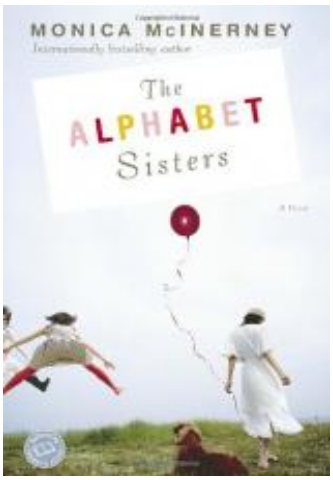
The Alphabet Sisters

by Monica McInerney



About the Book

As girls growing up in Clare Valley, Australia, Anna, Bett, and Carrie Quinlan were childhood singing stars known as The Alphabet Sisters. The unbridled enthusiasm of their flamboyant grandmother Lola was the glue that held them together. As adults, though, the women haven?t spoken in years?ever since Bett?s fiancé deserted her to marry the younger Carrie. Now Lola is turning eighty and she is determined to reunite the girls for a blowout bash. And no one ever says no to Lola.

Bett, who fled to London after the scandal of losing her fiancé, is hesitant to face her sisters and her hometown?especially since she has yet to find another man. Sophisticated Anna, the eldest sister, isn?t too keen on the prospect either, though she?s secretly grateful for any excuse to leave her crumbling marriage behind in Sydney. And Carrie, who remained in Clare Valley, is perhaps the most apprehensive. Her marriage?the nominal cause of the sisters? estrangement?is also on the rocks. Was she wrong to have followed her heart and run off with Bett?s fiancé?

When Lola shares her special request, that the girls stage a musical she has written, their short visit becomes a much longer commitment. As they are forced to spend more time together, the sisters must confront the pain that lingers between them. Preconceptions and misunderstandings are slowly put aside and the three find themselves gradually, irresistibly enveloping one another once again?until an unexpected turn of events changes everything in ways none of them could have ever imagined. . . .

Layering the lighthearted antics of small-town life with a heartbreaking story of loyalty lost and found, **The Alphabet Sisters** is an unforgettable story of two generations of women who learn that being true to themselves means being true to one another.

Discussion Guide

1. The Alphabet Sisters begins and ends with chapters from Bett?s perspective. Why do you think that author Monica McInerney chose to frame the novel in this way? Do you think that Bett is the guiding narrative voice in the story? Why or why not?

2. Which sister do you feel most sympathetic toward when the book begins? Did your allegiance shift as the story unfolded?

3. The girls? grandmother, Lola, is a larger-than-life personality. What lessons have her son and grandchildren learned from her? What would you say are the guiding principles of Lola?s life?

4. Lola christens her grandchildren ?The Alphabet Sisters.? What does this group identity mean to Anna, Bett, and Carrie? How does each of them react to being on stage and in the spotlight?

5. How does Lola?s invitation to her eightieth birthday spur each sister to make a change in her life? What do you think their parents felt about the daughters? feud? Why didn?t the sisters? parents get more involved?

6. How does each sister resent and admire the other? How did their time apart strengthen their individual personalities and their bonds with one another? What detrimental effects does the feud have on the sisters?

7. ?Still avoiding the truth after all these years?? Anna asks Bett. Do you think Bett is guilty of Anna?s accusation? Why or why not? What unpleasant revelations do her sisters muffle about their lives?

8. ?Lola used to talk to them as if they were her co-conspirators, her equals,? remembers Bett. How is Lola?s attitude toward her grandchildren unconventional? In which ways is she traditional? How does her mindset differ from that of her daughter-in-law, Geraldine?

9. What inspires Lola to force her granddaughters to produce her musical? Why do they agree to do it? How is music the glue that binds them together?

10. After Ellen is attacked by a dog, how does her personality change? In which ways is outward appearance an important element in Anna?s life, both before and after Ellen?s attack? How do her sisters also grapple with the ramifications of their looks?

11. How does the love triangle between Bett, Carrie, and Matthew affect each of its participants? What does Carrie love about Matthew? How does this compare to the way that Bett feels about him?

12. Discuss Anna?s husband, Glenn. How does she characterize her relationship with him at the beginning of their time together? What about their marriage now?

13. By the end of the book, each sister has discovered?or rediscovered?her perfect match. How are Richard and Anna, Matthew and Carrie, and Daniel and Bett complementary to one another? How does each couple approach love and romance differently? How does this compare and contrast the relationship of the women?s parents, Jim and Geraldine?

14. What does small-town life mean to the family? How does their position as proprietors of a motel give them a unique

vantage point on the goings-on of the town itself? How does their lifestyle give them a sense of stability? Of adventure?

15. Were you surprised when Anna?s illness was revealed to be terminal cancer? How does her diagnosis change the family? How do they rally around her?

16. Bett is shocked to learn that the stories spun about her grandfather are untrue. How does this revelation give you, as a reader, a different perspective on Lola? How does Bett react to her grandmother?s deception? Why do you think that Lola ?especially hates? to lie to Bett?

17. Have you been in a similar position with a family feud that seemed irresolvable? How did your family solve the problem? Did it help or hurt when others?like Lola?intervened?

18. What do you envision next for Bett, Carrie, and Lola? Would you like to see a sequel of this book that follows one or more of the characters in **The Alphabet Sisters**? Which ones?

Author Bio

International bestselling writer Monica McInerney is the award-winning author of ten previous novels, one short-story collection, and numerous stories and articles. She grew up in Australia, one of seven children, and has split her time between Australia and Ireland for twenty years. Monica and her Irish husband currently live in Dublin, Ireland.

Photo Credit: Ashley Miller

Critical Praise

?Charm, laughter, and tears . . . a delightful story that shows how quarrels can be solved with love and loyalty.?

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