerals in **Tallgrass**: Susan Reddick?s and Harry Hirano. How are they similar? How are they different? How do they each change Rennie?s view of the Japanese and her town?

6. In the 1940s, it was taken for granted that men acted and women talked. How much complicity do women have in the actions of their men: Mrs. Smith in her husband?s late-night raid on **Tallgrass**; Mrs. Snow in her husband?s descent into addiction and his treatment of her and Betty Joyce; Mrs. Reddick in her husband?s refusal to acknowledge Helen? Why do you think that Mary Stroud broke through the convention to confront the men outside **Tallgrass**?

7. Why were Americans so frightened of Japanese-Americans during World War II?more than the German- and Italian-Americans? In her acknowledgements, Sandra Dallas mentions that she was inspired to write this book, in part, by the prison camp in Guantanamo Bay. What parallels do you see between them? What differences?

8. Did you recognize any characters from Sandra?s other books in**Tallgrass**?

Author Bio

Sandra Dallas is a *New York Times* bestselling author of 20 adult novels, several children's novels, and numerous works of nonfiction about Western subjects. Her work has won numerous awards and prizes, including the Colorado Book Award, and, in 2021, she was inducted into the Colorado Authors' Hall of Fame. A former bureau chief for *Business Week* magazine, Sandra lives in Denver and Georgetown, Colorado, with her husband.

Critical Praise

?Sandra Dallas is a true American Voice. She writes of small towns within a big landscape. And Tallgrass speaks to a time in our history when prejudice and fear fueled passions that divided family and friends. And yet, always, Dallas writes of the human spirit that soars above it all.?

?*Gail Tsukiyama, author of* ***Dreaming Water***

?Deftly capturing regional voice as well as period detail, Sandra Dallas weaves a vivid portrait of a Colorado farm town unsettled by change and divided by mistrust on the World War II home front. Tallgrass is a compelling and genuinely moving novel that will keep readers guessing until the last page.?

?*Jennifer Chiaverini, author of Circle of Quilters*

?**Tallgrass** is a must-read for every American. . . . Sandra Dallas captures the feelings of people in eastern Colorado, a

part of the great American plains. Residents thought they were isolated from the great global conflict, but the winds of change deposited one of the internment camps in their midst. What a setting for a novel!?

?*former congresswoman Pat Schroeder, president and chief executive officer of the Association of American Publishers (AAP)*

?A profoundly moving story, told from the viewpoints of victims and witnesses, that hits the reader with insights into the human side of a barely remembered national tragedy of World War II.?

?*Bill Hosokawa, author of* ***Nisei***

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