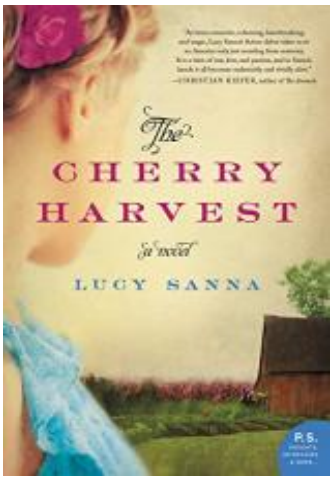
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The Cherry Harvest

by Lucy Sanna



About the Book

World War II has taken a toll on the Christiansen family. With food rationed and money scarce, Charlotte struggles to keep her family well fed. Her teenage daughter, Kate, raises rabbits to earn money for college and dreams of becoming a writer. Her husband, Thomas, struggles to keep the farm going while their son, and most of the other local men, are fighting in Europe.

When their upcoming cherry harvest is threatened, strong-willed Charlotte helps persuade local authorities to allow German war prisoners from a nearby camp to pick the fruit.

But when Thomas befriends one of the prisoners, a teacher named Karl, and invites him to tutor Kate, the implications of Charlotte?s decision become apparent --- especially when she finds herself unexpectedly drawn to Karl. So busy are they with the prisoners that Charlotte and Thomas fail to see that Kate is becoming a young woman, with dreams and temptations of her own --- including a secret romance with the son of a wealthy, war-profiteering senator. And when their beloved Ben returns home, bitter and injured, bearing an intense hatred of Germans, Charlotte?s secrets threaten to explode their world

Discussion Guide

1. In the opening chapter, Charlotte butchers one of Kate?s rabbits because she has nothing else for dinner. What do we learn about Charlotte in that scene? What about the scene with the lighthouse keeper?s wife, where Charlotte barters away Ben?s sweater?

2. Early on, Charlotte reflects, ?Thomas loved her, she knew. But he loved other things, too. He loved his books, and whatever he had wanted before, whatever he had left at the university, Charlotte couldn?t give him that.? Would you describe their marriage as happy despite their different needs and personalities?

3. When Charlotte first meets Karl, she thinks. ?Thomas had told her that Becker was intellectual, but she sensed something else, something more physical --- this man lived in his body.? What does it say about both Thomas and Charlotte that they see such different things in Karl?

4. Charlotte?s attraction to Karl is immediate. Is their affair inevitable? Do either of them gain from it?

5. Josie remarks early in the book that ?everybody loves Ben? and everyone is anxious for him to come home. How does each character handle the change in Ben?s personality when he returns from war? What did you think of Josie?s decision to break off their engagement?

6. Clay tells Kate: ?You?re a different kind of girl, Kate. You?re so?so real.? Why does he feel that way and what does it say about him? How do they manage to bridge the huge difference in their backgrounds to fall in love? Do Clay and Kate ultimately seem well-matched?

7. When Kate tells Clay what she believes to be the truth about Charlotte and Karl, she says, ?I should tell Father. I?m sure he suspects?suspects something.? Do you think Thomas suspects? If he does, why doesn?t he confront Charlotte?

8. Throughout the book, how do secrets serve to drive friends and family apart, and how do they work to bring them together?

9. At the beginning of the book, Charlotte is a strong woman whose family depends on her. At the end of the book, what are your feelings for her? Did she deserve the ?punishment? she may have brought on herself?

10. In the Epilogue, Kate fills us in about what transpired after Ben?s death. Are you optimistic for Kate? What do you think will become of Charlotte and Thomas in the years after the novel ends?

Author Bio

Lucy Sanna has published poetry, short stories and nonfiction books, which have been translated into a number of languages. Born and raised in Wisconsin, Sanna now divides her time between Madison, Wisconsin, and San Francisco. THE CHERRY HARVEST is her first novel.

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